


**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES
JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS**

Subject: Youth Grievance		Policy Number: 2	
Number of Pages: 4		Section: XV	
<p style="text-align: center;">Attachments</p> Grievance Form XV.2.A Grievance Investigation Form XV.2.B Grievance Appeal Form XV.2.C Witness Statement Form XV.2.D Grievance Log Form XV.2.E		<p style="text-align: center;">Related Standards & References</p> ACA 3-JTS-3D-09	
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I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services, that all youth have the right to file a grievance at any time. The grievance process allows youth to raise issues, and have errors corrected. Youth who file a grievance shall not be subject to disciplinary sanction or reprisal. To ensure an effective and protective grievance policy, all phases of the process shall remain confidential and all grievances shall be addressed and processed in a timely manner. Youth have the right to appeal any resolution provided on a grievance. Youth may request the assistance of any person in the completion and submission of a grievance.

II. DEFINITIONS

As used in this policy and procedure, the following definitions apply:

Grievance: A formal complaint filed when a youth feels that s/he is being treated unfairly, being or feeling threatened, or the youth's rights have been violated and/or when a youth seeks to remedy a problem or issue that is of concern to the youth.

Grievance Officer: An administrative appointee who is assigned to process and investigate grievances filed by youth, and to report findings and recommendations to the Campus Investigator.

Appeal: A request for the initial grievance decision/resolution to be reviewed by the Facility Administrator.

Subject	Policy #	Page
Youth Grievance	XV.2	2 of 4

III. PROCEDURE

- A. The Grievance Officer or designee shall instruct each youth during the orientation process regarding:
 1. Right to file a grievance at any time on any topic
 2. Assurance that no one, staff or student, will threaten or penalize them for filing a grievance
 3. Instructions on how to fill out grievance forms, and if they cannot complete the form themselves they can ask any staff to help them and that the staff will not refuse to help them
 4. Instructing them on the locations of the secure drop boxes, Grievance Forms, and Grievance envelopes
 5. The Grievance Officer will contact them after they file a grievance
 6. What happens if there is an investigation
 7. That the Grievance Officer will inform them of their findings within 48 hours
 8. That they have a right to appeal, and what this means
 9. What happens during the appeal process

- B. The grievance process shall remain confidential and staff cannot deny youth access to Grievance Forms and envelopes.

- C. Drop boxes are located in each housing unit and all common areas accessible to youth:
 1. The Grievance Officer will ensure that there is always a supply of Grievance Forms XV.2.A, and Grievance envelopes at each secure drop box location.
 2. Grievances written on any paper shall be accepted and processed as an official grievance.
 3. The Grievances will be picked up from the drop boxes every day by the Grievance Officer.
 4. Grievance Forms processed daily by the Grievance Officer:
 - a. The Grievance forms shall be date stamped,
 - b. Written in the Grievance Log by category and
 - c. Be assigned a unique control number.
 - i. There will be only one grievance associated with this number,
 - ii. No grievance will have more than one number assigned to it.

Subject	Policy #	Page
Youth Grievance	XV.2	3 of 4

5. The following information will also be documented in the log book:

- a. Student's name,
- b. Student's location (housing unit)
- c. Date the grievance was written
- d. Date grievance was received
- e. Student's complaint
- f. The decision/resolution/referral of the grievance

D. Once logged, the Grievance Officer shall review, address and seek resolution for each grievance.

1. Grievances that involve allegations of civil rights violations, abuse, or alleged criminal behavior, violent activity, and/or staff misconduct, or any grievance that the Grievance officer (after an initial evaluation of witness statements, and evidence gathered by the Grievance Officer) cannot resolve, the Grievance Officer shall close the grievance and,
2. Forward the grievance to the Campus Investigator as an incident for investigation and log such referral in the grievance Log. When necessary the grievance will be re-directed to Program Integrity by the Campus Investigator.
3. In such circumstances, the Grievance Officer shall inform the youth that the incident has been referred for investigation and that the findings of which shall be provided upon completion of the investigation (see policy VII.2: Incident Reporting).
4. There shall be no retaliation against a youth who files a false complaint.

E. The Grievance Officer shall interview the youth and discuss possible resolutions.

F. If there is no immediate resolution:

1. The Grievance Officer shall interview witnesses, participants, and/or staff involved. Witness statements shall be documented using the Witness Statement Form XV.2.D and
2. Gather any evidence associated with the grievance
3. If a decision can be made using the witness statements and initial evidence gathered by the Grievance Officer,
4. The Grievance Officer shall record all findings on the DYS Grievance Investigation Form XV.2.B; and provide a decision/resolution within 48 hours to the youth.

Subject	Policy #	Page
Youth Grievance	XV.2	4 of 4

- H. The Grievance Officer shall meet with the youth within 48 hours of the completion of the investigation to discuss the decision/resolution of the grievance. The youth shall be afforded a written copy of the resolution.
1. The youth shall have the option to sign the Grievance Form accepting the decision/resolution or the youth may request an appeal of the decision/resolution to the Facility Administrator.
 2. The youth will be afforded a copy of the signed resolution
 3. If the youth decides to appeal an Appeal Form XV.2., will be completed
- I. Youth have 48 hours from time the decision/resolution is given to them to appeal.
1. After the youth completes a Grievance Appeal Form XV.2.C, the Grievance Officer shall log the appeal in the Grievance Log and forward the appeal, the original grievance, and all information related to the investigation to the Facility Administrator within 48 hours of notification of the appeal.
 2. The Facility Administrator shall determine the appropriate decision/resolution and/or actions to be taken, following an evaluation of the Grievance package within 48 hours of receipt of the appeal.
 3. The decision/resolution of the Facility Administrator is final and the findings and decision/resolution shall be given in writing to the youth, this shall be noted in the Grievance Log.
- J. All original documentation, including the Grievance Form XV.2.A, Grievance Investigation Form XV.2.B, Grievance Appeal Form XV.2.C, Witness Statement Form XV.2.D, and final decision/resolution shall be forwarded to and maintained by the Grievance Officer and filed by month. Grievance records shall be maintained for three years and then destroyed.
- K. Staff shall be trained in the grievance process during the new hire training.
- L. The Grievance Officer shall review and evaluate grievances on a monthly basis and prepare a report summarizing trends and patterns indicated by grievances filed in a given month. The report shall be submitted to the Facility Administrator. Identified trends shall be reviewed for policy and training implications.