
GUIDE TO THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS AT OHIO PRISONS

The grievance procedure is a way to voice concerns or problems that come up during your time in prison. This may include complaints about how you are treated, living conditions, staff, inmates, rules, policies and procedures. Using the grievance procedure can resolve many complaints and correct problems.

This guide will help you with the complaint/grievance process at Ohio state prisons. This process is important because you must use up the entire grievance procedure before you can file a lawsuit in courts. This means you **MUST**:

1. File an Informal Complaint (Level 1)
2. File a Notification of Grievance (Level 2)
3. File an Appeal to the Chief Inspector (Level 3)

This process may be long, and your requests may not even be answered. However, each appeal means a different person looks at your request, so they might overrule the previous decision. It is very important that you follow all the steps on this sheet in order to protect your legal rights.

NOTE: You must use up all administrative solutions if you want to file a lawsuit. This means you must finish **ALL** the steps on this sheet. If you don't complete the entire process because you didn't receive a response, or did not have the proper form, etc., the court may dismiss your lawsuit and say that you did not "exhaust" your administrative remedies.

You should also try to talk to prison staff first. However, if talking doesn't resolve your problem, you should file an Informal Complaint (Level 1) within 14 days of when your problem happened. Then continue with all the appeals. If you are late in your request or appeal, turn it in anyway and explain why you are late.

TIPS FOR USING THE PRISON GRIEVANCE PROCESS

- There are strict **time deadlines** for making requests and appealing – 14 days for each step. Be sure to perform each step quickly!
 1. You must file an Informal Complaint (Level 1) within 14 days of when your problem happened.
 2. After you get a response from the Informal Complaint—or if you do not get any response within 7-10 days—immediately send a kite (written request) to the Inspector to ask for a Notification of Grievance Form (Level 2). You have 14 days to submit the Notification of Grievance.
 3. After you get a response from the Notification of Grievance—or if you do not get any response within 14 days—immediately send a kite (written request) to the Inspector to ask for an Appeal to the Chief Inspector (Level 3). You have 14 days to submit the Appeal to the Chief Inspector.
- One Problem at a Time: You should use a separate informal complaint **for each complaint or change you are requesting**. If you put multiple requests on one form, the prison might only address one of the requests.
- The prison staff should not retaliate against you for making these requests. If you feel you are being retaliated against for making a request, you should notify the Inspector. Be sure to give details like the full name of the person(s) that retaliated against you, and the date and time that they did it. You could also try to notify the CIIC, who inspects and monitors prison grievance procedures:

CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION INSPECTION COMMITTEE
RIFFE CENTER, 15TH FLOOR
77 SOUTH HIGH STREET
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215

- **Always keep a copy of the forms you file in each step.** If you are concerned about your copies getting lost or stolen, mail an additional copy to a friend or family member on the outside as a backup.
- **Stick to the facts.** Keep your complaints short and to the point. Be sure to include important names, dates, and times. Also, tell the prison what you want them to do to fix your problem.
- The complete inmate grievance procedure is explained in Administrative Rule 5120-9-31 of the Ohio Administrative Code. More information may be found in Administrative Rules 5120-9-29 and 5120-9-30. These rules are available in the library.

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