

IowaCASA Complaint Process

How is a complaint received?

Information is given in writing to any IowaCASA staff members, IowaCASA Board members, or members of the IowaCASA Leadership Team. Anyone can provide the information: paid or volunteer staff member, Board member, service user or community member. The information can include a request for action on the part of the complainant, but it does not have to.

Who reviews the complaint?

The IowaCASA Leadership Team reviews the complaint. Members of the Leadership Team may recuse themselves from the complaint process should any conflicts of interest exist. Examples of conflict include (but are not limited to):

- The complaint involves a center where someone on the committee works or has worked.
- The complaint involves an individual who works or has worked with someone on the committee.
- The complaint is brought forth by a survivor who has received services from a member of the committee or the committee member's workplace.
- The complaint involves someone who is a close associate of someone on the Leadership Team.
- Anyone can decline the invitation to be on a complaint committee without giving a reason.

If members of the Leadership Team must recuse themselves from the review committee, an equal number of board members will be brought on to the review committee. A minimum of six individuals should make up the review committee.

The IowaCASA ED or staff designee is kept apprised of each step of the process and provides consultation as needed; Copies of correspondence regarding the complaint are kept at the coalition office. The IowaCASA board is made aware of the complaint, recommendations, and findings.

What is a complaint?

Only actions involving an alleged violation of center standards can be reviewed through the complaint process. One of the first steps the review committee will engage in is to determine if a violation of center standards may be involved in the substance of a complaint. If a complaint does not concern a violation of center standards, the review committee will refer the complaint back to the center or complainant to resolve. The Leadership Team may offer to work with the parties involved on providing recommendations, if desired.

What are the rights of the parties in the process?

All parties in this process have the right to an advocate of their own choosing if they wish to have someone with them when they talk with members of the committee. A person who makes a complaint about a center has a right to information about the process and a right to know the outcome of the process as well. That information will be provided to the complainant by the complaint committee.

The Process:

- 1) As soon as possible after receipt of the complaint (usually within the week), the complaint and individual or organizations complained about are notified, and provided:
 - a. A copy of the complaint
 - b. A copy of the process that will be followed
 - c. A contact person's name (each party has one contact person assigned to them)
- 2) The Review Committee will determine if the complaint is a violation of center standards. If a complaint does not concern a violation of center standards, the review committee will refer the complaint back to the center or complainant to resolve.
- 3) The Review Committee will gather information. They can choose to request information to be submitted in writing or in person. The Review Committee can request information from any party to the complaint; the complainant; the person, persons, or organization being complained about; the Board of the center involved; or any other person or organization with knowledge about the circumstances of the complaint. The Review Committee should try to gather information from all parties within 60 days of the receipt of the complaint. If one party requests a chance to address the committee in person, all parties will be offered the chance to talk with the committee individually.
- 4) After the information is gathered, the Review Committee will submit a written recommendation to the IowaCASA ED, including recommendations for mediation, training, acquisition of resource materials, policy development or change, etc. The IowaCASA ED will make the final recommendation to the complainant.
- 5) Six months* after issuing the finding, the Review Committee will gather information to determine whether or not the Center/Individual has complied with the recommendation. The review committee will report their findings to the IowaCASA ED. If the Center/Individual has not complied, sanctions will be issued by the IowaCASA ED (outline of sanctions listed below). All information gathered in the complaint process will be kept confidential within the IowaCASA Leadership Team and Board (except that the conclusions of the committee will be made available to the complainant(s), but if a sanction is used, the content of the sanction will be made available to the public, after the appeal process has been exhausted.

*If a complaint is tied to the direct harm of survivors, the review committee may make the recommendation that immediate action is taken instead of allowing six months for compliance. Examples of direct harm include (but are not limited to):

- Violation of client confidentiality
- Violation of Iowa Code 709.15

- Denial of services based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, political affiliation, marital status, place of residence, or religion.
- Denial of services based on mental illness or substance abuse that does not present immediate risk of harm to a survivor or staff or volunteer member

Examples of Sanctions:

In the case of non-compliance the committee will make recommendations to the ED which may include:

- Report to funding authorities
- Dismissal from coalition
- Revocation of Victim Counselor Certification with inability to reapply for Certification

Appeals Process:

Appeals will be heard by the Board of Directors. If any board members took part in the first review committee, they must recuse themselves from the appeals process. Appeals should be made in writing to any IowaCASA board or staff member within 60 days of the written finding of the IowaCASA ED. The appellant may then address the second committee. All the information gathered by the first review committee will be made available to the second committee, along with their written finding, and the second committee will either affirm or modify the decision of the first committee. Appeals should be resolved within 60 days of the time the appeal is made. Either the complainant or the censured party may appeal a decision of the first review committee. The decision of the board is final.