



Public Accessibility Complaint Policy

Section: Governance and Operations	Attachment(s):
Policy #:	
Effective Date: May 15, 2018	
Adoption Date: May 15, 2018	
Revision Dates:	
Issuing Department: Centre County Board of Commissioners	
Responsible Officer: Centre County Administrator or Designee	
Required Policy Review Period: As needed.	

Section 1: Policy Statement:

Centre County Government strives to provide excellent service to the public and reduce dissatisfaction with services by continuous improvement of operations. This policy is intended to provide Centre County Government with a means to effectively address program and service delivery concerns raised by members of the public when they believe that they have been wrongfully affected by their inability to access a program, service, or facility due to their limited ability to hear, read, speak, write, or understand English as provided for in the Centre County Language Access Policy; or their inability to access programs and services because of barriers that impede use by individuals with special needs, as provided for in the Section 504 Policy.

When appropriate, it is the responsibility of the complainant to attempt to resolve concerns in a timely manner by respectfully discussing their concerns with County employee(s) directly involved with the issue.

It is the responsibility of the County employee(s) to attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they become complaints, and identify opportunities to improve County services.

A complainant is a person expressing dissatisfaction with accessibility to a county service, program or facility.

Section 2: Overview

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction related to a County government program, service, or facility, when a citizen believes that the County has not provided a service experience to the citizen's satisfaction at the point of service delivery.

This policy does NOT enable complaints related to the following:

- a. Decisions by the Centre County Board of Commissioners made in a publicly advertised meeting
- b. Actions of staff members employed by contracted service providers whose actions would be subject to the policies of that service provider
- c. Internal employee complaints
- d. Legal proceedings

In addition, this policy is distinct from, and is not the means to make:

- a. Requests for service
- b. Submittals of Right to Know requests
- c. General inquiries of interest in a program or service

Section 3: Provisions

This policy provides for the timely, respectful and thorough review of a complaint upon receipt of a fully completed Centre County Accessibility Complaint Form.

Complaint investigators will be impartial and selected based upon their association with and knowledge of the program, service or facility that has been referenced in the complaint. Typically, department heads will fill the role of an impartial investigator unless the complaint is made against a department head in which case the County Administrator or designee will conduct the investigation. At no time shall an employee(s) named in the complaint be responsible for the investigation.

Section 4: Registering a Complaint

Centre County Government offers its citizens many services. Should a resident believe that he or she has a valid objection against a County program, service, or facility, they are afforded the opportunity to file a complaint with the County.

- a. **Step One** -- Verbal Communication: It is the responsibility of the complainant, (the person submitting the complaint), or his or her representative, to first speak with the County department head responsible for the objectionable program, service, or facility in an effort to resolve the issue in the most efficient manner. Language services will be made available to the complainant, upon request. Department specific procedures will dictate if documentation of complaint resolution by verbal communication is required.
- b. **Step Two** – Written Complaint: Should the complainant not reach satisfaction through verbal communication with the responsible department personnel, they may file a written complaint using the Centre County Accessibility Complaint Form.
- c. **Step Three** – Investigation: An investigation, as may be appropriate, shall follow the filing of a written complaint. The investigation will be conducted by an impartial investigator. A written determination as to the validity of the complaint and description of its resolution, if any, shall be issued to the complainant in a timely manner; if the complainant provided their contact information on the Accessibility Complaint Form.

- d. Utilization of this complaint procedure is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.

Section 5: Procedures for Submittal of Written Complaints

- a. **Filing a Written Complaint:** In cases where resolution cannot be achieved through verbal communication, complaints will be accepted on the Centre County Accessibility Complaint Form. Directions for submittal are included on the form.

- b. **Receipt and Acknowledgement:** The Centre County Administrator or designee will record the date the complaint was submitted and forward a copy of the complaint to the selected investigator. Within three (3) business days of receipt of the complaint, the selected investigator shall acknowledge, to the complainant, that the complaint was received, is complete and under consideration; OR the complaint is incomplete and returned for additional information.

Incomplete complaint forms will not be refused but will require additional input by the complainant in order to move the complaint forward for consideration.

Should a complainant wish to remain anonymous, their complaint will be investigated but no acknowledgement of receipt, investigation or outcome will be made available to the complainant.

- c. **Consideration / Investigation:** The designated investigator shall review the issues identified by the complainant and in doing so may:

- i. Review the County's relevant procedures and policies
- ii. Review relevant program requirements
- iii. Review existing file documents (electronic and paper copy)
- iv. Interview employees or others involved in the issue
- v. Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint and/or improve County operations

- d. **Decision:** Decisions will typically be made within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a complete complaint. If no decision can be made within 30 calendar days, County personnel shall notify the complainant (provided contact information was disclosed) of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided. When a decision is reached, the Department Head or his/her designee shall provide a response in writing to the complainant. The response shall include:

- i. Whether the complaint was substantiated
- ii. If the complaint was not substantiated, provide reason(s) for the decision
- iii. Actions the County has or will take as a result of the complaint

- e. **Record:** The selected investigator shall file a copy of the complaint, the decision and the resolution with the County Administrator or designee in a timely manner.

Section 6: Related Policies / Forms / Documents:

Centre County Language Access Policy

Centre County Public Accessibility Policy (Section 504)

Centre County Public Accessibility Complaint Form

ADA Grievance Process -- Employee

Repealer:

All prior policies and/or directives or parts of policies and/or directives that are contrary to the provisions of this policy are hereby repealed to give this policy full force and effect.