Patient Complaints and SAFE Event Reporting

What is a Complaint? What is a Grievance?

A complaint is a verbal expression of dissatisfaction with some aspect of care and or services.

A grievance is a formal or informal written (written communication is always considered a grievance) or verbal complaint (when a verbal complaint about patient care is not resolved at the time of the complaint by staff present) by a patient or a patient’s representative regarding any of the following:

- The patient’s care
- Abuse and neglect
- Issues related to the organization’s compliance with CMS Hospital Conditions of Participation
- A Medicare beneficiary billing complaint related to rights and limitations provided in 42 CFR 489

All formal and informal grievances will be investigated to determine if opportunities exist to improve processes and systems related to the issues reported.

If you receive a complaint from a patient, family member or visitor refer to CVMC’s Patient Complaint and Grievance Policy: A-125

Sometimes a patient, family member or visitor will submit a complaint or grievance during any episode of care that should also be considered a safety event and followed up for opportunities to improve CVMC’s systems or care processes.
Patient Complaints and **SAFE Event Reporting**

Safety Tips To Consider for Every Complaint or Grievance

- Be vigilant for and aware of issues that affect patient safety.

- Report ‘Actual’ events
  - This includes events that reach the patient regardless of whether or not harm occurred.

- Report ‘Near Miss’ Events
  - This includes events that are caught before reaching the patient.

- Report ‘Systems Issues and Unsafe Conditions’
  - These are situations that cross more than one department or pose a risk to patient safety—even if no ‘event’ has yet occurred.

- If you are unsure whether or not to report something, err on the side of reporting. There is no down-side to reporting an event.

- SAFE reporting is everyone’s responsibility!

- The **Event Type Quick Reference Guide** is available in the Quality Management Department and will be distributed to all departments. If you need help entering an event connect with your departmental leader or call the Quality Management Department for assistance.

- If the event involves a patient - even if there is no harm to the patient - choose ‘Patient’ at the top of the event report.

*If in doubt, fill a SAFE out...*
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**Responsibilities of Staff Who Receive a Complaint**

- Listen to the person whose has the complaint and offer a sincere apology for any inconvenience they experienced or perceived.
- Do what you can to promptly fix the problem or process.
- Use Service Recovery Tools available via department managers or the Quality Management Department.
- **A complaint is a grievance if a care complaint:**
  - cannot be resolved at the time of the complaint by staff present
  - is postponed for a later resolution
  - is referred to another staff member for later resolution
  - requires investigation
  - requires further actions for resolution
  - a formal grievance is requested
- Notify your manager or supervisor and submit a “Complaint Management Contact Sheet” to the Quality Management Department or call the Quality Management Department X4350 for assistance.
- **Enter the complaint into the SAFE event reporting system if the complaint raises a safety concern.**
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Responsibility of Management Who Receive a Complaint

• Review the complaint and work with the staff to resolve the issue at the time of the complaint.
• If you cannot resolve the problem or if a formal grievance is requested, submit a “Complaint Management Contact Sheet” to the Quality Management Department or call the Quality Management Department X4350 for assistance.
• **Enter the complaint into the SAFE event reporting system if the complaint raises a safety concern.**
• Investigate the complaint, take appropriate action and provide a written response within 5 days of receipt of the grievance.

• **NEW PROCESS:** The manager will provide a written response within 5 days to the Quality Management Department for final review. This response will be mailed UPS to the patient or patient representative by the Quality Management Department within 7 days of the grievance.

• **NEW PROCESS:** If the investigation cannot be completed within 7 days, the manager will provide a written response indicating follow up will be provided within 21 days. This response will be sent to the Quality Management Department for final review and will be mailed UPS to the patient or patient representative by The Quality Management Department within 7 days of the grievance.

***Complaint Management Contact Sheet” and response letter sample can be found attached to the Grievance Policy A-125***
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Examples of possible complaints or grievances (while patient is in the care of CVMC) that should be entered into the SAFE system by category are:

- Visitor events - Fall - (example: Visitor fell due to wet floor)
- Other MISC - Confidentiality disclosure (example: Private health information was given to an unapproved person.)
- Unsafe condition - security issues (example: Wallet was stolen.)
- Unsafe condition – inappropriate staff behavior: (example: “A caregiver touched me inappropriately.”)
- Care coordination, communication – delay in transfer (example: “I waited 6 hours to be discharged.”)
- Equipment devices – broken item (example: “My wheelchair was broken”.)
- Communication inadequate – With other providers within a patient care area (example: “My requests are not followed through with”.)
- Food nutrition-food allergy (example: “My mother is allergic to gluten and received bread on her tray.”)
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**Examples** of possible complaints or grievances (after patient discharged) that should be entered into the SAFE system are:

- Care coordination - communication inadequate - (example: failure to remove an Intravenous or urinary catheter before discharge)
- Other MISC – Discharge against medical advice (example: elderly patient returned home alone)
- Medication related – wrong drug (example: “I was not supposed to be on this medication”)
- Care coordination/communication – message handling response problem (example: “I was supposed to get an X-ray before I left the hospital”).
- Care coordination/communication – referral consult problem (example: “The Home Health nurse did not come to visit me.”)
- Medication related – pain management: (example: “My husband was in extreme pain by the time we got home.”)
- Equipment, devices – equipment unavailable: (example: The oxygen tank was not delivered on time.)

**IF IN DOUBT, FILL A SAFE OUT**