

### **Information about Grievances when you are a Patient at the VPCH:**

- How to file a grievance
- How file an appeal of a response to your grievance
- How the grievance process works

Complaints and concerns about service or treatment that you receive while at VPCH may be brought to any hospital staff member at any time. Hospital staff will attempt to resolve all complaints and concerns as soon as possible. When a complaint cannot be resolved by staff, or the resolution is not satisfactory to you, you may file a grievance with the hospital. You may also ask a friend, relative, advocate or other representative to file a grievance for you.

### **To file a grievance**

To file a grievance, you must write out a statement of your complaint or concern. You should include as much information as possible and include what you would like the hospital to do about your complaint or concern. If you need help writing your grievance, you can ask someone for help. The people that can help you include: VPCH staff, the VPCH Patient Representative (phone number: (1-802-479-8716), your lawyer (Vermont Legal Aid or another attorney), someone from Disability Rights Vermont, a friend or a relative. You may also file a grievance after you have been discharged.

You may contact Disability Rights Vermont (contact information below) for assistance at any stage of the grievance process by calling: 1-800-834-7890.

After you have written your grievance, you should send it to the VPCH Quality Department. Any member of the staff can provide you with an envelope and will ensure that the grievance gets mailed to Quality.

Within 7 business days from the day that the Quality Department receives your grievance you will usually get a written response about your grievance from a member of the VPCH management team, informing you of the steps taken on your behalf to investigate the grievance and the results of the grievance process. If your grievance requires more time to review or investigate, you will receive a letter letting you know that the response from the hospital will be sent to you as soon as possible and within 21 days.

### **Appeal to the Chief Executive Officer**

If you are not satisfied with the response to your initial grievance, you may appeal the response to the Chief Executive Officer of the hospital. You appeal by sending a letter to the Quality Department explaining what happened and why you are not satisfied with the response to your grievance. You need to send the appeal letter within 10 days of the day you receive the initial response. If for some reason you cannot appeal the decision within 10 days, you may mail a request for more time to the Quality Department.

Within 10 business days of receiving your appeal, the Chief Executive Officer will schedule a meeting with you to discuss your complaint or concern. You may bring a friend or

another representative with you to this meeting. The meeting will be informal but you are allowed to ask questions of staff members, present any information that you want to and have the meeting tape recorded. Within 10 business days of the meeting, the Executive Director or his/her designee will send you a written response to your appeal.

**Appeal to the Commissioner**

If you are not satisfied with the response by the Chief Executive Officer, you may submit an appeal to the Commissioner of Mental Health. To appeal to the Commissioner, you should send a letter to the Quality Department explaining what happened and why you are not satisfied with the response. You must send the appeal letter within 10 days of the day you receive the response from the Chief Executive Officer. If for some reason you can not appeal the decision within 10 days, you may mail a request for more time to the Quality Department.

Within 10 business days of receiving the notice of appeal, the Commissioner, or someone designated by the Commissioner, will schedule a meeting with you to discuss your complaint or concern. You may bring a friend or another representative with you to this meeting. The meeting will be informal but you will be allowed to ask questions of staff members, present any information, and have the meeting tape recorded. Within 10 business days of the meeting, the Commissioner or his/her designee will send you a written response to your appeal.

VPCH staff will provide you with a copy of the VPCH Grievance and Appeal Policy and Procedure at your request.

The VPCH Director of Quality is available to discuss and answer any questions you may have about the grievance process.

**Other places you may file a complaint**

In addition to filing a grievance or instead of filing a grievance, you may, at any time, file a grievance directly with the Department of Mental Health, the Vermont Board of Health and/or the Vermont Medical Practice Board by forwarding the grievance to:

Commissioner  
Department of Mental Health  
Redstone Building  
26 Terrace Street  
Montpelier, VT 05609-1101  
1-(802) 828-3824

Board of Health/ Board of Medical Practice  
Vermont Department of Health  
P.O. Box 70  
Burlington, VT 05402-0070  
1-(802) 657-4220; (800) 745-7371

You may complain about abuse, neglect, or exploitation by contacting the state agency responsible for investigating such complaints by writing or calling:

**Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living  
Division of Licensing and Protection  
103 South Main Street, Ladd Hall  
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-2306  
1-(800) 564-1612**

**If you are concerned about the quality of your care or premature discharge you may complain to the Northeast Health Care Quality Foundation (NHCQF). NHCQF is the organization charged with reviewing the appropriateness and quality of care rendered to Medicare beneficiaries in hospital settings. Concerns or complaints can be sent to:**

**NHCQF  
15 Old Rollinsford Road, Suite 302  
Dover, NH 03820-2830  
1-800-772-0151 (toll free) or 1-603-749-1641  
1-603-749-1195 (Fax)  
[www.nhcqf.org](http://www.nhcqf.org)**

**If you have a concern about patient safety or the quality of care, you may complain to The Joint Commission at:**

**Office of Quality Monitoring  
The Joint Commission  
One Renaissance Boulevard  
Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois 60181  
1-800-994-6610**