

SALISH AND KOOTENAI HOUSING AUTHORITY GRIEVANCE POLICY

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the procedure by which the Salish and Kootenai Housing Authority (Housing Authority) shall insure that all customers utilizing the services of the Housing Authority are given the opportunity to dispute Housing Authority action or failure to act, and to receive within a reasonable period of time, a response to the dispute. A copy of the Grievance Policy shall be displayed in the Housing Authority office and made available to customers upon request.

B. APPLICABILITY

The Salish and Kootenai Housing Authority Grievance Policy shall be applicable to all disputes between a customer and any program under the administration or control of the Housing Authority with the exception of the Transitional Living Center and is only applicable to disputes regarding the interpretation or implementation of established policy. The Policy shall not be applicable to disputes among individuals not involving the Housing Authority, and shall not be used as a method of initiating changes in Housing Authority policy.

C. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions are applicable:

1. **Grievance** shall mean any formal complaint or dispute which a customer may have with respect to the Housing Authority action, or failure to act, in accordance with the individual lease, agreement, contract or in accordance with any other Housing Authority regulations or policies.
2. **Grievable Actions** will be those actions that are taken against a customer or individual by the Executive Director or staff. Those actions that are taken in accordance with Federal Statutes and Regulations are not grievable.
3. **Customer** shall mean any person receiving services from any program under the administration or control of the Housing Authority.
4. **Customer Request Form** shall mean formal documentation, in written form, of a grievance either using a Customer Request Form or a letter signed and dated by the customer. The staff at the Housing Authority office will assist customers in preparation of the Customer Request Form as needed.
5. **Conciliation Meeting** shall mean an informal meeting between the Executive Director of the Housing Authority, or his designee, and the customer in an attempt to resolve a grievance prior to scheduling a Grievance Hearing before the Board of Commissioners.
6. **Grievance Hearing** shall mean a formal presentation to the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners of all facts pertaining to a grievance.

The request for Grievance Hearing does not require the customer to resubmit all of the details of the grievance as this information will have been presented in the Customer Request Form previously filed with the Housing Authority.

D. DOCUMENTATION

1. A Housing Authority Customer Request Form shall be completed, dated and signed by the customer whenever there is a grievance, as the initial step in the grievance process. A letter requesting action and signed and dated by the customer may substitute for a Customer Request Form.
2. The Housing Authority staff shall keep a record of all formal and informal individual grievances, requests for assistance, or other communications requesting a review of Housing Authority action or failure to act. All Customer Request Forms will be date stamped upon receipt and logged in and distributed to the appropriate staff. Customers must receive a response to the Customer Request Form within 10 working days from the date it was received.
3. Any action taken to respond to an individual grievance shall be recorded with an indication of results achieved and further action required or anticipated.
4. Any Grievance Hearing before the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority will be documented in the minutes, plus any explanatory materials to be entered in the record kept regarding the appeal.

E. INFORMAL SETTLEMENT OF GRIEVANCES

1. The Housing Authority staff shall make every effort to respond to individual grievances, problems, requests for assistance, requests for action or appeals of decisions so as to avoid the necessity for formal Customer Requests and Grievance Hearings before the Board.
2. If requested, the staff shall assist individuals to document grievances and to assist in the completion of a Customer Request Form.
3. Staff shall respond to Customer Request Forms within ten working days of receipt of the Customer Form..

F. GRIEVANCE HEARING

1. If the customer is not satisfied with the result or findings of the Informal Settlement of the Customer Request Form, a request for a Grievance Hearing before the Board of Commissioners can be made. The request must be made within ten working days of receipt of a formal Housing Authority response to the Customer Request Form. A Grievance Hearing may not be requested until the customer has filed a formal Customer Request Form and the Housing Authority has made a response.
2. If a hearing is not requested within the required ten working days, the matter in dispute will not be considered further and the customer will be required to adhere to the action specified in the original Customer Request Form response.
3. When a request for a Grievance Hearing is received, a hearing will be scheduled for the next available Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

4. If the customer requesting the hearing does not appear or is not excused from appearing, for reasons deemed valid, the customer will be required to adhere to the decision of the Board.
5. At a formal Grievance Hearing before the Board of Commissioners, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. The hearing will take place during the Appointment/Correspondence section of the Board agenda.
 - b. All visitors and guests other than the Executive Director, or designees, staff personnel, and the recording secretary, will be requested to leave the meeting room while the hearing is in progress. The customer has the right to be represented by another person of their choice at the hearing.
 - c. There will be an opportunity for both the Housing Authority and the customer to make opening statements, present witnesses and documents and ask questions of the other party.
 - d. The format of the hearing shall not imply that the burden of proof is more on one side than the other. The purpose of the hearing is to present all information required in order to allow a decision by the Board based on the merits of the grievance.
 - e. The Board will make a decision on the grievance at the conclusion of the Regular Meeting. The Housing Authority will transmit the decision within 24 hours to the customer both orally and in writing.
 - f. The decision shall be binding on all parties involved.

G. PAYMENT AND DEPOSIT OF RENTOR MONTHLY PAYMENTS DURING GRIEVANCE PROCESS

When a grievance involves payment of rent or monthly payments or other charges, the customer may not withhold payment pending a response to a Grievance Hearing by the Board of Commissioners. The customers must make all payments for rent or other charges when due. The Housing Authority shall place these moneys in its accounts and shall not use them for any purpose until a Grievance Hearing is held and a decision is rendered.

Approved by the Salish and Kootenai Housing Authority Board of Commissioners at a Regular Meeting held November 15, 2016.