



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES**

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**Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)  
Formal Complaint System  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**What is a formal complaint?**

A formal complaint is a statement by a person receiving DDA supports can make when they are unhappy about the services and supports they are getting. It also can be about other problems the person may have with the rules or actions of DDA, DDA staff, Providers, or Providers' staff.

**Who can file a formal complaint?**

A formal complaint can be filed by a person who receives DDA supports, their guardian, or other legal decision-maker. Family members, friends, advocates, and other people can also file a formal complaint for the person, if they have the person's permission to do so.

**Is there a time limit for when you can file a formal complaint?**

Yes. Formal complaints usually must be made within 90 days after the problem happened. However, if you show that there is a really good reason for missing the deadline, the formal complaint may still be accepted.

**What if your formal complaint is about a Provider?**

Each DDA Provider has a Formal Complaint Process. If you want to file a formal complaint about a Provider, you usually must use the Provider's Formal Complaint Process first. You can ask your Provider for information on how to file a formal complaint using its process. If you disagree with how the Provider decides your formal complaint, you can use DDA's Formal Complaint Process to get the Provider decision reviewed.

**What if you want to make a formal complaint about a Provider, but you are afraid of how the provider will treat you if use their Formal Complaint Process?**

If you are afraid, you can let the DDA Complaint System Coordinator know, and you may be able to make your formal complaint with DDA instead.

**What if your formal complaint is about DDA?**

If DDA denies, delays, decreases, or ends the service and supports you receive, you can file a formal complaint with DDA. Also, you can file a formal complaint with DDA if you are unhappy about how you have been treated by DDA or are unhappy about a DDA policy.

**How do you file a formal complaint with DDA?**

You can file a formal complaint about DDA in-person, by phone, email, or mail to:

**D.C. Department on Disability Services, ATTN: DDA Formal Complaint System,  
250 E Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024,  
202-442-8686, [dds.complaints@dc.gov](mailto:dds.complaints@dc.gov).**

When you file a formal complaint with DDA, be as clear as you can about what the problem is, who or what caused it, when it happened, and how you want the problem to be fixed. You can choose anyone to help you file a formal complaint, including a supporter, family member, friend, or the DDA Complaint System Coordinator. When you file be sure to get a copy of your formal complaint, with the date and time you made it.

## **What if your DDA formal complaint is about abuse, neglect, or exploitation?**

If your formal complaint could be a Serious Reportable Incident (SRI), DDS will place an administrative hold on your formal complaint, and send your formal complaint to DDA's Incident Management and Enforcement (IMEU). If IMEU finds the formal complaint to be a SRI, IMEU will investigate. After that investigation is done, the DDA Complaint System Coordinator will contact you. If your issue has not been resolved in the course of the investigation, the complaint process will resume at that time.

## **When will DDS respond to your formal complaint?**

When you file a formal complaint with DDA, DDS has 14 days to perform an "Internal DDS Review" and respond. DDS will try to resolve the issue during the 14-day period. Once the Internal DDS Review is complete, DDS will send you a letter with the result.

## **What if you are unhappy with the Internal DDS Review?**

If you are unhappy with the Internal DDS Review, you can ask for an "External Review." Information on how to request an External Review will be attached to the DDS Internal Review decision letter. If you want to request an External Review, you must do so within 14 days after getting the Internal Review decision letter. If your formal complaint was administratively closed, then you can ask the DDA Complaint System Coordinator for "Reconsideration" within 14 days of getting the closure notice. If you ask for Reconsideration, DDS will issue its decision within 14 days of your request. That decision is a DDS Final Decision that you can appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH).

## **What is an External Review?**

An External Review is a process where an "External Reviewer," who is not employed by DDS or a Provider agency, looks at and tries to resolve your DDA formal complaint. Over 45 days, the External Reviewer will work with you and others involved, using different approaches, such as negotiation, mediation, or a fact-finding hearing. If a fact-finding hearing is held, after listening to both sides, the External Reviewer will make recommendations to the DDS Director about what decision to make on the formal complaint. The External Reviewer will write a report with the recommendations, and you will get a copy. You have 17 days from the date of the External Reviewer's report to send comments to DDS. The Director must make a decision within 22 days of receiving the External Review's report. That decision is a DDS Final Decision that you can appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH).

## **What if you are unhappy with the DDS's Director Final Decision?**

If you disagree with the DDS Director's Final decision, you may appeal it to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). Information about how to appeal to OAH will be attached to the DDS Director's Final Decision.

## **What is the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)?**

OAH is a special kind of court that holds hearings and decides appeals about final DC governmental decisions. You can learn more by visiting the OAH Resource Center (441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 450N, Washington, DC 20001) or checking out the OAH website ([oah.dc.gov](http://oah.dc.gov)).

## **Is the DDA Formal Complaint System the only way you can address problems about DDA?**

No, there are other ways to make a complaint if you do not want to file a formal complaint. 1. Contact your Service Coordinator or their supervisor. 2. You can use DDA's Customer Service Line (202-442-8686). If your problem has to do with DDA denying, delaying, reducing, or ending Medicaid or Medicaid Waiver services, you can appeal straight to OAH without having to make a formal complaint first.