



Recovery Housing Complaint Process

On behalf of the State of Rhode Island's Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) and the National Association of Recovery Residences (NARR), RICARES investigates complaints regarding certified recovery houses from residents and from the community.

Confidentiality during the Complaint Process

- We are not able to investigate anonymous complaints.
- We will keep the complaint process as confidential as possible. We will not reveal the name of the complainant. However, it must be noted that to resolve the complaint RICARES will need to reveal the nature of the complaint to the Owner/Operator. Because of this disclosure, the Owner/Operator may discern the identity of the complainant.
- We expect Recovery House Owners/Operators and staff to hold the complaint process and the investigation confidential.

Oversight and Conflict of Interest

- RICARES staff, other than the dedicated Recovery Housing Program staff members and the Executive Director, are siloed from the complaint process.
- Possible actions for the violation of the NARR Code of Ethics or Standards include but are not limited to:
 - Written Notification: A Written Notification with a request for Corrective Action and follow-up review
 - Suspension: Suspension with request for Corrective Action and follow-up review
 - Revocation of Certification
 - Denial of Application for Certification

Complaint Process

- A dedicated staff person will receive and investigate complaints.
- It's important to follow the complaint procedures carefully and to document all related facts, dates, and information when filing a report.

Step 1: Filing a Complaint

A complaint can be filed online at www.ricares.org or by calling 401.475.2960 and requesting to speak to a member of the recovery housing program staff.

Step 2: Submission

The completed Complaint Form will be submitted online at www.ricares.org

Step 3: Notification of Receipt

The Department of BHDDH, Owners/Operators, and the person who filed the complaint will be notified by RICARES within 48 business hours of submitting the complaint form. This notification confirms that we have received a complaint and will include the complaint category selected.

The categories on the complaint form are:

1. Unexpected Death
2. Serious Injury
3. Assault/Battery
4. Missing/Diverted Medication
5. Environmental Emergency
6. Theft
7. Fire
8. Serious Staff Misconduct
9. Other NARR Standard Violations

We are only authorized to handle complaints that are alleged violations of the NARR standards. Allegations/complaints not related to the NARR standards should be reported to the QI/QA division at the Department of BHDDH (401-462-2629). Allegations of criminal conduct should be reported to the police.

Step 4: Investigation

RICARES will contact and interview people that the complainant identifies as witnesses. RICARES will also contact the Owners/Operators and interview all relevant and present parties. RICARES will consult with subject matter experts and seek expertise should we need it. Ideally, the investigation will be completed within 30 days, however, some complaints may take longer. We aim to resolve all complaints in a timely fashion.

Step 5: Share Findings

Once the investigation is complete RICARES will provide a report to BHDDH, Owners/Operators, and the person that filed a complaint. This report may also include recommendations for change.

Step 6: Appeals, if applicable

Owners/Operators, and the person that filed the complaint, may initiate a written appeal of any action taken in a timely manner of the findings and receipt of the written report (see FAQ's below).

FAQ's about Filing a Complaint:

Q: Why won't RICARES investigate anonymous complaints?

A: It is impossible to determine the facts accurately for all parties if the complaint is anonymous.

Q: Is the process confidential?

A: Yes, as much as possible.

All documentation that is generated or received during an investigation shall be confidential from the public. Sharing the details of the complaint with Owners/Operators may discern the identity of the person who filed a complaint. To the best of our ability, the identity and all identifying information will remain confidential.

Q: What happens during an investigation?

A: The investigator will speak with you about your complaint. RICARES will then determine whether to proceed with the investigation of the complaint or we will make recommendations for another avenue of resolving the complaint. If we proceed with the complaint, we will then interview all relevant parties. In normal circumstances, the investigation will be completed within 30 days.

Q: What happens when the investigation is complete?

A: Owners/Operators and the complainant will be notified of our findings.

Q: Is there an appeal process?

A: Yes, there is. Complainants and Owners/Operators can both file an appeal.

Q: What happens during an appeal?

A: We offer multiple modes of appeal so that all people can arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. Ask for an Appeal Conversation appointment with Sarah Edwards sedwards@ricares.org . If the resulting conversation does not meet the needs of RICARES, the Owner/Operator, or the complainant, then a formal appeal must be written and submitted to the RICARES Board of Directors. The appeal must include a written summary and the evidence you would like the Board to consider sent to RICARES, 166 Valley St., Providence, RI 02909 or emailed in one pdf document to sedwards@ricares.org. If all parties are still not satisfied, then the BHDDH Contracts Administrator will convene a hearing of all parties and make a ruling.

Q: Under what authority does RICARES operate?

A: For Recovery Housing Certification, we operate as the affiliate of the National Alliance of Recovery Residences. RICARES does not operate any recovery residences. For Complaint Investigations, we operate on behalf of the R.I. Department of BHDDH with whom RICARES is contracted to certify recovery residences in RI, according to NARR standards, under the state statute S 2579.