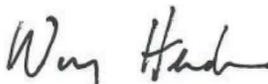


To: DCF DMCPs Administrator  
DCF Area Administrators  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Group Home Providers  
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors  
Private Child Placing Agencies  
Residential Care Center Providers  
Shelter Care Providers  
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Wendy Henderson  
Division Administrator 

Re: **County Child Welfare and Youth Services Complaint Process**

**PURPOSE**

This memo describes the procedural requirements for county human and social service departments to handle complaints received for child welfare and community-based youth service cases. The memo defines which persons can file a formal complaint and the issues that can be reviewed through the complaint process. This memo replaces DCFS Memo Series 2003-07. This memo also describes how the Department of Children and Families (DCF) reviews child welfare and youth service complaints received at the state level.

**BACKGROUND**

Families can find involvement in child welfare and youth services stressful and may object to how services are provided by county human and social service departments and DCF's Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). Local child welfare and youth services agencies including DMCPS were required by DCFS Memo Series 2003-07 to have formal complaint procedures in place and inform persons of the complaint procedure, so persons are aware of how to resolve their complaints.

Persons can also file complaints about local child welfare and youth services agencies with DCF as the state agency overseeing child welfare and community-based youth services. DCF practice is to require persons with complaints to complete the local agency complaint procedure before DCF regional office staff will review their concerns.

DCF procedure for persons with concerns about child welfare services provided by DMCPS is described on the following DCF webpage: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/complaint>.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

DCF convened a workgroup of county agency and DMCPs staff to review the child welfare and youth services complaint procedure. The workgroup made policy recommendations for the local agency complaint process. Based on those recommendations, the attached Appendix A – Requirements for Local Agency Complaint Process explains the requirements for the local agency complaint process.

The workgroup also developed the attached Appendix B - Model Complaint Procedure and Appendix C - Model Complaint Form for local agency use. Counties may use the Appendix B - Model Complaint Procedure and Appendix C – Model Complaint Form or their own local procedure and form, provided the local procedure and form includes content similar to the model procedure and form.

DCF also clarified the procedure for state review of complaints about local agencies. The attached Appendix D – State Process for Review of Complaints explains the state process for reviewing child welfare and youth services complaints.

## **ACTION SUMMARY**

Local agencies must have a formal complaint procedure for child welfare and youth services. Agencies must provide DCF regional staff with the name of the agency complaint coordinator, their complaint procedure document and the agency’s complaint form within 60 days of issuance of this memo. Agencies must notify DCF regional office staff of changes to the agency’s complaint coordinator, procedure, or form within 30 days of the change. Agencies must provide DCF with copies of their complaint records upon request.

DCF will refer persons raising concerns about a local agency to the agency to use the agency’s complaint process. If persons have completed the entire agency complaint process, DCF will do a case review to address their concerns. The agency will be copied on DCF letters to complainants.

ATTACHMENTS:      Appendix A - Requirements for Local Agency Complaint Process  
                            Appendix B - Model Complaint Procedure  
                            Appendix C - Model Complaint Form  
                            Appendix D - State Process for Review of Complaints

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT:      DCF Area Administrator  
  Bureau of Regional Operations  
  [DCFBROCWComplaints@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFBROCWComplaints@wisconsin.gov)

MEMO WEB SITE:                    <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

## **APPENDIX A – REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL AGENCY COMPLAINT PROCESS CHILD WELFARE AND YOUTH SERVICES COMPLAINTS**

### **BACKGROUND**

Persons in families receiving child welfare or youth services may have concerns about the services provided to their families by local child welfare and youth service agencies. Extended family members and other persons with a connection to the family being served may also have concerns about the services or the welfare of the children. Case participants and other interested persons may contact local agencies to express their concerns. This policy defines what concerns must be handled by local agencies as formal complaints and the complaint procedure that local agencies must use.

The best management of child welfare and youth services to families occurs when local agencies review customer complaints and are accountable for decisions made and actions taken by the agency staff. Handling complaints and concerns at the local level assures that agency managers are informed of concerns and reinforces the agency's accountability and position of responsibility in the community. Problem solving at the local level also reinforces the local community's responsibility to support child safety and youth well-being, and local agency connections with their local community.

Families also have the option to file complaints about local agencies with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as the state agency overseeing child welfare and community-based youth services. DCF practice is to require persons with complaints to complete the local complaint procedure before DCF regional office staff will review their concerns.

Persons with complaints about a local agency are given the agency's complaint procedure by DCF and directed to the agency's designated complaint coordinator. If persons complete the full local complaint procedure and still have concerns, DCF regional office staff will review the case record and contact local agency staff to determine whether the agency followed the applicable program requirements in state statutes, administrative rules, and program standards. The state review process is explained in Appendix D - State Process for Review of Complaints.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS**

Local child welfare and youth service agencies are required to have a formal complaint procedure to resolve complaints for the following types of cases or services:

- Voluntary Child Welfare Services Under Chapter 48
- Voluntary Youth Services Under Chapters 48 or 938
- Child in Need of Protection and Services (CHIPS) Cases
- Juvenile in Need of Protection Services (JIPS) Cases
- Delinquency Cases
- Out-Of-Home Care

Local agencies are encouraged to resolve complaints informally to the extent possible. Open communication with families is the best way to resolve concerns about services and achieve positive outcomes for families. Even in situations where formal complaints are filed, persons can continue to work with agency staff to resolve their concerns informally.

In situations where persons wish to make a formal complaint about local agency services, the agency must provide persons with a written explanation of the local complaint procedure and a complaint form. The complaint procedure document must explain how the complaint will be handled by the agency, including how the person will be allowed to present verbal or written information about their complaint and the time period for the agency to respond to complaints. The complaint form must identify where complaints can be submitted and the name of the agency complaint coordinator.

Local agencies may use the Model Complaint Procedure (Appendix B) and Complaint Form (Appendix C) issued by DCF or develop their own complaint procedure documents and complaint forms. Local agencies can use their own documents, as long as the documents have similar content to the model documents.

The local child welfare and youth services complaint procedure must include the following elements:

- Written clearly with simple language and in a format friendly to the public.
- Indicate there are confidentiality requirements that limit what child welfare and youth services case information may be shared with individuals submitting a complaint. Persons who are not direct participants in the case will typically need the case participants to authorize release of information in order to receive case information.
- Complaint procedure and form documents must be readily available and given to persons upon request. If local agencies give information packets to families receiving child welfare and youth services, local agencies are encouraged to include complaint documents in the packets.
- Local agencies are encouraged to have the complaint procedure, the complaint form and the complaint coordinator contact information available on the agency website.
- Complaint procedure and form documents should be translated into Spanish and Hmong if the agency serves significant numbers of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons in those language groups.
- Agencies must offer a competent interpreter, if requested, to explain the complaint procedure to LEP persons and support LEP persons to pursue their complaints.

Local human and social service departments operate multiple programs, and those other programs have similar requirements for customer complaint procedures. Local agencies may use an agency-wide complaint procedure, form, and coordinator, as long as the agency-wide complaint process meets the requirements for child welfare and youth services complaints specified in this memo.

The complaint process may be affected by statutory and other legal provisions, such as confidentiality requirements, appeals processes, criminal prosecutions, and other litigation. The legal requirements and processes may limit the ability of local agencies to respond to complaints. Local agencies should consult with their legal representative with respect to these issues.

## **LEVELS OF REVIEW**

Local agencies are encouraged to offer child welfare and youth justice customers opportunities to informally resolve their concerns, such as talking with the supervisor of their caseworker or

the child welfare or youth services program manager. Local agencies are not required to issue written responses to informal complaints. Local agencies should include notes in the case record to indicate that the concerns were discussed with the person.

If persons request a formal review of their complaint, local agencies must offer the formal complaint process. To the extent feasible, local agencies are encouraged to offer two levels for complaint resolution, as described in this policy. DCF recognizes that a second level of complaint resolution may not be feasible for some agencies so agencies may use a single level of review in their complaint procedure.

### **FIRST LEVEL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**

The initial level complaint review should be conducted by the agency manager for the child welfare or youth services program area, the designated agency complaint coordinator, another agency manager, or other agency staff persons familiar with the child welfare or youth services program.

In situations where the agency's child welfare or youth services manager had previous informal discussions with the person about their concerns, it is advisable for the agency to have another staff person handle the first level review of the formal complaint. DCF recognizes that some agencies may have limited options for which staff persons can handle formal complaints.

The individual(s) conducting the first level review must:

1. Gather information from the case record and agency staff
2. Allow the person to present information about their complaint using one or more of the following methods: in-person, videoconference or via telephone
3. Issue a written response to the person

The local agency must offer opportunities to the person making a complaint to present information in-person or by telephone at times that are convenient to the person. If after multiple attempts to schedule a meeting/call, if the agency is unable to reach the person, the complaint may be closed.

Once a meeting/call is scheduled, if the person notifies the agency that they are unable to participate in the meeting/call, the meeting/call should be rescheduled. If the person does not notify the agency and misses the meeting/call and the person does not attempt to reschedule, the complaint may be closed.

The written response by the agency must address the specific concerns identified by the person and be issued within 60 calendar days of when the complaint was received by the agency. The 60-day time frame can be extended with mutual agreement by the person and the agency.

For local agencies that offer a second level of complaint review, if the person is unsatisfied with the initial agency response to the complaint, the person must be allowed to request a second-level review of their concerns. The agency's initial response letter must explain how the person can request a second-level review of their concerns. To request a second-level review, persons must submit a request within 10 calendar days of receipt of the initial response letter from the agency.

## **SECOND LEVEL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**

The second level review of the complaint should be done by the human or social service agency director, or another senior manager designated by the director.

The individual conducting the second level review must:

1. Gather information from the case record and agency staff, including the initial written response
2. Allow the person to present information about their complaint using one or more of the following methods: in-person, videoconference or via telephone
3. Issue a written response to the person

The written response must address the specific concerns identified by the person and be issued within 30 calendar days of when the request was received by the agency. The 30-day time frame can be extended with mutual agreement by the person and the agency.

The second level review is the final decision by the local agency on the complaint. If the person remains unsatisfied with the local agency decision, the person can request DCF to review their concerns. State Process for Review of Complaints (Appendix D) explains the process DCF uses to review complaints.

## **THIRD PARTY PARTICIPATION IN COMPLAINT REVIEWS**

The person making a complaint may request that a third party participate in the meeting/call with the local agency about their complaint, either as an advocate to support the complainant or an assistant to facilitate participation.

Local agencies may receive requests from extended family, family friends or other interested parties to participate in the complaint resolution as an advocate for the person making the complaint. Agencies should explain how third parties can obtain releases of information from the family to participate in the complaint process.

Third parties can participate as an assistant or advocate provided the person making the complaint has completed a release of information to allow the third party to have information about the case, the third party does not have a conflict with the case and the third party can participate in the complaint review in a respectful manner. The local agency can require third parties to sign a non-disclosure form to not share confidential information with other persons. The local agency has discretion to determine whether more than one third party can participate as an assistant or advocate, if the third party has a conflict of interest and can participate in a respectful manner.

If the person making the complaint has a disability or a communication limitation, the local agency must allow the person to have another person participate in the complaint process to assist the person making the complaint.

## **WHEN TO USE THE FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS**

Local agencies may receive complaints about child welfare and youth services from a broad range of persons who have an interest in the safety and well-being of children. Family members, out-of-home care providers and persons that are directly involved with the local agency in the case or are receiving services from the local agency may use the formal complaint process.

Local agencies may be contacted by other persons with concerns about the safety and well-being of children, but as explained below if those persons are not directly involved in the case or are not receiving services, local agencies do not have to offer the formal complaint process to address their concerns.

Families receiving child welfare and youth services and out-of-home care providers may have a variety of concerns about the decisions and actions of the local agency. Concerns about caseworkers and service providers, such as difficulty communicating with a worker/provider or not liking the worker/provider are routine customer service or personnel management concerns that the agency may handle informally. Local agencies are not expected to offer the formal complaint process for customer service and personnel management concerns. Those concerns may be addressed informally.

If persons have concerns about conditions specified in Family Court, CHIPS, JIPS or Delinquency Court Orders, or a court proceeding is pending in their case, persons should be advised that their legal concerns must be addressed by the court. Local agencies are not expected to use the formal complaint process to resolve legal concerns for which the court has jurisdiction.

Families receiving child welfare and youth services and out-of-home care providers may have concerns about actions taken by law enforcement and the court. Local agencies are not expected to offer the formal complaint process for concerns about law enforcement investigations, criminal charges, and prosecutions. Local agencies are also not expected to offer the formal complaint process for concerns about court decisions regarding custody, placement, visitation, guardianship, or termination of parental rights. Persons with concerns about law enforcement or court decisions can pursue their concerns with the law enforcement agencies and through the court process.

Other members of the extended family, friends of the family or other interested parties may not have direct involvement in the family case, or their involvement may be limited to only certain aspects of the case. Those other persons typically do not have a right to receive confidential case information. While those other persons may contact the local agency to express their concerns and the agency should acknowledge the concerns, agencies are not expected to offer the formal complaint process to persons that do not have direct involvement in the family case.

Concerns raised by other persons who do not have direct involvement in the case and are not receiving services from the local agency can be resolved informally and do not require a written response from the local agency. In situations where persons are not allowed to file a formal complaint, the persons should still have an opportunity to discuss their concerns informally with a local agency manager.

In situations where other persons have reported a child safety or youth well-being concern to the local agency or requested services from the local agency, those persons do have direct involvement with the agency, but their involvement with the agency is limited to only that specific aspect of the case, such as the safety or well-being report or the request for service. The opportunity for those other persons to use the formal complaint process is limited to their direct involvement with the agency.

While agencies can discuss general child welfare and youth services policies and procedures with persons who have limited direct involvement in cases, there are limits on what information can be shared with these individuals based on confidentiality requirements. As such, agencies should consult with their legal representatives to determine what information can be shared.

If local agencies have previously responded to a complaint and a person files a new complaint with substantially the same concerns, agencies are not required to offer the formal complaint process again.

### **OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

If the complaint involves Native American children that are subject to the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act, the local agency shall notify the tribe of the complaint and provide the tribe with an opportunity to be involved in the complaint resolution.

The local agency must maintain records of formal complaints and those records be made available to DCF upon request. For complaints reviewed by DCF, regional office staff will generally request copies of the person's complaint form and the agency response letter(s).

The formal complaint procedure for child welfare and youth services is separate from any appeal processes mandated in statute or administrative rule for substantiation of abuse or neglect, benefit payments or licensure. While persons seeking to resolve concerns about substantiations, Kinship Care payments, Foster Care payments, or Foster Home licensure may seek to use the local agency complaint procedure, persons are entitled to appeal substantiation, benefit, and licensing decisions directly through the designated appeal processes.

## **APPENDIX B – MODEL CUSTOMER COMPLAINT PROCESS CHILD WELFARE AND YOUTH SERVICES COMPLAINTS**

The goal of all human/social service agencies is to assure the safety and well-being of children. If you are a family member receiving child welfare or youth services, an out-of-home provider, or are directly involved with a child welfare or youth services case and have a concern with the child welfare or youth services provided by (*insert local agency name*), you have the right to express those concerns as a complaint. The agency has a responsibility to review your concerns as quickly and effectively as possible. Handling complaints at the local level helps to assure that local agencies are aware of concerns and agencies are accountable for decisions made and actions taken by agency staff. Please note this complaint process does not limit you from using other remedies that may be available to you under the law.

There are two ways your concerns can be reviewed – informally and formally.

### **INFORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS**

The best way to start resolving concerns is with the informal complaint process. The informal process is the fastest way to resolve issues and helps develop the relationship between you and your agency worker. The informal process may include talking with your agency worker, another staff person with whom you have been working, or the supervisor. You can contact the agency to request a call or meeting with agency staff to discuss your concerns.

If you do not wish to use the informal process or have tried to discuss the concerns with the agency worker and/or supervisor and the issues are not resolved, you can use the formal complaint process.

If a formal complaint is submitted, it will be handled through the formal process. You may continue to discuss the issue with the agency worker or supervisor informally while the formal complaint is being processed.

For both the informal and formal complaint process, you may request that a third party of your choice participate to help you in talking with agency staff. If you have a disability or communication limitation, you can have someone assist you with your complaint. If you want someone to be your advocate during the complaint process, the agency will decide if the third party can participate. For a third party to participate in discussions about your case, you will have to sign a release of information form to allow the agency to share information about your case. The third party must have a completed release of information to participate. The third party should not have a conflict of interest with your case. The third party must also participate in a respectful manner. The agency will let you know if the third party can participate.

### **FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS**

If you feel your concerns were not resolved through the informal process, you may file a written complaint and use the formal complaint process. To use the formal complaint process, follow the steps described below.

1. Complete the (*insert local agency*) Complaint Form explaining your concerns and what you want the agency to do to resolve your concerns.
2. Send the complaint form to the agency address listed at the bottom of the form.

The agency will contact you to schedule a time for you (and third party if applicable) to speak to the person reviewing your complaint by telephone, videoconference, or in-person to allow you to present information about your complaint. The meeting or call will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. If you do not respond to attempts to schedule the meeting or call, or if the meeting or call is scheduled and you do not participate, your complaint will be closed.

Once the complaint form is received by (*insert local agency name*), an agency supervisor, manager or complaint coordinator will be assigned to review your complaint. The review will include:

1. Reviewing the case record and other documentation related to your concerns
2. Speaking with you to gather information about your concerns and what you want the agency to do to resolve the concerns
3. Speaking with your agency worker, other agency staff and other persons (such as service providers) as necessary to gather additional information about your concerns

The complaint reviewer will respond to you in writing within 60 calendar days from the date the complaint was filed. The written response will indicate what actions the agency will take to respond to your concerns.

#### **SECOND LEVEL REVIEW OF THE INITIAL DECISION** (*if applicable for the local agency*)

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the initial review of your complaint and the local agency offers a second level of review, you may ask the agency to review your concerns at the second level. The written response for the initial review will explain the process for a second-level review, if available.

If you wish to have a second-level review of your concerns, you must submit a request to the agency within 10 days of receipt of the written response with the initial decision.

If you submit a timely request for a second-level review, the local agency director or designee will:

1. Review the complaint form you submitted and the agency response from the initial review
2. Review the case record and communicate with the agency staff involved with your case
3. Speak with you (and third party if applicable) by telephone, videoconference or in person regarding your complaint
4. Review additional information as needed to answer questions about your complaint

Following the second-level review, the local agency will respond in writing within 30 days from the date the request for a second-level review was filed. This is the local agency's final determination.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF) REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**

If after going through the local agency formal complaint process you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you can request DCF, as the state agency overseeing child welfare and youth services, to review your complaint.

**APPENDIX C – MODEL LOCAL AGENCY COMPLAINT FORM  
CHILD WELFARE AND YOUTH SERVICES COMPLAINTS**

*(Insert Local Agency Name)*

**CHILD WELFARE OR YOUTH SERVICES COMPLAINT FORM**

Use of Form: This form can be used for formal complaints about child welfare or youth services. If your complaint is related to other human services, benefit payments, HIPAA, Civil Rights, or other matters, you may need to file a different complaint form.

**INFORMATION:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Case Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you spoken to the agency worker?     yes         no

Have you spoken to the supervisor?        yes         no

Describe your concerns (if needed, use additional sheet of paper to describe your concern(s)):

Requested resolution by the agency:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Send complaint form to:        *(Insert contact information for local agency complaint officer, including name, street mailing address, telephone number and email address)*

## **APPENDIX D – STATE PROCESS FOR REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS CHILD WELFARE AND YOUTH SERVICES COMPLAINTS**

### **STATE PROCESS FOR COMPLAINTS**

When the Department of Children and Families (DCF) receives complaints about a local child welfare or youth services agency, DCF staff will contact the persons to gather information about their concerns. The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) reviews complaints about child welfare services in Milwaukee County. DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations reviews complaints about child welfare services outside of Milwaukee County and community-based youth services statewide. DCF receives complaints directly from persons and complaints may be referred to DCF from other agencies.

Persons with complaints about a local agency may contact the Governor's Office, State and Federal Legislators, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS) about their concerns. The Governor's Office generally directs DCF to respond directly on behalf of the Governor. When DCF is contacted by a State or Federal Legislator about a case, DCF provides information within the limits of confidentiality requirements and explains the local agency complaint process. Local agency complaint procedures and forms will be shared with legislators upon request so they can respond to their constituents. For complaints received by US DHHS, DCF provides information to US DHHS so they can write their own response to the person.

If the persons have not gone through the formal complaint process at the local level, DCF will refer the persons to the local agency to pursue their specific concerns. DCF's response will generally be limited to providing information about program policies that apply to the situation and resources available to the persons. If persons express interest in going through the agency complaint process, they will be given the agency complaint procedure, complaint form and contact information for the agency complaint coordinator. DCF will notify the agency that a complaint was received and whether DCF will take any further action on the complaint.

DCF review of the complaint is limited to local agency compliance with child welfare and youth services program requirements. DCF will generally not review the following:

- Complaints regarding local agency customer service and personnel management concerns. Persons will be directed to the local agency program manager to resolve those concerns.
- If the customer service or local agency personnel complaint involves allegations that the persons believe the local agency discriminated against them on the basis of race, age, gender, disability, national origin, or other protected factor under Federal and State Civil Rights Laws, DCF may investigate those complaints as a civil rights matter. As the state agency responsible for civil rights enforcement for child welfare and youth services, DCF may conduct civil rights investigations for service delivery complaints alleging discrimination.
- Complaints regarding law enforcement and criminal prosecution. Persons will be advised that DCF has no authority over criminal investigations.
- Complaints regarding actions taken by the court. Persons will be advised that DCF has no authority over court proceedings, including child custody and visitation, placements

of children outside of their homes, and termination of parental rights. Persons will also be informed that DCF cannot offer legal advice about their case.

When DCF responds to complaints, the person is sent a letter acknowledging their concerns and advising them to go through the local complaint process if they have not done so. Depending on the concerns raised by the person, such as how program policy applies to their situation, DCF's letter may respond to the program policy concerns. The local agency is copied on DCF's response letter.

Information about DCF review of child welfare and youth services complaints is on the DCF website as follows:

Milwaukee County: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/complaint>

Statewide: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/about-us/complaint/child-welfare>

### **CASE REVIEWS BY DCF**

If persons have gone through the local agency complaint process and still have concerns, they may request that DCF conduct a review of the case. DCF will review complaints related to access to services and compliance with program requirements. DCF's role is to act as a neutral party in reviewing the concerns raised by the person, conduct a fact-finding review specifically related to the identified issues, and assess whether the agency complied with the applicable statutes, administrative rules, and program standards.

In situations for persons with limited involvement in the case, DCF will review only the specific concerns related to their direct involvement with the local agency. DCF will not review other concerns that do not qualify for the formal complaint process. Persons for whom DCF will not review their concerns will be directed to the local agency program manager to resolve their concerns.

To conduct the case review, DCF regional office staff will contact the person, review the case record, contact local agency staff, and request copies of the local agency complaint record for the case. The scope of the DCF review will be limited to the specific issues identified in the local complaint process.

After gathering information, DCF will issue a letter to the person with the findings of the case review. The letter will state whether the agency followed the applicable statutes, administrative rules, and program standards.

DCF's case review letter will be issued within 30 days of when the complaint was received by DCF, unless there are delays in receiving information from the person or the local agency. The local agency will be copied on the case review letter.

If DCF determines that a local agency did not follow the applicable statutes, administrative rules, or program standards, DCF will contact the agency prior to sending out the letter to discuss the agency's case practice and what actions are necessary for the case. DCF will provide the agency with a summary of the case review, with recommendations for how to improve case practice.

Once DCF issues the case review letter, DCF will consider the complaint closed and will not do any further review of the complaint. If the person makes further contact with DCF about their concerns, unless there are new concerns not addressed in the original complaint, the person will be referred back to the local agency to address their concerns.