

Resolving Medical Concerns

Since September 1, 1994, delivery of healthcare on most TDCJ (Texas Department of Criminal Justice) facilities has been contracted to the CMHC (Correctional Managed Health Care) Committee. That Committee in turn contracts with two of the state university health sciences centers; *University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston (UTMB) and Texas Tech University Health Science Center in Lubbock (TTUHSC)*. This Managed Care Program was implemented by the Texas State Legislature through provision of the Texas Government Code 501.059. Clinical decisions are the responsibility of the university healthcare providers. The TDCJ Health Services Division monitors this care. The TDCJ Division Director for Health Services cannot order the facility healthcare staff to provide a specific plan of treatment.

Good communication is the best way to stop misunderstandings. Realizing this, the TDCJ Health Services Division's Office of Professional Standards (OPS) initiated an informal complaint process in 1999 to supplement the Offender Grievance Process. The OPS believes that the use of the complaints process is essential in resolving Offender complaints because it directs the path of communication and provides a guideline for participation between Offenders and facility healthcare providers about the resolution of health-related complaints.

The facility Practice Manager/Business Manager (UTMB-CMHC) and the Unit Health Administrator (TTUHSC-CMHC) are to facilitate the resolution of health-related complaints. The Medical Complaints Coordinator ensures that:

- Each complaint and/or grievance is recorded and directed to the appropriate department for investigation.
- Interviews take place, if necessary (Offender, staff and witnesses).
- All necessary documentation is reviewed.
- An action plan, if needed, is formulated for the resolution of the complaint.

Upon the Offender's arrival at the facility, the Medical Department is responsible for providing each offender with information in writing (Forms HSA 34 (English version) or 34-A (Spanish version), verbally when necessary on methods to access treatment and include instructions for filing a health-related grievance. Postings will be made in the Medical Department and all living areas.

When the Offender has a concern, complaint or question about a medical issue, it should first be submitted to the Medical Complaints Coordinator. *The offender may use a Sick Call Request to ask for medical services and use a form I-60 to ask for information/initiate a complaint.* The Offender also has a responsibility to present complaints in a timely manner. Treatment, as well as work restrictions, is prescribed based on the Offender's current physical condition and medical needs.

Medical departments do not have to answer complaints that use vulgar, indecent or physically threatening language.

The Bottom Line...

Both the TDCJ Health Services Division and Correctional Managed Care staff believe that healthcare can be provided to the Offender in a manner that is both conscientious and cost-effective.

Informal resolution of medical concerns through communication between the patient and the provider is a good place to begin.

If a third party (i.e., family member, advocate, etc.) has questions or wishes to inquire about an Offender's healthcare, they are welcome to do so. We strongly suggest that you attempt to contact the unit Medical Department and ask questions or discuss your concerns with them first. *Please remember that prior to the release of any confidential information, the offender MUST sign an "Authorization for Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information" (PHI) form.* This form is in effect for 180 days, unless the Offender rescinds the approval prior to that time.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of that attempt, you may contact the TDCJ Health Services Division utilizing the following ways:

Telephone

Please contact the *Family Hotline* at:
936-437-4271

If you get voicemail, please leave your name and daytime contact number, including the name and TDCJ# of the Offender you are inquiring about and someone will return your call.

Fax

If you wish to fax us an inquiry, please fax it to:
936-437-3659

Written Correspondence

If you wish to inquire in writing, our address is:

**TDCJ Patient Liaison Program
Two Financial Plaza, #625
Huntsville, Texas 77340**

Internet

Internet inquiries may be emailed to:
health.services@tdcj.texas.gov

Confidential medical information requests will not be responded to via email due to a lack of confidentiality. We will respond by U.S. mail so it is imperative that you provide a mailing address.

In ALL forms of inquiry, this office MUST have the Offender's name and TDCJ-CID# and your U.S. mailing address as well as telephone contact information.



**Texas Department of Criminal
Justice**

Health Services Division

Office of Professional Standards

Resolving Medical Concerns

Mission Statement

*It is the mission of the
Office of Professional Standards
to assure the provision of essential healthcare to
incarcerated persons in the custody of the
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
as set forth in the
Health Services Division Policy Manual;
and to strive for continuous quality improvement
of service, delivery and resource utilization.*