

# **WorkSource Pierce**

## **Program Concern & Complaint Resolution Handbook**

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**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY - EQUAL ACCESS**

WorkForce Central is an equal opportunity employer/program.  
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. Washington Relay Service – 711.

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## INTRODUCTION

This WorkSource Pierce Program Concern & Complaint Handbook provides procedural guidance to partners in the WorkSource Pierce system for processing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Wagner-Peyser Title III, and Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) program complaints in compliance with federal regulations. The content of this procedural handbook is equivalent to WorkForce Central's Program Concern & Complaint Policy. Both the Program Concern & Complaint Policy and this Handbook are located on WorkForce Central's website at <https://workforce-central.org/about/policies/>.

WorkForce Central's [Program Concern & Complaint Resolution Policy \(hyperlink\)](#), which introduces this handbook, is intended to:

- Clarify the oversight role of WorkForce Central.
- Outline minimum expectations for coordinating program complaints among partners.
- Encourage prompt resolution of all customer concerns.

This handbook builds on this framework by:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of partners and programs regarding program complaint processing.
- Providing approved procedures containing minimum state and federal requirements for processing program complaints.
- Providing examples of tools (e.g., complaint log and forms) to assist with the implementation of procedures that comply with minimum requirements.

The program complaint procedures and tools in this handbook can serve as templates for WorkForce Central to adopt or modify. These templates represent the minimum state and federal requirements and should not be modified to remove minimum state and federal requirements.

**Each section of the Handbook is intended as a stand-alone guide for program complaint procedures within its applicable program.**

**Note:** *Discrimination complaints* are processed under the WorkForce Central's Discrimination Complaint Policy, located on [WorkForce Central's website \(hyperlink\)](#).

Customers with disabilities must be provided, upon request and at no cost to them, appropriate accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services to file their program concern or program complaint. Customers who are limited English proficient (LEP) must be provided, upon request and at no cost to them, language assistance services, including oral interpretation and/or written translation to file their concern or complaint, per [29 CFR Part 38](#).

## REFERENCES

- [20 CFR 651](#), [652](#), [653](#), and [658](#)
- [20 CFR 683.600](#)
- [20 CFR 658.410](#)
- [29 CFR 38](#)
- [WIOA Section 188](#)

# 1. WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

## Purpose

To establish minimum requirements for accepting, fact-finding, resolving and referring program customer complaints and apparent violations connected to Wagner-Peyser funded services or partners.

## Wagner-Peyser Specific Definitions

**Apparent Violation** – an apparent violation of Wagner-Peyser regulations or employment-related laws by an employer, where an employee or a Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) representative observes, has reason to believe, or has received information regarding a suspected violation. If the employer has posted on the agency’s “WorkSource Washington” website within the past 12 months, the appropriate program complaint contact must attempt to resolve the apparent violation. If the employer has not posted on the agency’s website within the last 12 months, the apparent violation of employment-related law must be referred to the appropriate enforcement agency.

**Complainant** – an individual, organization, employer, association, or other entity filing a program complaint. When the complainant is an English Language Learner (ELL) all written correspondence with the complainant pertaining to the program complaint must include a translation into the complainant’s native language.

**Complaint (Wagner-Peyser)** – the submission of a written and signed allegation that Wagner-Peyser (employment service) funded programs or partners violated Wagner-Peyser regulations, or an allegation that an employer violated federal, state, or local employment-related laws. At a minimum, program complaints must contain the following information:

- Complainant’s name.
- Mailing address or other means by which the complainant may be contacted.
- Identification of individual(s) or organizations(s) responsible for the alleged issue.
- A description of the complainant’s allegations, which must include enough detail to determine the jurisdiction of the program complaint and the date(s) the alleged incident(s) took place.
- The complainant’s written or electronic signature and signature date. The signature of their authorized representative is also acceptable.

**Complaint Contact** – ESD’s Employment Connections (EC) Regional Director or the designated local staff assigned to process program complaints according to procedural requirements contained in this section of the Handbook (Wagner-Peyser Program Complaint Procedures).

**Complaint regarding an employment-related law** – a complaint filed by an individual that does not pertain to job postings placed in the last 24 months on the agency’s website by an employer, or to H2A-H2B postings made by the agency in the last 24 months, that alleges an employer, or an agency violated federal or state employment related laws.

**Complaint regarding the Employment Service (ES) regulations** – an ES complaint may be an agency-related complaint or an employer-related complaint.

- An agency-related complaint occurs in instances where a complainant alleges that ESD or a WorkSource partner, through actions or omissions, violated Wagner-Peyser regulations.

- An employer-related complaint pertains to job postings within the last 24 months, placed on the agency’s website by an employer, or H2A-H2B postings made by the agency, in which the complainant:
  - Alleges the employer violated the terms and conditions of the job posting; or
  - Alleges the employer violated an employment-related law such as wages, working conditions, child labor laws, sanitation, or housing standards, etc.).

**Determination** – a written record of the results of an investigation, the conclusions reached on the allegations of the program complaint, and how the complaint was resolved. If the complaint is against ESD, the determination includes an offer to the complainant of the opportunity to request, in writing, a hearing within 20 business days after the certified date of receipt of the notification.

**Employment-Related Laws** – those laws that relate to the employment relationship, such as those enforced by the Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division (WHD), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA, or by other Federal, State, or local agencies).

**Employment service (ES) regulations** – the Federal regulations at [20 CFR Parts 651, 652, 653, 654, 658](#), and [29 CFR Part 75](#).

**Enforcement Agency** – a body sanctioned by local, state, or national government to enforce laws. Examples include the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), Department of Labor’s (DOL’s) Wage & Hour Division (WHD), or the Washington State Human Rights Commission, etc.

**H-2A Program** – the federal program that allows agricultural employers who anticipate a labor shortage to apply for permission to hire foreign workers temporarily.

**H-2B Program** – the federal program that allows non-agricultural employers who anticipate a labor shortage to apply for permission to hire foreign workers temporarily.

**Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW)** – a migrant farmworker, a seasonal farmworker, or a migrant food processing worker.

**Resolution** – A program complaint is considered resolved when:

- The complainant indicates satisfaction with resolution.
- The complainant chooses not to elevate a complaint to the next level.
- The complainant fails to respond to a written request for information within time frames.
- The complainant exhausts the final level of review.
- The agency with jurisdiction makes a final determination on a referred complaint.

Note: If a complainant or a complainant’s representative fails to respond within the specified time frames, the complainant or the complainant’s representative may reopen the case within one year after it has been closed.

**Respondent** – the individual or entity that is alleged to have committed the violation described in the complaint.

## **Program Complaint Contact(s) Availability**

A locally designated trained program complaint contact must be available to receive program complaints regarding both ES regulations and complaints regarding employment law, in person, at all WorkSource centers and affiliates where Wagner-Peyser funded staff are located.

## **Program Complaints Received in Person**

If an individual decides to file a program complaint, the following minimum steps must be followed:

- Offer to explain the process for filing a program complaint and offer to take the complaint in writing. It is recommended, but not required, that complainants use the Program Complaint Form (available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) or the federally approved [ETA 8429, Complaint/Apparent Violation Form](#). Forms are accessible via the hyperlinks here and on [WorkForce Central's website](#). If the complainant represents several other complainants, all complainants must be named; however, only one signature is required from a complainant listed on the form. An additional sheet may be attached to the form if more space is needed. The additional sheet must be signed and dated by the complainant or the complainant's representative.
- Obtain all necessary information to resolve or refer the program complaint.
- If a program complaint is filed by a MSFW, ask the complainant to contact WorkSource before leaving the area in order to obtain change of address information. If the complaint is not resolved at the lowest level possible, the complainant will also be advised to maintain communication with the program complaint contact during the fact-finding. For MSFW, the program complaint contact is the State Monitor Advocate (SMA).
- Provide the complainant and any other complainants named on the form with a copy of the completed complaint form as confirmation of receipt.
- Process as a complaint regarding ES regulations or a complaint regarding an employment-related law, depending on jurisdiction.

## **Program Complaints Received in Writing**

When a program complaint in any form (such as a letter or e-mail) is received that is signed by the complainant (or the complainant's representative) and includes sufficient information to initiate processing, the document must be treated as if it were a properly completed program complaint form filed in person by the complainant and processed as a program complaint regarding ES regulations or as a program complaint regarding an employment-related law. Confirmation of receipt must be provided to the complainant via hard copy mailing or email.

If the complainant has not provided sufficient information to process the complaint, additional information must be requested following procedures noted in this handbook.

## **Procedures for Handling Agency and Employer-related ES Program Complaints**

The program complaint contact must, at a minimum:

- Conduct fact-finding.
- Attempt to resolve the agency related complaint within **15 working days** of receiving the complaint.
- Document all actions taken.
- If unable to resolve the complaint within **15 working days**, the program complaint contact will elevate the complaint to ESD's state contacts using information noted in this handbook. The referral will be made in writing and contain a summary of the local determination made

regarding the complaint. The local program complaint contact must inform the complainant and the respondent in writing, via mail or email, of the referral action made to the state.

### **State-Level Actions on ES Program Complaints Against the Agency or Employer**

The state program complaint contact must attempt to resolve the program complaint or, if necessary, may conduct additional fact-finding. If a resolution has not been achieved within **30 working days** from the date of referral, the state will issue a written determination via certified mail and may provide copies via email.

Complainants may request a hearing if they remain unsatisfied after a determination has been issued by the state. Hearings will be scheduled in accordance with [20 CFR 658.416\(e\)](#).

### **Procedures for Handling Employment-Related Law Complaints**

For all program complaints alleging an employment-related law violation, the program complaint contact must assist the individual by referring the complaint to the appropriate enforcement agency in writing.

All program complaints regarding an employment-related law that are referred to an enforcement agency must be logged.

No follow-up is required on referrals made to an enforcement agency on complaints regarding employment-related laws unless the complainant is an MSFW.

### **Procedures for Transferring Out-of-Area Program Complaints Regarding ES Regulations**

Program complaints regarding allegations that occurred in another part of the state must be referred to the local ESD administrator where the alleged violation of ES regulations occurred.

If a WorkSource center or affiliate receives a program complaint against more than one site, with an alleged agency-wide violation of ES regulations, the complaint may be initially processed at the state level. Therefore, such complaints must be forwarded to the state for further consideration using the information noted in this handbook.

If a WorkSource center or affiliate receives a program complaint regarding allegations that occurred in another state, the complaint must be taken in writing and submitted to the state using the information noted in this handbook for appropriate referral and processing.

### **Apparent Violations**

All apparent violations must be reported to a local program complaint contact.

The program complaint contact, in conjunction with the WorkSource office administrator, must determine if there is enough information to suggest that a violation of Wagner-Peyser (ES) regulations or employment-related law occurred. If that is the case, the relevant program complaint procedures must be followed, and the violation must be logged.

### **H-2A and H-2B-related Program Complaints**

All H-2A and H-2B related program complaints, whether received from workers referred through WorkSource or otherwise, are considered ES program complaints.

If a complainant alleges that ESD or its personnel, through actions or omissions, violated H-2A and H-2B regulations, the complaint will be processed as an [ES complaint against the agency](#).



If a complainant files a program complaint against an H-2A or H-2B employer, alleging the employer did not comply with recruitment requirements or contractual terms, the complaint will be processed as an [ES Complaint against the employer](#).

### **MSFW Program Complaints**

All MSFW program complaints and apparent violations must be handled according to the type of allegations and situations described in previous sections, with the following **exceptions**:

- For ES, apparent violations and employment-related law complaints brought by an MSFW as described in this handbook, resolution must be attempted within **five (5) working days, except** when the local program complaint contact determines such attempts may be detrimental to a complainant or may be an allegation of discrimination. In such instances, the program complaint contact must either immediately refer the complaint to the appropriate enforcement agency or to the WorkForce Central Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer or the State-Level EO Officer, as appropriate.
- All complainants must be offered the full array of employment services available at the WorkSource Center.
- MSFW program complaints referred to the state level must be sent to the State Monitor Advocate (SMA), and the MSFW complainant must be provided the SMA's contact information.
- Monthly follow-up must be conducted on all MSFW program complaints referred to an enforcement agency, as described in this handbook.
- MSFWs will be given up to **40 working days** from the date of receipt to respond to written requests for additional information, as described in [20 CFR 658.411\(b\)\(ii\)\(B\)](#).

### **Requests for Additional Information**

If a program complaint contact is unable to speak to a complainant to obtain additional information in order to resolve a program complaint, a written request for that information will be sent via certified mail or through some other form of communication where receipt can be verified. All non-MSFW complainants are allowed **20 working days** from the date of receipt to respond to a written request for additional information. If a complainant does not respond, the program complaint will be considered closed.

### **Confidentiality**

The identity of a complainant(s) or any person who provides information related to a program complaint, or who assists in a complaint investigation, will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible, consistent with applicable law and a fair determination of the complaint. The identity of a complainant may only be released upon written consent of the individual(s) providing the information regarding a complaint or apparent violation.

### **Record Keeping**

All records and correspondence related to program complaints will be maintained by the program complaint contact and kept separately from any other records. All such records must be maintained for a period of not less than three (3) years from the final date of resolution of the complaint in alignment with [29 CFR 97.42](#).

At a minimum, complaint files will include:

- An original of completed complaint form(s).



- Originals of all correspondence received/transmitted.
- A record of pertinent telephone calls.
- Copies of e-mail correspondence, if any.
- Copies of written or typed notes.
- Miscellaneous items relevant to the allegations such as copies of check stubs, work agreements, etc.

### **Program Complaint Log**

All WorkSource centers and affiliates will maintain a system for logging Wagner-Peyser program complaints and for maintaining confidentiality of complaint information. Here is an example of a [program complaint log \(hyperlink\)](#) that meets the requirements for all program complaints. At a minimum, the log must contain:

- The name of the complainant.
- The name of the respondent (employer or state agency).
- The date the program complaint is filed.
- Whether the complaint is by or on behalf of an MSFW.
- Whether the complaint pertains to ES regulations.
- If the program complaint pertains to ES regulations, whether it is employer-related or agency-related.
- If the complaint alleges an employment-related law violation against an employer, the enforcement agency to which the referral was made.
- The action taken and whether the complaint has been resolved.

If the Program Complaint Coordinator receives a discrimination complaint, they will log it as follows and then forward the complaint to the WorkForce Central EO Officer and/or the State-Level EO Officer:

- The name and address of the complainant.
- The basis of the discrimination complaint.
- A description of the complaint.
- The date the complaint was filed.
- The disposition and date.
- Any other pertinent information.

Access to the program complaint log must be limited to the Program Complaint Coordinator, the WorkForce Central EO Officer, and personnel authorized to monitor the program complaint process.

### **Program Complaint Log Coordination**

Within **one (1) month** of the end of a calendar quarter, the program complaint contact must provide the State Monitor Advocate an electronic copy of all complaints logged during that quarter.

### **Elevating Program Complaints to the State**

Program complaints must be elevated to the state for resolution or further action if:

- No decision or resolution has been reached within **15 working days for non-MSFWs and 5 working days for MSFWs** of the filing of an ES complaint against the agency.
- No decision or resolution has been reached within **15 working days for non-MSFWs and 5 working days for MSFWs** of the filing of an ES complaint against an employer.
- An ES program complaint is made against more than one WorkSource center or affiliate, with an alleged agency-wide violation as noted in this handbook, or
- A program complaint is made against a respondent from another state as noted in this handbook.

To elevate a non-MSFW program complaint, the Program Complaint Contact must submit it to the state complaint officer at:

[ESDGPSStateComplaintOfficer@esd.wa.gov](mailto:ESDGPSStateComplaintOfficer@esd.wa.gov)

or

Attention: Complaint Officer  
Employment Security Department  
PO Box 9046  
Olympia, WA 98507-9046

To elevate an MSFW program complaint, the Program Complaint Contact must email the complaint to:

[ESDGPMonitorAdvocate@esd.wa.gov](mailto:ESDGPMonitorAdvocate@esd.wa.gov)

### **Program Complaint Posters**

All WorkSource centers and affiliates that offer Wagner-Peyser funded services will display an ETA-approved [WorkSource program complaint poster \(hyperlink\)](#) in an area conspicuous and readily visible to the public.

### **Discontinuation of Services with Employers**

ESD will initiate discontinuation of services to employers consistent with [20 CFR 658 Subpart F](#).

### **References**

- [20 CFR 658 Subpart E](#) – Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System (Complaint System)
- [20 CFR 658 Subpart F](#) – Discontinuation of Services to Employers by the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service
- [20 CFR 653.113](#) – Apparent Violations
- [20 CFR 653.503](#) – Field Checks
- [29 CFR 97.42](#) – Retention and Access Requirements for Records

## 2. TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT (TAA) PROGRAM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

### Purpose

To establish minimum requirements for program complaints related to all TAA program service providers.

### TAA Specific Program Complaint Definitions

**Complaint (TAA)** – the submission of a written and signed allegation that TAA funded service providers violated TAA regulations. At a minimum, TAA program complaints must contain the following information:

- Complainant's name.
- Mailing address or other means by which the complainant may be contacted.
- Identification of individual(s) or organizations(s) responsible for the alleged issue.
- A description of the complainant's allegations, which must include enough detail to determine the jurisdiction of the complaint and the date(s) the alleged incident(s) took place.
- The complainant's written or electronic signature and signature date. The signature of their authorized representative is also acceptable.

**Complaint Contact** – EC Regional Director or designated local staff assigned to process program complaints according to procedural requirements contained in this section.

### Program Complaints Received in Person

If an individual elects to file a program complaint, the following minimum steps will be followed:

- Offer to assist the complainant in filing a complaint. It is recommended, but not required, that complainants use the Program Complaint Form (available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)). Forms are accessible via the hyperlinks here and on [WorkForce Central's website](#).
- Provide the complainant, and any other complainants identified on the complaint, with a completed copy of the program complaint form.
- Follow procedures for handling TAA complaints.

### Program Complaints Received in Writing

When a program complaint in any form (e.g., a letter) is received that is signed by the complainant and includes sufficient information to initiate processing, the document must be treated and processed as if it were a properly completed program complaint form filed in person by the complainant.

If the complainant has not provided sufficient information, additional information must be requested in alignment with procedures noted in this handbook.

### Procedures for Handling TAA Program-Related Complaints

TAA program-related complaints will, at a minimum, be processed as follows:

- Conduct fact-finding.
- Attempt to resolve the complaint within **15 working days** of receiving the complaint.

- Document all actions taken.
- If unable to resolve the complaint within **15 working days**, the program complaint contact must elevate the complaint to the state using information noted in this handbook. The referral must be made in writing and contain a summary of the local determination made. The Program Complaint Contact will inform the complainant and the respondent, in writing, of the referral action made to the State.
- The State must attempt to resolve the program complaint or, if necessary, may conduct additional fact-finding. If a resolution has not been achieved within **30 working days** from the date of referral, the state will issue a written determination via certified mail.
- The complainant may request a hearing if they remain unsatisfied after a determination has been issued by the state. Hearings will be scheduled in accordance with [20 CFR 658.416\(e\)](#).

### **Requests for Additional Information**

If a program complaint contact is unable to speak to a complainant to obtain additional information needed to resolve a complaint, a written request for additional information will be sent via certified mail or through some other form of communication where receipt can be verified. All TAA complainants are allowed **20 working days** from the date of receipt to respond to a written request for additional information. If a complainant does not respond, the program complaint will be considered closed.

### **Confidentiality**

The identity of a complainant(s) or any person who furnishes information related to, or who has assisted in an investigation of a program complaint, will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible, consistent with applicable law and a fair determination of the complaint. The identity of a complainant may only be released upon written consent of the individual(s) furnishing information regarding a complaint or apparent violation.

### **Record Keeping**

All records and correspondence related to program complaints must be maintained by the program complaint contact and kept separately from any other records. All records regarding TAA complaints and actions taken must be maintained for a period of not less than three (3) years from the final date of resolution of the program complaint in alignment with [29 CFR 97.42](#). At a minimum, files must include:

- An original of completed program complaint form(s).
- Originals of all correspondence received/transmitted.
- Copies of e-mail correspondence, if any.
- Copies of written or typed notes.
- Miscellaneous items relevant to the allegations, such as copies of check stubs, work agreements, etc.

### **Program Complaint Log**

All WorkSource centers and affiliates must maintain a system for logging TAA program complaints and for maintaining confidentiality of complaint information. Here is an example of a [program complaint log \(hyperlink\)](#) that meets the requirements for all program complaints. At a minimum, the log must contain:

- The name of the complainant.

- The name of the respondent.
- The date the program complaint is filed.
- The action taken and whether the complaint has been resolved.

If the Program Complaint Coordinator receives a discrimination complaint, they will log it as follows and then forward the complaint to the WorkForce Central EO Officer and/or the State-Level EO Officer:

- The name and address of the complainant.
- The basis of the discrimination complaint.
- A description of the complaint.
- The date the complaint was filed.
- The disposition and date.
- Any other pertinent information.

Access to the program complaint log must be limited to the Program Complaint Coordinator, the WorkForce Central EO Officer, and personnel authorized to monitor the program complaint process.

### **Elevating Customer Service-Related Program Complaints to the State**

A TAA customer service-related program complaint may be elevated to the state if:

- No decision or resolution has been reached within **15 working days** of the filing of the complaint, or
- The TAA customer service-related program complaint is made against more than one WorkSource center or affiliate, with an alleged agency-wide violation.

To elevate a TAA customer service-related program complaint to the state, the program complaint contact must submit a written notice to the state complaint officer at:

[ESDGPStateComplaintOfficer@esd.wa.gov](mailto:ESDGPStateComplaintOfficer@esd.wa.gov)

or

Attention: Complaint Officer  
 Employment Security Department  
 PO Box 9046  
 Olympia, WA 98507-9046

### **References**

- [20 CFR 617](#) – Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015
- [Public Law 114-27](#) – Trade Act of 2015
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 11-02](#), [Change 1](#) and [Change 2](#) – Trade Act of 2002
- [TEGL 22-08](#) and [Change 1](#) – Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act of 2009
- [20 CFR 658 Subpart E](#) – Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System
- [20 CFR 683.600\(c\)\(1\)](#) – Requirement for Process Dealing with Complaints
- [29 CFR 97.42](#) – Retention and Access Requirements for Records

### 3. WIOA TITLE I PROGRAM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

#### **Purpose**

To establish minimum requirements for resolving program complaints alleging a violation of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA.

#### **WIOA Specific Program Complaint Definitions**

**Complainant** – an individual, organization, association, or other entity filing a complaint.

**Local Hearing** – the process by which a local area, through an impartial hearing officer, reaches a determination in an attempt to resolve a WIOA program complaint within **60 calendar days** from the date of complaint submission. For all intents and purposes, the local hearing is the formal resolution process prescribed by WIOA for program complaints, but complaints can be resolved prior to, and in lieu of, a local hearing.

**Local Hearing Officer** – an impartial officer responsible for conducting a hearing. Impartial officers will not be directly connected to the allegations or potentially affected by the results of the determination(s).

**Program Complaint (WIOA)** – the submission of a written and signed allegation that WIOA Title I funded programs/partners violated WIOA Title I regulations. The Program Complaint Form (available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) may be used; however, at a minimum, program complaints must contain the following information:

- Complainant's name.
- Mailing address or other means by which the complainant may be contacted.
- Identification of individual(s) or organization(s) responsible for the alleged issue.
- A description of the complainant's allegations, which must include enough detail to determine the jurisdiction of the complaint and the date(s) the alleged incident(s) took place.
- The complainant's written or electronic signature and signature date. The signature of their authorized representative is also acceptable.

**Program Complaint Contact** – WorkForce Central designated staff assigned to process program complaints according to procedural requirements contained in this section.

#### **Providing Information about WIOA Program Complaint Procedures**

Information about the local WIOA program complaint procedures, including instructions on how to file a complaint, must be made available to WIOA Title I participants and other interested parties in the WorkSource System upon request.

Individuals receiving WIOA Title I funded services will be provided a [notice of their right to file a program complaint \(hyperlink\)](#). An acknowledgement of receipt will be signed by the participant and uploaded into the participant's ETO record.

Reasonable efforts must be made to ensure that information about the content of the WIOA program complaint procedures will be understood by all individuals, including youth, individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), and individuals with disabilities.

#### **Program Complaints Received in Person**

If an individual elects to file a program complaint, the following minimum steps will be followed:

- Offer to assist the complainant in filing a complaint. It is recommended, but not required, that complainants use the Program Complaint Form (available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)). Forms are accessible via the hyperlinks here and on [WorkForce Central's website](#).
- Provide the complainant, and any other complainants identified on the complaint, with a completed copy of the program complaint form.
- Follow procedures for handling TAA complaints.

### **Program Complaints Received in Writing**

When a program complaint in any form (e.g., a letter) is received that is signed by the complainant and includes sufficient information to initiate processing, the document must be treated and processed as if it were a properly completed program complaint form filed in person by the complainant.

If the complainant has not provided sufficient information, additional information must be requested in alignment with procedures noted in this handbook.

### **Program Complaint Resolution Timeline**

Complainants must be provided an opportunity to resolve program complaints without a hearing, and an opportunity for a hearing if the resolution is not agreeable to any party involved. An initial resolution should be attempted within the **first 25 calendar days** of receipt of the complaint to allow WorkForce Central sufficient time to prepare for and conduct a hearing, in the event that the complaint is not resolved. The hearing must be completed, and a determination provided, **within 60 calendar days** of receipt of the program complaint.

### **Local Hearings**

The submission of a program complaint is considered a complainant's hearing request. A hearing before an impartial hearing officer will be completed within **60 calendar days** of the filing of a complaint unless such a complaint is resolved prior to the hearing.

The complainant and the respondent must be notified in writing of the hearing prior to the date of the hearing. The hearing notice must be in writing and must contain the following information:

- Date of the notice, name of the complainant, and the name of the party against whom the complaint is filed.
- Date, time, and place of the hearing.
- Statement of the alleged violations.
- Name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

The hearing will be conducted according to the procedures established by WorkForce Central and a hearing determination will be provided to complainant within **60 calendar days** from the date of complaint submission.

### **State-Level Appeal**

An appeal may be filed with the state if:

- No local decision has been reached within **60 calendar days**, or



- Either party remains dissatisfied with the local hearing decision.

To request a state hearing, the complainant must submit a written and signed notice of appeal to:

[ESDGPStateComplaintOfficer@esd.wa.gov](mailto:ESDGPStateComplaintOfficer@esd.wa.gov);

or

Attention: Complaint Officer  
Employment Security Department  
PO Box 9046  
Olympia, WA 98507-9046

### **Confidentiality**

The identity of a complainant(s) or any person who furnishes information related to, or who has assisted in, an investigation of a program complaint will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible consistent with applicable law and a fair determination of the program complaint. The identity of a complainant may only be released upon written consent of the individual(s) furnishing information regarding a complaint.

### **Record Keeping**

All records and correspondence related to program complaints will be maintained by the program complaint contact and kept separately from any other records. All records regarding WIOA Title I program complaints and actions taken must be maintained for a period of not less than six (6) years from the final date of resolution of the complaint.

Note: While [29 CFR 97.42](#) requires a minimum three (3) year record retention schedule, WorkForce Central's record retention requirements for WIOA program complaints is six (6) years.

See [29 CFR 95.53](#) for institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, and commercial organizations.

At a minimum, files will include:

- The original program complaint filed.
- Copies of all documents related to the issues that were collected and reviewed, including all fact-finding reports and interviews.
- Copies of all correspondence and agreements with involved parties.

### **Program Complaint Log**

All WorkSource centers and affiliates must maintain a system for logging WIOA program complaints and for maintaining confidentiality of complaint information. All actions taken related to receipt, referral, or disposition of each program complaint must be recorded in a program complaint log. Here is an example of a [program complaint log \(hyperlink\)](#) that meets the requirements for all program complaints.

If the Program Complaint Coordinator receives a discrimination complaint, they will log it as follows and then forward the complaint to the WorkForce Central EO Officer and/or the State-Level EO Officer:

- The name and address of the complainant.

- The basis of the discrimination complaint.
- A description of the complaint.
- The date the complaint was filed.
- The disposition and date.
- Any other pertinent information.

Access to the program complaint log must be limited to the Program Complaint Coordinator, the LWDB EO Officer, and personnel authorized to monitor the program complaint process.

### **Binding Arbitration**

Program complaints will be processed through a binding arbitration procedure if a collective bargaining agreement covering the parties to the complaint so provides.

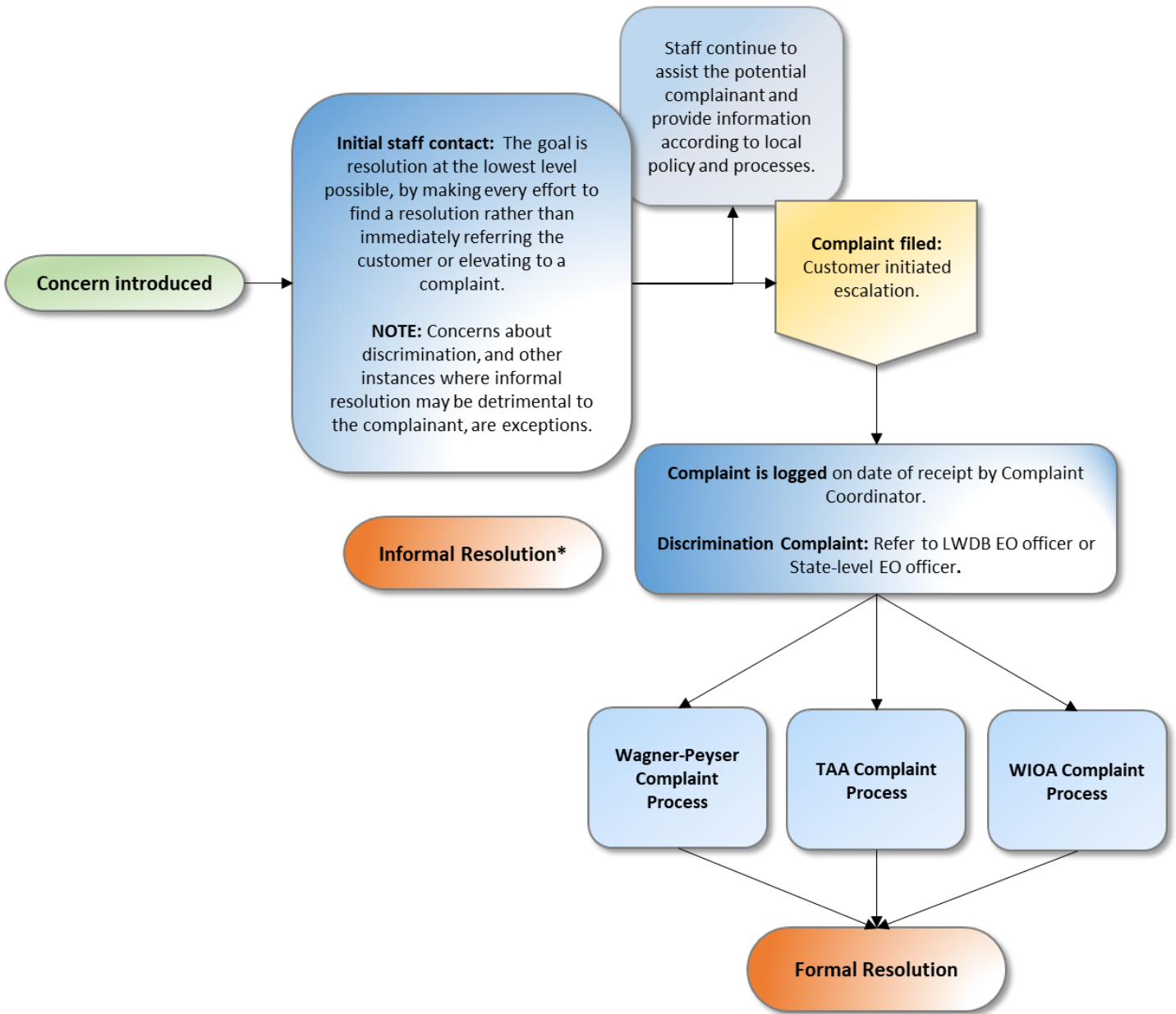
### **References**

- [20 CFR 667 Subpart F](#) – Grievance Procedures, Complaints and State Appeals Processes
- [29 CFR 97.42](#) – Retention and Access Requirements for Records
- [29 CFR 95.53](#) – Retention and Access Requirements for Records

## **4. DOWNLOADABLE TOOL EXAMPLES**

- [Sample Program Complaint Log](#)
- [Summary of Rights and Program Complaint Procedures Form](#)
- [Program Complaint Form - English](#)
- [Program Complaint Form – Spanish](#)
- [WorkSource Complaint Poster-English &Spanish](#)

# COORDINATED CONCERN AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS



\*Except in cases where informal resolution at the local level would be detrimental to the complainant or allegations of discrimination are made.

## 5. PROGRAM CONCERN AND COMPLAINT PROCESSING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- **What is the difference between a program concern and a program complaint?**

A program concern is any written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction rather than alleged violations of program regulations noted in this handbook. A written expression of dissatisfaction may also be processed as a concern except for alleged violations of program rules or laws noted in this handbook.

Concerns do not require the same formal process as a complaint (i.e., logging, tracking, etc.). Local processes may include additional requirements for processing concerns.

- **What do I do if I'm not familiar with the program or scope of the concern presented?**

Customers can't be expected to know what program they are connected to or who to ask for help. Our goal is to resolve all concerns as easily and quickly as possible. Because WorkSource customers usually don't know what program they are connected to, it's important to do your best to assist any customer to defuse situations as early as possible. If necessary, connect the customer with the appropriate partner or do some networking and get back to the customer. Program complaint submission is not required to connect the customer with the appropriate contact.

- **What should I do if a customer indicates they want to file a program complaint?**

If you haven't already, ask the customer what would resolve the issue and offer assistance. Often times the customer just wants to express a concern or receive assistance, without realizing the implications of submitting a formal complaint. That being said, a customer has the right to due process. If the customer's intent is to file a program complaint, direct the customer to the appropriate program complaint contact for further processing.

- **What should I do if a customer indicates they want to file a discrimination complaint?**

If a customer says they feel discriminated against or feels they were treated poorly because of a protected characteristic (race, gender, age, etc.), first give the customer their rights to file a discrimination complaint with the WorkForce Central EO Officer, the State-Level EO Officer, and the USDOL Civil Rights Center. After giving the customer their rights, continue to provide service to the customer. Please refer to [WorkSource System Discrimination Complaint Processing Policy](#).

- **Can a program complaint be filed via email?**

Yes. A program complaint provided in any reasonable form, (letter or email) which is signed by the complainant or their representative (written or electronic) and includes sufficient information to initiate an investigation must be treated as if it were a completed locally approved form filed in person.

- **What is an example of a written concern that is not a program complaint?**

Here's an example: an email submitted to a legislator expressing dissatisfaction with services, as opposed to an allegation of a violation of program regulations, is considered a concern.

Also, a written expression of dissatisfaction made against a WorkSource partner that administers a program or a process not covered by this handbook may be processed as a concern (and referred as appropriate), even if it contains a signature. The program complaint processes in this handbook are tied to specific funding sources, and external complaint processes exist to correspond with external funding sources.

- **Do program concerns resolved at the local level need to be logged?**

A local area is not required to track customer concerns. However, a local area may choose to document program concerns through the use of a log or some other method.

- **How can a customer file a program complaint?**

A customer may file a program complaint by submitting a locally approved program complaint form that is filled out and signed or by submitting a signed letter with sufficient information to initiate fact-finding. This handbook contains additional information regarding what must be included on complaint forms, including examples of forms that can be implemented.

- **Who has local authority over program complaint jurisdiction?**

For WIOA Title-related complaints it would be the WorkForce Central appointee (WIOA Title I complaint contact); for Wagner-Peyser and TAA-related program complaints, it would be the EC regional director or the appointee (Wagner-Peyser or TAA complaint contact).

- **May LWDBs develop a local policy and process that applies to all WorkSource sites located in a WDA?**

Yes. It is not required for each site to maintain separate policies or procedures. However, local areas may consider appointing more than one complaint contact (or other representative) for program complaints to assist with facilitation of the LWDB's process even if the LWDB is governed by one policy or procedure.

- **Is a local hearing required to respond to a Wagner-Peyser program complaint that is not resolved at the local level?**

No. If a program complaint is made against ESD and that program complaint has not been resolved within 15 working days, the program complaint contact will elevate the complaint to the state following procedures noted in this handbook.

- **For Wagner-Peyser, what is the difference between a program complaint and an apparent violation?**

An apparent violation is a violation of employment law made by an employer, where an ESD representative observes, has reason to believe, or is in receipt of information regarding a suspected violation. Apparent violations do not involve a written and signed allegation made by a customer against an employer.

Partners should be cautioned that it **is not** within ESD's role to search out potential employer violations of employment law. However, if violations of employment law become apparent, such situations must be documented and reported to the appropriate program complaint system representative for processing according to the requirements in this handbook. Those program complaint contacts will evaluate the individual circumstances of the issue presented and determine whether the allegation warrants action.

- **What happens if a complainant moves, and we don't receive a confirmation receipt?**

When using certified mail, a confirmation receipt is normally returned. If the confirmation receipt is returned, indicating the complainant no longer resides at the address provided, or the certified mail is returned as undeliverable and no other form of contact is available, the receipt or returned mail must be saved in a file as a document that confirms an attempt to make contact was made.

- **Can only ESD discontinue services or can a non-ESD entity providing labor exchange services also discontinue services?**

Per [20 CFR 658.501\(a\)](#), the state workforce agency (ESD) must initiate procedures for discontinuation of services to employers. This places the burden on ESD to initiate discontinuation of services procedures. Depending on the circumstances, non-ESD entities providing labor exchange services may, however, recommend that ESD initiate discontinuation of services.

- **What specific services could be discontinued according to the Wagner-Peyser program complaint process?**

Labor exchange services would no longer be provided to the employer in question. Other services may be discontinued if such services are supported by Wagner-Peyser funds.

- **Where can I find a WorkSource complaint poster that satisfies Wagner-Peyser requirements?**

You may print a copy of the [WorkSource Complaint Poster \(hyperlink\)](#) for your office. The poster must be printed in color on 11" X 17" card stock paper in order to enhance readability.

- **Why are TAA program complaint procedures included in this handbook?**

TAA program complaint procedures were added to the handbook in order to increase visibility of TAA requirements among partners. In addition, it made sense to centralize the location of TAA program complaint procedures to make partners aware that there are specific procedures for each.

- **Why is the term “grievance” not defined or noted in the WIOA Title I program complaint procedures?**

The term “grievance,” while noted in WIOA regulations, is not defined. In addition, a review of WIOA Title I program complaint procedures from other states indicated that the word “grievance” is often used interchangeably with the word “complaint.” To reduce possible confusion, the Washington State ESD Employment System Administration and Policy has eliminated the use of the word “grievance” until guidance is received from DOL offering a definition that is different from the word complaint.

- **For WIOA Title I program complaints, can a complaint contact serve as an impartial hearing officer?**

Program complaint contacts may serve as an impartial hearing officer only if they are not directly connected to the allegations or potentially affected by the results of the determination(s). The impartial hearing officer must be in a position to render an impartial decision in order to avoid the appearance of unfairness. Local procedures could establish the LWDB or representatives of the LWDB as hearing officers if they are not directly connected or potentially affected by the determination.

- **Where can I find guidance on how to prepare for or how to conduct a hearing on a WIOA Title I program complaint?**

The Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) serves as an independent state agency that conducts impartial administrative hearings. [OAH's website](#) offers instruction on how to schedule and prepare for a hearing. For WIOA Title I program complaints, OAH may serve as an impartial hearing officer.

[Ohio's Complaint Procedures Manual](#) also provides several helpful examples, including a hearing notice and hearing determination outline. Refer to pages 33-36.