

Complaint by a SHIBA volunteer: Procedures and form with instructions

Purpose and use of this document

The purpose of this document is to create a system for receiving, reporting and documenting complaints by SHIBA volunteers. It also provides a fair and consistent method to handle complaints by SHIBA volunteers as accurately, quickly and objectively as possible.

Introduction

Supervisors will use the following procedures to investigate and follow up when a volunteer submits the **Complaint by a SHIBA volunteer: Form with instructions** which is included on pages 7-12 of this document.

Informal resolution procedure

Stage one

Volunteers will initially discuss their complaint or grievance with their immediate supervisor, explaining their view of what has happened and what they think should be done to resolve the situation. For purposes of this process, the volunteer's supervisor is usually the local sponsor's volunteer coordinator.

The supervisor will, if necessary, gather more information, determine if the complaint warrants further action and, as appropriate, act to resolve the complaint. This determination should be made within seven days, with explanation and notification provided to the volunteer (oral notification may be sufficient when the complaint is resolved at the informal level). The supervisor should also provide an explanation of the volunteer's right to initiate a formal complaint, if the volunteer is dissatisfied with the supervisor's decision.

If the concern involves the volunteer's supervisor, the volunteer may choose to report the concern directly to the volunteer coordinator's supervisor or to the SHIBA program director, who should discuss the complaint with the volunteer.

Allegations involving a serious breach of policies or procedures or any breach of law will be immediately communicated to the sponsor management and the

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SHIBA program director. The incident reporting procedures (see VRPM policy 2.8: Incident reporting on My SHIBA) should be followed in these circumstances.

If the complaint or grievance is not resolved, move on to the formal resolution procedure.

Formal resolution procedure

Stage two

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the supervisor's resolution of the complaint, the volunteer will put their complaint in writing and deliver it to their supervisor or, at their discretion, forward it directly to the sponsor management or the SHIBA program director, depending upon whom the complaint is against. The volunteer should be encouraged to include the following in their complaint:

- The name of the complainant and person against whom the complaint is filed.
- The date of the incident precipitating the complaint.
- A concise description of the complaint and any precipitating incidences.
- The identity of anyone with relevant information or an explanation of where additional information can be found.
- Any documentation relevant to the complaint and where it can be found.
- Other information that supports the complaint.
- A description of action previously taken by the volunteer to resolve the complaint.
- A listing of all desired outcomes and reasons why such outcomes are appropriate.

The volunteer's supervisor will forward the written complaint within five business days to the sponsor management or the SHIBA program director if applicable. The volunteer coordinator (or designated staff) will establish a file to hold all materials gathered during investigation of the complaint and should maintain a written timeline and record of actions taken during the resolution procedure.

The volunteer coordinator (or designated staff) may again attempt to resolve the complaint in an informal manner by talking with the individuals involved and taking appropriate action. One option at this stage is for the volunteer coordinator (or designated staff) to discuss the complaint directly with the

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volunteer and attempt to develop an agreeable resolution. As appropriate, other individuals directly involved in the situation may be included in these discussions.

The determination will be made within seven business days with an explanation and notification to the volunteer.

Stage three

If the volunteer still feels that the issue has not been resolved satisfactorily then the matter should be referred to an individual designated by the program to deal with complaint resolution. This could be another staff member, the SHIBA program director, or any other designee. This role may be on a permanent or ad-hoc basis.

The individual designated to review complaints and grievances will then review all applicable information and evidence, re-interviewing appropriate parties as necessary, and render a formal decision of the person's response to the complaint. This determination should occur within 14 business days of receipt of the volunteer's decision not to accept an informal judgment.

Notice of the decision will be sent to all affected parties, along with a description of what next steps might occur based on the formal decision. Possible next steps might include, depending upon the nature of the complaint:

- Re-assignment of the volunteer to another supervisor or role.
- Disciplinary action against a volunteer or staff member.
- Changes in the support provided the volunteer.
- Additional training for a volunteer or staff member.
- Adjustment in program procedures.

The intent of these next steps is to both correct the problem in the immediate situation and to ensure that the individual is less likely to encounter a similar problem in the future.

Stage four

If the volunteer wishes to appeal the formal decision, then an appeal in writing can be submitted within five business days to the SHIBA program director, who will review the appeal and issue a determination within 14 business days. See the **SHIBA volunteer appeals procedures** document on My SHIBA at

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www.insurance.wa.gov/my-shiba). An appeal may also be submitted by any other affected party.

This determination by the SHIBA program director will constitute final disposition of the complaint or grievance.

Related procedures

An explanation of the volunteer complaint/grievances procedure should be included in orientation of new volunteers and in the volunteer handbook.

Volunteers have the right to be accompanied to meetings or to be represented by their nominee at all meetings during this resolution process.

Complaints by volunteers shall be kept confidential other than to those directly involved in the complaint resolution procedure.

A complaint or grievance should not be viewed as a negative procedure – volunteers should feel welcome to use the procedure and the program should view it as an opportunity to learn and improve the involvement of volunteers.

Volunteers and staff members are expected to make every effort to resolve complaints fairly, promptly and politely.

If at any time during the process or investigation, the program concludes that a volunteer has filed a claim in bad faith, has refused to cooperate in an investigation of the complaint or has provided false information regarding the complaint, disciplinary action up to and including termination of the volunteer may be taken.

The program should realize that volunteers may quit at any time throughout the complaint and grievance process. Some volunteers may even quit before initiating the complaint and grievance process. If the volunteer quits as a result of a complaint, the volunteer should be contacted by the program, who should then acknowledge the volunteer's complaint and inform them of action that has been or will be taken by the program to address their complaint.

The volunteer will also be given the opportunity to either participate in an exit interview or complete an exit survey, giving their feedback on their overall experience volunteering for the program. Even if the volunteer chooses not to participate in any or all of the complaint and grievance procedures, it behooves

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the program to fully address all ethical, human resources and public relations issues raised by the complaint through phone calls and/or letters, as appropriate to the situation.

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Procedures for supervisors are on pages 1-5 of this document.

Form with instructions, for use by SHIBA volunteers is on pages 7-12 of this document.

Complaint by a SHIBA volunteer: Form with instructions

For use by SHIBA volunteers

Guiding principles

- For purposes of this process, the volunteer's supervisor is usually the local sponsor's volunteer coordinator.
- Complaints by volunteers are confidential other than to those directly involved in the complaint resolution procedure.
- Volunteers have the right to be accompanied to meetings or to be represented by their nominee at all meetings during this resolution process.
- If at any time during the process or investigation, SHIBA concludes that a volunteer has filed a claim in bad faith, has refused to cooperate in an investigation of the complaint, or has provided false information about the complaint, disciplinary action up to and including termination of the volunteer may be taken.

Steps to take if you wish to file a complaint or grievance

Stage one

If you, as a SHIBA volunteer, have a complaint or grievance, we wish to respond promptly and thoroughly. Please start by discussing your complaint or grievance with your immediate supervisor, explaining your view of what has happened and what you think needs to occur to resolve the situation.

- If your complaint is against your immediate supervisor, you can instead start by discussing the issue with sponsoring agency's director or the SHIBA program manager.
- The supervisor will, if necessary, gather more information, decide if the complaint warrants further action and, as appropriate, act to resolve the complaint. This decision will be made within seven days, and then will be provided to you with an explanation and notification.
- If the complaint is not resolved, move on to stage two.

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Stage two

1. Fill out the complaint form at the end of this document. You will return the form to your supervisor or other designated staff as indicated in stage one.
 - a. Be certain to include your name, the date you filled out the form and your preferred contact information.
 - b. Make a copy for your records.

The form includes requests for the following information:

- Your name and person against whom the complaint is filed.
 - The date of the incident precipitating the complaint.
 - A concise description of the complaint and any precipitating incidences.
 - The identity of anyone with relevant information or an explanation of where additional information can be found.
 - Any documentation relevant to the complaint and where it can be found.
 - Other information that supports the complaint.
 - A description of any previous action taken to resolve the complaint.
 - A listing of all desired outcomes and reasons why such outcomes are appropriate.
2. The supervisor will, if necessary, gather more information, decide if the complaint warrants further action and, as appropriate, act to resolve the complaint.
 3. The written complaint will be forwarded within five business days by the volunteer's supervisor to the sponsor management or the SHIBA program director if applicable.
 4. This decision will be made within seven business days and then will be provided to you with an explanation and notification.

Stage three

1. If you feel that the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved, notify the supervisor that you are not accepting the informal judgment.
2. The matter will then be referred to an individual designated by SHIBA to deal with resolution of complaints.
3. The individual designated to review complaints and grievances will then make a determination within 14 business days of the receipt of your decision to not accept the informal judgment.

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4. Notice of the formal decision will be sent to all affected parties, along with a description of what next steps might occur based on the decision. Possible next steps might include, depending upon the nature of the complaint:
 - Re-assignment to another supervisor or role.
 - Disciplinary action against a volunteer or staff member.
 - Changes in the support provided the volunteer.
 - Additional training for a volunteer or staff member.
 - Adjustment in program procedures.

Stage four

1. If you wish to appeal the formal decision, then an appeal in writing can be submitted within five business days to the SHIBA program manager, who will review the appeal and issue a determination within 14 business days. See the **SHIBA volunteer appeals procedures** document on My SHIBA at www.insurance.wa.gov/my-shiba. An appeal may also be submitted by any other affected party.

Submit written appeals to:

SHIBA Program Manager
P.O. Box 40255
Olympia, WA 98504

Or send to shiba@oic.wa.gov

2. The determination by the SHIBA program manager will constitute final disposition of the complaint or grievance.

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Complaint form instructions, for volunteers are on pages 7-9 of this document.

The complaint form is on pages 11-12 of this document.

Complaint form: Complaint by a volunteer

See pages 7-9 of this document for **Complaint by a SHBIA volunteer: Form with instructions** for information on how to use this form. Supervisors will use instructions on pages 1-5 of this document.

Date complaint is reported: _____
Volunteer Name: _____
Phone number: _____
Email address: _____
Mailing address: _____

Complaint is against (name and relationship – e.g. client, staff person, another volunteer, etc.):

Date(s) of incident: _____

What is the nature of your complaint? Please describe the incident/s that occurred that led up to your complaint or grievance:

Is anyone else involved in your complaint or grievance, such as witnesses, and if so, who are they?

Continued on next page

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Is there any documentation relevant to your complaint? ___Yes ___No
If yes, where can it be found?

Please add any other information that supports your complaint, if any:

What action (if any) have you taken already to resolve your complaint?

What would you like the outcomes of your complaint to be, and why do you see those outcomes as appropriate?

Return this form to your supervisor or designated staff as indicated in stage one of the complaint process.

It is recommended that you make a copy for your records.