

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policy 03-17, Change 1

To: Workforce Development Boards

From: WorkForce West Virginia

Subject: GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Effective Date: April 1, 2022

Purpose:

This document establishes the policy of West Virginia on the development, maintenance and implementation of programmatic grievance and complaint procedures. This policy and related procedures cover complaints alleging noncriminal violations of the requirements of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in the operation of local WIOA programs and activities and transmits policy governing WIOA Title I related grievance and complaint procedures at the local and State level.

Scope:

Title 20 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subpart F Section 683.600 requires that Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) and sub-recipients of WIOA Title I grant funds comply with the grievance and complaint provisions of the WIOA. This policy applies to programmatic grievances and complaints pursuant to WIOA Section 181(c) and does **not** address the procedures for processing complaints alleging discrimination under WIOA Section 188 and/or Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 37. Information and complaints involving allegations of fraud, abuse, or other criminal activity must be reported directly to U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Inspector General.

REFERENCES:

- WIOA Section 181 (c)
- Title 20 CFR Part 683.600
- Title 29 CFR Part 37

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

This policy implements the requirements of WIOA Section 181(c) and 20 CFR Part 683.600. Retain this policy until further notice.

BACKGROUND:

Title 20 CFR Section 683.600 requires each LWDB, State, and direct recipient of funds under Title I of WIOA to establish and maintain a procedure for grievances and complaints from participants and other interested parties affected by the local workforce development system, including American Job Center partners, service providers, and the statewide workforce development programs.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

Definitions:

Complainant means any participant or other personally interested or personally affected party alleging a non-criminal violation of the requirements of WIOA.

Complaint file is a file that is maintained in a central location within each office which includes a hard copy of each complaint filed along with pertinent documentation.

Days means consecutive calendar days, including weekends and holidays.

Grievance or complaint means a written expression by a party alleging a violation of WIOA, regulations promulgated under WIOA, recipient grants, sub-agreements, or other specific agreements under WIOA. All complaints, amendments to a complaint, and withdrawals shall be in writing. This policy is intended to resolve matters which concern actions arising in connection with the WIOA Title I grant program.

Hearing Officer means an impartial party who shall preside at a hearing on a grievance or complaint.

Local Workforce Development Board includes the Local Workforce Development Area's/Region's administrative entity and any sub-recipients to which the administrative entity has delegated the complaint and grievance resolution process.

Participant means an individual who has been determined to be eligible to participate in, and who is receiving services under, a program authorized by WIOA.

Participant case file means either a hard copy or an electronic file.

Recipient means an entity to which a WIOA grant is awarded directly from DOL to carry out a program under Title I of WIOA. The State is the recipient of funds awarded under WIOA Sections 127 (b)(1)(C), 132(b)(1)(B), and 132(b)(2)(B).

Sub-recipient means an entity to which a sub-grant is awarded, and which is accountable to the recipient (or higher tier sub-recipient) for the use of the funds provided.

Policy:

It is the policy of the State of West Virginia that:

- The principles and procedures set forth in this Policy 3-17, Change 1 shall be used by all West Virginia LWDBs in the development of local-level grievance and hearing procedures; and
- The principles and procedures set forth in this Policy 3-17, Change 1 shall govern the treatment and handling of all grievances or complaints in connection with all WIOA Title I grant programs and activities conducted by the State, or pursuant (directly or indirectly) to sub-grants from the State.

The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) concurs with this policy and has approved the local policy and procedures contained in this document.

Procedures:

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS

These procedures will guide the receipt, hearing, and resolution of non-criminal grievances and complaints relating to WIOA Title I grant programs and activities that are funded with WIOA Title I grant monies provided to the LWDB by the State. These procedures will be available for use by all individuals and entities, including WIOA Title I grant participants, LWDB staff, sub-recipients of the LWDB, and other interested parties. Local procedures must include “a process which allows an individual alleging a labor standards violation to submit the grievance to a binding arbitration procedure, if a collective bargaining agreement covering the parties so provides.” [Title 20 CFR Section 683.600(c)(3)].

Additionally, all LWDB’s and sub-recipients of WIOA Title I grant funds must make reasonable efforts to assure that information about the content of the grievance and complaint procedures will be understood by affected participants and individuals, including youth and those who are limited English-speaking individuals. Such efforts must comply with the language requirements of Title 29 CFR Section 37.35.

At all levels of the grievance or complaint process, complainants have the right to be represented, at their own expense, by a person(s) of their choosing.

Grievances or complaints must be filed within **30** days of the alleged violation. All grievances or complaints, amendments, and withdrawals must be in writing. All persons filing grievances or complaints shall be free from restraint, coercion, reprisal, or discrimination.

II. LOCAL GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Pursuant to Title 20 CFR Sections 683.600 through 683.610, the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has established this procedure for resolving grievances and complaints alleging a violation of WIOA Title I, regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA. The following outlines the procedures for resolving issues arising in connection with WIOA Title I grant programs operated by the administrative entity for the LWDB and its sub-recipients. Any participant or other interested party adversely affected by a decision or action by the local workforce development system, including decisions by One-Stop partners and services providers, has the right to file a grievance or complaint with the LWDB.

A. Notice to Affected Parties

Initial and continuing notice of the local grievance and complaint procedures and instructions on how to file a complaint must be:

- Posted in a public location and be made available to any interested parties and members of the public.
- Made available to each participant. A copy of the written description of the local grievance and complaint procedure shall include (1) Notification that the participant has the right to file a grievance or complaint at any time within 30 days of the alleged violation; (2) Instructions and timeline for filing a grievance or complaint; and (3) Notification that the participant has the right to receive technical assistance. Such information shall be modified, as needed, whenever the procedures are changed.

The LWDB has the responsibility to provide technical assistance to the complainants, including those grievances or complaints against the LWDB. Such technical assistance includes providing instructions on how to file a grievance or complaint, providing relevant copies of documents such as the Act, regulations, local rules, contracts, etc., and providing clarifications and interpretations of relevant provisions. This requirement shall not be interpreted as requiring the LWDB to violate rules of confidentiality.

B. Form and Filing of Grievance or Complaint

The official filing date of the grievance or complaint is the date the written grievance or complaint is received by the LWDB, its service providers, One-Stop partners, or sub-recipients. The filing of the grievance or complaint will be considered a request for a hearing, and the LWDB shall issue a written decision within 60 days for the filing of the grievance or complaint.

The grievance or complaint must be in writing, signed, and dated. For resolution purposes, the SWDB requires that the following information be obtained or provided for all complaints:

- Full name, telephone number, and mailing address of the complainant.
- Full name, telephone number, and mailing address of the respondent.
- A clear and concise statement of the facts and dates describing the alleged violation.
- The provisions of the WIOA, the WIOA regulations, grant, or other agreements under the WIOA, believed to have been violated.
- Grievances or complaints against individuals, including staff or participants, shall indicate how those individuals did not comply with the law, regulations, or contract; and
- The remedy sought by the complainant.

The absence of any of the requested information shall not be a basis for dismissing the grievance or complaint.

A grievance or complaint may be amended to correct technical deficiencies at any time up to the time of the hearing. The 30-day period in which a grievance or complaint may be filed is not extended for grievances or complaints that are refiled with amendments. Grievances or complaints may be withdrawn at any time prior to the issuance of the hearing officer's decision. The LWDB shall send a copy of the grievance or complaint to the respondent and immediately (within one business day) notify the State WIOA Unit.

C. Investigation

After the complaint has been filed and the State notified, the LWDB will assign a staff member to investigate the claims being brought forth. WorkForce West Virginia will provide at least one other investigator in all such matters. The scope of the investigation should be limited to the allegations within the grievance or

complaint; however, other observable violations that may warrant further investigation can be noted by all parties involved. Each party to the investigation must do their due diligence in obtaining any evidentiary statements as there must be no coercion, leading, or otherwise interfering with the willful and unadulterated obtainment of statements from the complainant, respondent(s), and any witnesses.

The investigation and written summation of all statements and evidence should be completed within 10 working days to allow for a Hearing if an Informal Resolution cannot be reached between the parties.

D. Informal Resolution

The LWDB shall notify the complainant and the respondent of the opportunity for an informal resolution. Respondents must make good faith efforts to resolve all grievances or complaints prior to the scheduled hearing. Failure on the part of either party in the grievance or complaint to exert good faith efforts shall not constitute a basis for dismissing the grievance or complaint, nor shall this be considered part of the facts to be judged in the resolution process. Where a complaint alleges a violation of the WIOA Title I grant or any agreements under WIOA, the LWDB must assure that every grievance or complaint not resolved informally or not withdrawn is given a hearing, regardless of the grievance or complaint's apparent merit or lack of merit.

When a complaint is resolved through the informal resolution process, the LWDB must attempt to contact the complainant and have him or her provide a written withdrawal of the complaint within 10 days of the receipt of the notice of resolution or impasse where a complainant decides not to proceed to an administrative hearing. The LWDB shall maintain copies of correspondence in the local office complaint file and provide a copy of such materials to the State, when requested.

E. Notice of Hearing

Hearings shall be conducted within 30 days of the filing of a grievance or complaint. The complainant and the respondent must be notified, in writing, of the hearing 10 days prior to the date of the hearing. The 10-day notice may be shortened with the written consent of both parties. The hearing notice shall be in writing and contain the following information:

- The date of the notice, name of the complainant, and the name of the party against whom the grievance or complaint is filed.

- The date, time, and place of the hearing before an impartial hearing officer.
- A statement of the alleged violations. These statements must accurately reflect the content of the grievance or complaint as submitted by the complainant; however, clarifying notes may be added to assure that the grievance or complaint is addressed accurately.
- The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

F. Conduct of Hearings

An impartial hearing officer shall conduct the hearing. The LWDB will seek impartial hearing officers from among the staff of legal offices or personnel departments of municipalities or counties that will not be directly affected by, or will not implement the final resolution of, a specific grievance or complaint.

The hearing will be conducted in an informal manner with strict rules of evidence not being applicable and according to the procedures established by the LWDB. Both parties will have the right to present written and/or oral testimony and arguments; the right to call and question witnesses in support of their position; the right to examine records and documents relevant to the issues; and the right to be represented. The hearing will be recorded electronically or by a court reporter.

G. Decision

Not later than 60 days after the filing of the grievance or complaint, the hearing officer shall mail a written decision to both parties by first class mail. The hearing officer's decision shall contain the following information:

- The names of the parties involved.
- A statement of the alleged violation(s) and issues related to the alleged violation.
- A statement of the facts.
- The hearing officer's decision and the reasons for the decision.

- A statement of corrective action or remedies for violations, if any, to be taken; and
- Notice of the right of either party to request a review of the decision by the State Review Panel within 10 days of the receipt of the decision.

H. Appeal

If a complainant does not receive a decision at the LWDB level within 60 days of the filing of the grievance or complaint, or receives an adverse decision, the complainant then has the right to file an appeal with the State.

The complainant may request an appeal hearing by submitting a written notice to:

WorkForce West Virginia
Office of the Commissioner
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Building 3, Suite 300
Charleston, WV 25305

III. STATE-LEVEL GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Title 20 CFR Section 683.600(d) requires the State to provide a process for dealing with grievances and complaints from participants or interested parties affected by the statewide workforce development programs, resolving appeals of decisions issued at the LWDB level, remanding grievances and complaints related to the local WIOA Title I programs to the LWDB grievance process, and affording an opportunity for an informal resolution and a hearing to be completed within 60 days of the filing of the grievance or complaint.

In cases where the State has imposed either administrative or financial/monetary sanction(s) resulting from monitoring, investigations, or audits, the complainant may file an appeal with the State through the procedures established in their Audit Resolution guidance.

A. State-Level Informal Resolution and Hearing Procedures

All complaints of noncriminal violations of the requirements of WIOA by the State, or complaints by individuals or interested parties affected by the statewide workforce development program shall be filed in writing with the Office of the

Commissioner, WorkForce West Virginia. All requests for State hearings shall include the same basic elements necessary for local level hearings. These are:

- Full name, telephone number, and mailing address of the complainant,
- Full name, telephone number, and mailing address of the respondent,
- A clear and concise statement of the facts and dates describing the alleged violation,
- The provisions of the WIOA, the WIOA regulations, grant, or other agreements under the WIOA, believed to have been violated,
- Grievances or complaints against individuals, including staff or participants, shall indicate how those individuals did not comply with the WIOA law, regulation, or contract; and
- The remedy sought by the complainant.

Upon receipt of the request for a State hearing, the Commissioner or his/her designee shall review the grievance or complaint and shall provide an opportunity for an informal resolution. The Commissioner shall notify the complainant and the respondent within 10 days of receipt of the grievance or complaint and proceed with the informal resolution process. If the State cannot resolve the grievance or complaint informally, then a hearing will be held.

Hearings on any grievance or complaint shall be conducted within 30 days of the filing of a grievance or complaint. The complainant and the respondent shall be notified in writing of the hearing 10 days prior to the date of hearing. The hearing notice shall advise the following:

- The date, time, and place of the hearing before an impartial hearing officer.
- The pertinent sections of the WIOA or any other federal regulations involved.
- A statement of the alleged violations. These statements must accurately reflect the content of the grievance or complaint as submitted by the complainant. However, clarifying notes may be added to assure that the grievance or complaint is addressed accurately.

- The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

B. Appeals of LWDB Decisions or Requests for WFWV Review

1. A complainant may file a request for review with WFWV if no decision has been issued at the LWDB level within the 60-day time limit. A complainant may file an appeal if the LWDB has issued an adverse decision. The request for a WFWV review or appeal shall be filed or postmarked (if mailed) within 10 days from the date on which the complainant received an adverse decision from LWDB or 15 days from:
 - The date on which a complainant should have received a decision regarding a locally filed complaint, which is defined as five days from the date the decision was due, or
2. All requests for review or appeals shall include the following:
 - The full name, telephone number, and mailing address of the complainant,
 - The full name, telephone number, and mailing address of the LWDB,
 - A statement of the basis of the request or appeal, and
 - Copies of relevant documents, such as the complaint filed at the LWDB and the local decision, if any.
3. WFWV shall request the record of the hearing from the LWDB and shall review the record. WFWV shall notify the concerned parties and the LWDB by first class mail, certified with a return receipt, of the following information at least 10 days before a scheduled hearing:
 - The date of the notice, name of the complainant, and the name of the party against whom the complaint is filed.
 - The date, time, and place of the hearing before a hearing officer.
 - A statement of the alleged violations. This statement shall accurately reflect the content of the complaint as submitted by the complainant.

- The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person issuing the notice.

C. Hearing

1. The WFWV hearing shall be conducted in an informal manner with strict rules of evidence not being applicable. Both parties shall have the right to present written and/or oral testimony under oath and arguments; the right to call and question witnesses; the right to request and examine records and documents relevant to the issues, and the right to be represented. The hearing shall be recorded.
2. The WFWV hearing officer shall be an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ).

D. Referral of Local Grievances or Complaints

Grievances or complaints filed directly with the State related to the local WIOA programs will be remanded to the LWDB grievance process in accordance with LWDB Grievance and Complaint Procedures.

E. Remedies

1. Remedies that may be imposed for a violation of any requirement under WIOA Title I shall be limited to:
 - Suspension or termination of payments under WIOA Title I,
 - Prohibition of placement of a participant with an employer that has violated any requirement under WIOA Title I,
 - Reinstatement, where applicable, of an employee, payment of lost wages and benefits, and reestablishment of other relevant terms, conditions, and privileges of employment; and
 - Where appropriate, to other equitable relief.
2. Nothing in paragraph 1 shall be construed to prohibit a complainant from pursuing a remedy authorized under another federal, State, or local law for a violation of WIOA Title I.

F. Federal-Level Appeal Process

Under Title 20 CFR Section 683.610(a)(1), if the State or Local Workforce Development Board has not issued a decision within the required 60-day time limit, the complainant can file an appeal to the Secretary of Labor. The appeal must be filed with the Secretary of Labor no later than 120 days of the filing of the grievance or complaint with the State, or the filing of the appeal of a local grievance or complaint with the State.

In cases where a decision has been reached and the State issued an adverse decision, the complainant can file an appeal to the Secretary of Labor within 60 days of the receipt of the decision being appealed.

The request for appeal must be submitted by certified mail, return receipt to:

Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210
Attention: ASET

A copy of the appeal must be simultaneously provided to the Region 2 ETA Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Labor—Employment and Training Administration, Suite 825 East, The Curtis Center, 170 South Independence Mall West, Philadelphia, PA 19106, and the opposing party.

ACTION:

All recipients and sub-recipients of WIOA Title-I funding through the Workforce Development Board of West Virginia shall utilize the grievance and complaint procedures specified in this policy or ensure that any policies or procedures established by the recipient or sub-recipient are in accordance with these requirements.

INQUIRIES:

Please direct inquiries about this directive to WorkForce West Virginia at (304) 558 - 6788.