

Distinguishing Between Concerns and Formal Complaints
Frequently Asked Questions
ACGME Office of Resident Services

Concern	Formal Complaint
<p>What is a concern?</p> <p>A concern is an issue, care, trouble, or distress that someone has about a residency or fellowship program and/or its sponsoring institution that creates uncertainty and apprehension. Examples: inability to access one’s file; fear and intimidation in the program/institution; resident well-being issues; untimely verification of residency education; inability to obtain a date for a grievance hearing; abuses of power or discretion</p>	<p>What is a formal complaint?</p> <p>A formal complaint pertains to chronic and routine non-compliance with ACGME Institutional and/or Program Requirements.</p>
<p>How do I submit a concern to the ACGME?</p> <p>Concerns can be made by phone, e-mail, letter, or through the annual ACGME Resident/Fellow Survey, which includes a direct link to contact Resident Services by e-mail.</p>	<p>How do I raise and lodge a formal complaint with the ACGME?</p> <p>Formal complaints must be submitted in writing and must be signed.</p>
<p>May I submit a concern anonymously and confidentiality?</p> <p>Yes. The ACGME accepts anonymous concerns. We will also strive to maintain your confidentiality. There may be times, however, when Resident Services may need to identify you to the program and/or institution in order to advocate for fair process, and to identify options and strategies for resolution; however, we would never do so without your permission.</p>	<p>May I submit a formal complaint anonymously and confidentiality?</p> <p>The ACGME does not accept anonymous complaints. Formal complaints must be signed, and include the name and contact information of the complainant.</p> <p>It is important to note, however, that Resident Services will not reveal a complainant’s name to the program or institution unless the complaint is about</p>

<p>Providing your name and contact information enables Resident Services to inform you about the actions taken in response to your concern, and also to contact you should additional information be needed.</p>	<p>the lack of due process and/or the complainant gives the ACGME permission to share his or her name.</p>
<p>Is there a time limit for submitting concerns?</p> <p>Yes. Concerns that occurred prior to the current and preceding residency/fellowship year may not be considered.</p>	<p>Is there a time limit for submitting formal complaints?</p> <p>Yes. Allegations of non-compliance that occurred prior to the current and preceding residency year should not be submitted.</p>
<p>Must I inform my program director and/or the designated institutional official (DIO) of my concern(s) before contacting Resident Services?</p> <p>You should utilize all the resources available in the program and/or institution before submitting a concern to Resident Services, unless you have a valid reason for not utilizing these resources first. For example, if your concern involves the program director and DIO and you feel that the existing channels of communication or dispute resolution have proven unsatisfactory.</p>	<p>Must I inform my program director and/or the designated institutional official (DIO) of my formal complaint(s) before contacting Resident Services?</p> <p>As with concerns, you should utilize all the resources available in the program and/or institution before submitting a formal complaint to Resident Services, unless you have a valid reason for not utilizing these resources first.</p>
<p>Who is my designated institutional official (DIO)?</p> <p>The DIO is the person in your institution's graduate medical education (GME) office who has oversight over all of the programs at the institution. Many DIOs have different titles within the institution (for example: DIO <i>and</i> Associate Dean of Graduate Medical Education). Contact your GME office to find your DIO.</p>	

<p>Will submitting a concern affect the program's and/or institution's accreditation status(es)?</p> <p>Submitting a concern will not affect the program's and/or institution's accreditation status(es). The specific duties of Resident Services are: to determine the facts in each case; to work with the concerned physician and DIO in seeking a satisfactory resolution; to call attention to any injustices and abuses of power or discretion; and to recommend the use of the formal complaint process for violation of ACGME Institutional and/or Program Requirements.</p>	<p>Will submitting a formal complaint affect the program's and/or institution's accreditation status(es)?</p> <p>Submitting a formal complaint <i>may</i> affect the program's and/or institution's accreditation status(es). The program director will be asked to provide a response to the formal complaint, the DIO must sign the response, and the relevant ACGME specialty Review Committee will review the formal complaint and render a decision, which may affect the program's and/or institution's accreditation status(es).</p>
<p>Will I be given a copy of the DIO's response to my concern?</p> <p>No. All communications between the ACGME and programs and institutions are confidential. We are happy to inform you of the outcome of the concern investigation, but cannot provide specific detailed information that was submitted in response to the concern.</p>	<p>Will I be given a copy of the program director's and DIO's responses to my formal complaint? Will I receive a copy of the Review Committee's decision?</p> <p>No. All communications between the ACGME and programs and institutions are confidential. We will inform complainants as to whether or not the accreditation of the program was affected. We are not at liberty to provide more detailed information.</p>
<p>Does Resident Services address individual residency/fellowship credit and contract issues?</p> <p>No. Neither process (Concern or Formal Complaint) addresses individual residency/fellowship credit and contract issues.</p>	
<p>Does Resident Services address allegations of discrimination?</p> <p>No. Discrimination may be a legal, employment issue and it is best handled by a lawyer or a legal organization. If you believe that you have been a victim of discrimination, it is recommended that you contact the Human Resources Department at your institution, or the Equal Employment Opportunity</p>	

Commission (www.eeoc.gov).	
<p>Does Resident Services act as a mediator or adjudicator for concerns?</p> <p>Resident Services does not mediate or adjudicate individual disputes. Resident Services functions on an informal basis by such means as listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, and developing a range of responsible options. When possible, Resident Services helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.</p>	<p>Does Resident Services act as a mediator or adjudicator for formal complaints?</p> <p>Resident Services does not act as a mediator or adjudicator for formal complaints. Resident Services only addresses matters regarding compliance with the published requirements and does not adjudicate individual disputes between persons in residency/fellowship programs and/or sponsoring institutions.</p>
<p>Can Resident Services assist a resident/fellow in finding another residency/fellowship position?</p> <p>No. Resident Services does not find positions for residents/fellows.</p>	
<p>Can Resident Services provide legal advice?</p> <p>No. The ACGME is an accreditor, not a legal organization.</p>	