



PATIENT CONCERNS and GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION

POLICY:

It is the policy of Rice Medical Center (RMC) to define and resolve any patient concern and/or grievance within seven (7) days. Patients may file a verbal or written complaint concerning any aspect of their care to any hospital employee at any time.

DEFINITION:

Concern

A concern is defined as an informal or formal complaint registered by anyone other than the patient or the patient's care and may become a grievance if not addressed appropriately.

NOTE:

A concern may not become a grievance if the staff present can resolve the issue immediately with satisfaction from the patient and/or patient's legal representative.

Grievance

A grievance is a written or verbal complaint that cannot be resolved at that time or needs further investigation by RMC. A grievance form can be filled out by the patient or the patient's legal representative regarding the patient's care, abuse, neglect, issues related to RMC's compliance with CMS Hospital Conditions of Participation (CoP), or a Medicare beneficiary billing complaint related to the rights and limitations provided by 42CFR and 489.

A patient complaint is not a grievance if the staff present can resolve the patient issue promptly. Staff present includes any RMC staff present at the time of the complaint or who can quickly be at the patient's location to resolve the complaint. This includes nursing administration or the charge nurse on duty.

Verbal complaints made over the telephone can constitute a formal grievance under the CMS patient rights standards if staff present cannot resolve them. If the complaint is postponed for later resolution or requires further investigation, then it will be considered a grievance. An email or fax is also considered to be a written grievance. Any allegation of abuse, neglect, or failure of RMC to comply with any of the CoPs is considered a grievance.

NOTE:

Any complaints filed by a friend or family member who is not the patient's representative would not be covered under this section. Federal HIPAA privacy regulations requires hospitals to refrain from discussing any specifics about the patient's care that involve individual identifiable health information unless the patient authorizes this verbally to the hospital representative or signs an authorization form. Such complaints would be considered a concern and would be addressed back to the patient or patient's legal representative.

PROCEDURE:

Notice of Rights:

Upon admission to Rice Medical Center, every patient shall be informed and given a copy of the Patient and Family Bill of Rights, which will include information on how the patient or patient's legal representative can

file a concern or a grievance. Such information shall include the name or the title of the person at RMC whom to contact to raise the concern. The patient should have reasonable expectations of care and services. The facility should address those expectations in a timely, reasonable, and consistent manner. RMC must inform the patient or patient's legal representative of the internal grievance process, including whom to contact to file a grievance. As part of its notification of rights, RMC must inform the patient that he/she may lodge a grievance with the state agency directly, regardless of whether he/she first used RMC's grievance process. RMC must provide the patient or the patient's legal representative a phone number and address for lodging a grievance with the state agency.

Registering a Grievance:

Any employee who receives a complaint, that cannot be resolved with satisfaction from the patient or patient's representative, will report the grievance in writing to their department supervisor as soon as possible during the shift. Any employee, patient and/or patient's representative can complete a grievance form. Completed grievance forms will be submitted to Administration.

Review and Resolution of Grievances:

Administration will forward the grievance to the appropriate personnel for investigation and follow-up in an appropriate time frame. A grievance shall go no longer than seven (7) days without action being taken. Any grievance that would endanger the patient such as neglect or abuse should be reviewed immediately. If the grievance cannot be resolved within seven (7) days, Rice Medical Center will inform the patient or the patient's representative that RMC is still working to resolve the grievance and will follow-up with a written response. RMC's administrator will report the grievance investigation and the resolution to the Board of Directors. The Hospital Board reserves the right to conduct its own review of any patient grievances and to resolve any patient grievances in any manner it deems appropriate regardless of what action, if any, has been taken or recommended by the patient grievance committee.

All Medicare beneficiary concerns regarding quality of care or premature discharge will be reported to the Quality Improvement Organization. In addition to the process specified in this policy, any grievance regarding the physicians may be referred to the Medical Staff for review and resolution at the discretion of the Hospital Board.

Notice of Resolution:

In resolution to the grievance, Rice Medical Center will communicate to the patient or their legal representative steps taken on behalf of the patient to investigate the grievance, result of the grievance investigation and actions taken, and date of completion. Communication to the patient must be communicated to the patient or patient's legal representative in a language and manner the patient or patient's legal representative understands. Certain aspects of the investigation and actions taken may not be communicated as appropriate.

Retention of Patient Grievance Records:

Patient grievance forms and other written patient grievances and notices of resolution shall be filed with all other variance reports separate from the patient's medical record.

Grievance Resolved:

A grievance may be resolved when the patient is satisfied with the action taken. A grievance may also be closed when RMC has taken appropriate and reasonable action on the patient's behalf to resolve the grievance. RMC must document all efforts and demonstrate compliance with CMS grievance requirements.