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PIN 26-13-CCLD
(Supersedes in part PIN 21-06-CCLD)

TO: ALL COMMUNITY CARE PROVIDERS

FROM: ***Original signed by Kevin Gaines***
KEVIN GAINES, Deputy Director
Community Care Licensing Division

SUBJECT: **UPDATE TO THE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) FOR
COMMUNICATION WITH COMPLAINANTS**

Provider Information Notice (PIN) Summary

PIN 26-13-CCLD provides an updated FAQ document describing the Community Care Licensing Division's (CCLD) complaint process and communications with the complainant prior to, during and after a complaint investigation. This PIN supersedes in part PIN 21-06-CCLD.

The FAQ For Communication with Complainants has been updated. This FAQ describes the complaint filing process and addresses questions regarding the nature and content of the CCLD's communications with the complainant prior to, during, and after a complaint investigation. Information on how to file a complaint on a Home Care Organization and how to report suspected child care subsidy funding misuse or fraud has also been added.

If you have any questions regarding this PIN, please contact the CCLD office with jurisdiction over your facility. You can find the contact information below:

- [Adult and Senior Care Regional Offices](#)
- [Children's Residential Program Regional Offices](#)
- [Child Care Regional Offices](#)
- [Home Care Services Branch](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Communication with Complainants For Residential and Child Care Facilities and Home Care Organizations

Question 1: What is a “complainant”?

Answer 1: A ***complainant*** is any person making a complaint which alleges a violation of an applicable statute or regulation regarding a care facility licensed by the California Department of Social Services, a resource family home approved by a Foster Family Agency, or a Home Care Organization (HCO).

Question 2: How is a complaint about a community care facility submitted to the California Department of Social Services (“Department”)?

Answer 2: An individual or an entity may report a complaint about an Adult or Senior Care facility, a Children’s Residential facility, a Child Care facility, or an HCO to the Department’s Centralized Complaint and Information Bureau (CCIB) or to the individual’s local Regional Office or Home Care Services Program Office.

Note: *Fraud complaints about child care subsidy benefits or misuse of public funds are processed separately and should be submitted directly to the Department’s Child Care and Development Division (see the Answer to Question 12 below for more information).*

CCIB contact information:

Complaint Hotline: 1-844-LET-US-NO (1-844-538-8766)

Online: [CCLD Complaint Web Page](#)

Email: letusno@dss.ca.gov

Fax: (916) 414-2551

Regular Mail: California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, M.S. 19-814
Sacramento, CA 95814

For Regional Office contact information listed by program, please refer to the Department's website: [CCLD Information and Resources](#).

Child Care Regional Offices can be located using the Child Care [Regional Office Search](#) link by zip code.

For Adult and Senior Care residential facilities, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman can also resolve care complaints. The office may be contacted via the State CRISIS line at 1-800-231-4024 or via the local police or sheriff's department. For additional information, please see [Report Elder Abuse or Neglect](#) on the California Department of Aging website.

Note: Licensees are prohibited by law from retaliating against anyone who submits a complaint to the Department or the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. For more information, see California Health and Safety Code sections 1539, 1568.07(d), 1569.37, 1596.857(b).

For more information on the Department's complaint process, see the Community Care Licensing Division's [Evaluator Manual Reference Material for Complaints](#).

Question 3: What information should a complainant provide to the Department?

Answer 3: Complainants are encouraged to provide as much detail as possible, to give investigators a clear understanding of the specific claims made in the complaint (the complaint "allegations"). Identifying relevant witnesses, documents, and details of the case will help streamline the investigation process.

Question 4: How will the Department acknowledge receipt of a complaint?

Answer 4: The Department will initially respond to a complainant according to the following scenarios:

- ***When the Department has been provided the means to contact the complainant in writing:***
If the complainant provides the Department a manner in which to contact them in writing (such as U.S. mail or email), the Regional Office or Program Office staff member assigned to the case (known either as the "Licensing Program Analyst" or "LPA" or "Enforcement Analyst" or "EA") will send the complainant an acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint using a [Complaint Intake Notification](#) (form "LIC 856A or HCS 856A").
- ***When the Department's only manner in which to contact***

the complainant is via telephone:

If the complainant only provided a telephone number as a manner of contact, the assigned staff member will contact the complainant by telephone to inform them of the Department's proposed course of action.

- ***When a complaint is submitted with no complainant contact information provided to the Department:***

Complaints submitted without follow-up contact information prevent the Department from reaching the complainant. To receive follow-up communication, the complainant must provide their name and contact details.

Question 5: After the complaint is received, will the Department contact the complainant regarding a complaint investigation?

Answer 5: Yes, the Department will contact the complainant (if contact information has been provided).

Question 6: When will the Department contact the complainant?

Answer 6: The Department will contact the complainant (if contact information has been provided):

- To begin the investigation;
- During the investigation (if necessary); and
- After the complaint investigation to notify the complainant of the results.

For all facilities except HCOs, an initial facility site inspection must occur within 10 calendar days of receipt of the complaint as set forth in applicable law, unless upon preliminary review, the Department determines the complaint is willfully intended to harass the licensee or is without any reasonable basis.

The Department may delay a complaint investigation if it is determined that:

- it would interfere with an investigation by other agencies, including law enforcement;
- it would endanger the health and safety of persons in care;
- it would increase the possibility of evidence being destroyed; or

- victims or witnesses still in care would be in danger of physical abuse, mental abuse or intimidation as a result of the investigation.

While complaint investigations are handled as expeditiously as possible, the total length of an investigation can vary, depending on the complexity, availability of witnesses, and other factors.

Question 7: What will be communicated to the complainant at the beginning of the complaint investigation?

Answer 7: In situations where the complainant provided a means to respond in writing (such as U.S. mail, email, etc.) the Complaint Intake Notification form will be sent to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the complaint. The complainant will then be contacted by the assigned staff member or Investigations Branch Investigator, to review the allegations and be informed that the allegations will be investigated. The Department will promptly communicate its proposed course of action to the complainant.

If the complaint is received by CCIB, the complainant will be informed that the complaint and all received material are being forwarded to the designated Regional or Program Office.

The complainant will be provided the toll-free phone number 1-844-LET-US-NO (1-844-538-8766) for future complaints, concerns, and general information.

The complainant will be informed that the Department will notify them of the **determinations** (see Question 9, below) made in the investigation after delivering the determinations to the licensee. During the investigation, the complainant may contact the applicable Regional or Program Office for a status update on their complaint investigation (if contact information has been provided).

Question 8: Will the Department communicate with the complainant during the complaint investigation?

Answer 8: If the Department requires clarification of the allegations and/or additional information is needed, the complainant will be contacted.

If the complaint investigation is postponed (for example, due to a natural disaster, etc.) then the complainant will be notified of the Department's updated timeline.

Question 9: What determinations can the Department make in a complaint investigation?

Answer 9: At the conclusion of a complaint investigation, the Department will arrive at one of three determinations regarding each of the allegations made in the complaint:

1. The allegation is **Substantiated**: The allegation is considered valid because the “preponderance of the evidence” standard has been met.
2. The allegation is **Unsubstantiated**: The allegation lacks a preponderance of the evidence to prove that the violation occurred.
3. The allegation is **Unfounded**: The allegation is considered invalid because the evidence shows it could not have happened, is false, and/or is without a reasonable basis, and/or is willfully intended to harass.

Question 10: What will be communicated to the complainant after the complaint investigation?

Answer 10: Complaints submitted without contact information prevent the Department from notifying the complainant of investigation determinations. When a complainant provides their name and contact details, the Department can share its determinations and, upon request, the evidence supporting them.

If the [Complaint Investigation Report](#) (form LIC 9099 or HCS 9099) has been filed publicly, the complainant may view it on the [Department's Transparency Website](#) by conducting a facility search, or they may request a copy of the report by contacting the Department.

The Department will not disclose the confidential identities of witnesses and interviewees unless ordered to do so by a court of law.

- **For Adult, Child Care, and Children’s Residential facilities:** If the complainant provides a manner in which to contact them in writing (such as U.S. mail, email, etc.), the assigned LPA will send the complainant a copy of the Complaint Determination Notification(s) which clarifies the determination(s), and will provide a link to the [Department's Transparency Website](#), which contains the Complaint Investigation Report, unless it is statutorily required to be confidential. If the complainant only provides a telephone number as a means to contact them, then the assigned LPA will contact the complainant

by telephone to notify them of the Department's determination(s).

- ***For Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly and Residential Care Facilities for the Chronically III:*** If the complainant provides a manner in which to contact them in writing (such as U.S. mail, email, etc.), the assigned LPA will send the complainant a copy of the Complaint Determination Notification(s) which clarifies the determination(s), and will provide a link to the [Department's Transparency Website](#), which contains the Complaint Investigation Report. If the complainant only provides a telephone number as a means to contact them, then the assigned LPA will contact the complainant by telephone to notify them of the Department's determination(s).
 - For Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (Senior Care facilities), Health and Safety Code section 1569.35(d) requires the Department to notify the complainant in writing of the determination as a result of the investigation within 10 business days of completing the investigation of a complaint.
- ***For Home Care Organizations:*** If the complainant provides a manner in which to contact them in writing (such as U.S. mail, email, etc.), the assigned EA will send the complainant a copy of the Complaint Determination Notification(s) which clarifies the determination(s) and will provide a link to the [Department's Transparency Website](#), which contains the Complaint Investigation Report. If the complainant only provides a telephone number as a means to contact them, then the assigned EA will contact the complainant by telephone to notify them of the Department's determination(s).

Note: Complaint Investigation Reports are uploaded to the [Department's Transparency Website](#) on the Sunday following the day the determination is added to the Department's database.

Question 11: What are the complainant's options if they are concerned with the Department's determination(s)?

Answer 11: If the complainant expresses concern about the Department's determination(s), the LPA or EA will remind the complainant that, if they have additional relevant evidence that was not available at the time the initial allegation was made, providing it to the Department within 60 days of completion of the investigation will allow the Department to evaluate it and render a decision to:

1. Investigate further; or
2. Open a new complaint; or

3. Take no further action in the event the new evidence would not have an impact upon the determination(s).

If the Department considers the new evidence and chooses to investigate the complaint further, the Department will inform the complainant of the determination(s) reached in the continued investigation. This communication will be made using the methods mentioned in this FAQ in Answer 10, above.

If the Department considers the new evidence and chooses to open a new complaint, the Department will communicate with the complainant using the methods described in this FAQ in Answers 7, 8, and 10, above.

Question 12: How can I report misuse of public funds or child care subsidy fraud?

Answer 12: Misuse of public funds and child care subsidy fraud can take many forms, including when individuals intentionally falsify or withhold information to secure public assistance (such as child care subsidy benefits) for unauthorized purposes or personal gain. The Department's Child Care and Development Division will investigate allegations of child care subsidy fraud or misuse of public funds and will take appropriate action, as needed. Such complaints are handled and processed separately from the complaint procedures set forth above for community care licensing violations.

To report potential misuse of public funds related to child care subsidy fraud, please email the Department's Child Care and Development Division at ChildCareFraud@dss.ca.gov. Include your name and contact information, along with information regarding the misuse of public funds related to child care subsidy fraud. Details including the program name, facility or provider name and address, dates, witnesses, description of the suspected fraudulent activity, and any supporting documents or information will help facilitate the investigation process.