

# LICENSING ALERT



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Deputy Secretary for Quality Assurance  
and Health Planning

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Division of Drug and Alcohol Program Licensing  
Licensing Alert 2-96

## Complaint Investigations

The Division of Drug and Alcohol Program Licensing receives 40-50 complaints annually against licensed and unlicensed drug and alcohol providers. These complaints necessitate an investigation by the Division, which in most instances result in an unannounced or scheduled visit to the facility. Occasionally, a complaint can be handled via telephone. The purpose of this Alert is to provide information on the Division's receipt and processing of a complaint.

A complaint can be filed with the Division by any individual, i.e., client, family member, staff. The complainant may request anonymity or ask that his/her name be held in confidence. In order for us to investigate the allegation(s), they must fall within the parameters of the regulations and applicable standards for a licensed drug and alcohol facility or cause a threat to the welfare, health, or safety of a client being served at a drug and alcohol facility. The complainant is asked to provide factual, pertinent information. If it is determined that the issue/concern falls outside the authority of the Division, a referral may be made to the appropriate agency.

Complaints falling under the jurisdiction of the Division are assessed on degree of risk/seriousness (immediate threat, potential threat, no threat). Accordingly, timeliness for the initiation of an investigation is generally dependent upon the seriousness of the allegation(s).

While some investigations are conducted by one staff person, in most instances, two staff persons are assigned. The majority of investigations occur via an unannounced visit. Upon arrival at the facility, Division staff identify themselves and ask to meet with a facility representative to briefly describe the nature of the complaint, i.e., physical plant issue, treatment issue, personnel issue. The purpose of the visit is fact finding. Division staff gather information by talking with facility staff and clients, by reviewing facility and client records, and/or by conducting a tour of the facility.

At the conclusion of the visit, Division staff again meet with the facility representative. If there is no apparent need for further investigation, i.e., revisit to the facility, contact

with collateral sources, or conference with Division supervisory staff, preliminary findings are shared with the facility. However, if consultation or further investigation is necessary, the facility is informed that findings will be shared at a later time. Other citations/areas of concern which were identified during the course of the visit are generally discussed with facility representatives at this time.

Following the visit, the facility receives a written report regarding all findings, as well as instructions for submitting plans of correction, if indicated. Upon receipt and approval of requested plans of correction, the investigation is considered completed. The complainant is provided a brief written summary of the findings.

Should you have any questions regarding this process, you may contact Carol Bashore or Arvida Wanner at (717) 783-8675.