

4 Steps to do when a Complaint Letter is received:

1. **Acknowledge complaints promptly.** Follow the response timeframe outlined in your organizational policy or guidelines and inform the individual when they can expect a reply. Delaying a response to a verbal or written complaint can erode trust and antagonize the individual. A timely response shows that the organization has received the information and is taking it seriously. If a delay is anticipated, inform the individual when they are likely to receive a reply.
2. **Investigate promptly** to gather facts related to the complaint, using documentation such as health records or incident reports, and by discussing with relevant staff. Act quickly, as memories fade and crucial details can be forgotten. The scope of the investigation will vary depending on the specifics of the complaint. Remember, when conducting the investigation and preparing a response, personal health information can only be disclosed in accordance with applicable privacy laws.
3. **Provide Written Acknowledgment:** It is crucial to respond to the patient in writing in the form of a letter. A prompt written reply not only demonstrates professionalism but also allows the hospital to clearly outline the steps being taken to address the patient's concerns. Many patients feel that their issues remain unresolved until they receive a formal written response.
4. **Always follow up**, in writing. If the matter can be resolved immediately in person or over the phone, send a written response as a follow-up to summarize and expand upon your prior discussion and confirm any agreed-upon actions. Following up makes individuals feel appreciated rather than ignored and shows that you are interested in what they had to say. If a written response has been sent instead of a face-to-face meeting (when not possible or desired by the complainant), further follow-up in writing is not necessary.

Things to Remember in Writing a Letter:

- The salutation serves as a courteous recognition and marks the opening of the letter. It **should include an acknowledgment of the receipt of the complaint or concern.**
- The introductory paragraph should be concise and clearly of **your state the purpose letter.** This is where you express any apologies and/or condolences if warranted.
- The main body of the letter should include **a paragraph for each key point** you want to address,
- The concluding paragraph should include **a final expression of regret and a closing statement offering further follow-up** through phone calls or in-person meetings, along with pertinent contact information.
- In your response letter, **do not copy** all persons included in the complainant's letter unless you have authorization from the complainant.
- **Be mindful** of privacy and confidentiality issues.
- Use clear, concise, and understandable language. **Avoid medical jargon** or provide layman's terms in parentheses if necessary.
- Having a **second pair of eyes** review the letter can help ensure that the right intention is conveyed without any miscommunication.
- The **secondary letter** to the patient should include detailing what you have learned from the review and any proposed recommendations. If there are multiple complaints or concerns, acknowledge each one without necessarily providing a detailed analysis of each.



Letter Writing
Guide.pdf

SOURCE:

Response Letter to Grievance:

(Your Hospital)
(Address)

(Date)
(Patient's Name)
(Patient's Address)

Subject: Response to Your Letter

Dear (name),

I am writing to follow up on your (family member)'s recent visit to (facility/site/location). Thank you for your letter dated (date). I truly appreciate the time you took to share all your concerns. We place great importance on the care we provide to each of our patients and are committed to continuous improvement. When unexpected complications arise, we thoroughly review the care provided and are transparent about our findings.

We carefully examine any unexpected outcomes or concerns regarding the medical care we delivered, and we are here to listen and respond to any questions or concerns you may have. The care your (family member) received at (facility/site/location) will be formally reviewed. You will be notified by letter once our review is complete, which typically takes seven days from the date your complaint was filed. If the process takes longer, we will inform you with another letter. Our follow-up letter will allow you the opportunity to learn the results of our review.

In the meantime, if you have any specific concerns or questions, you would like us to address during our review, please feel free to call me at [phone number] at your convenience.

Sincerely,
(name, title)
(Contact information)

30 Day Extension Letter:

(Your Hospital)
(Address)

(Date)
(Patient's Name)
(Patient's Address)

Subject: Response to Your Letter

Dear (Patient's Name),

I would like to thank you once again for bringing your concerns to our attention. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us improve the quality of care we provide at (Hospital Name). We take all patient feedback seriously and are committed to addressing any issues that arise during your care at (Hospital Name). We are thoroughly reviewing the matters you have raised at this time. Due to the complexity of the issues mentioned, we require additional time to conduct a comprehensive review. **OR:** To ensure a thorough and fair review, we need additional time to gather all relevant information and consult with the appropriate departments.

Since our goal is to ensure that our patients receive the highest standard of care, we anticipate that our review will be completed by (New Deadline Date). In the meantime, if you have any further information or documentation that you believe would be helpful to our review, please do not hesitate to share it with us.

We understand that this delay may be inconvenient, and we appreciate your patience as we work to resolve your concerns thoroughly and fairly. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please feel free to contact me directly at (Your Phone Number) or (Your Email Address).

Sincerely,

(Your Name, Title)
(Your Contact Information)

Resolution Letter:

(Your Hospital)
(Address)

(Date)
(Patient's Name)
(Patient's Address)

Dear (Patient's Name),

Thank you for your letter dated (Date of Patient's Letter), in which you expressed your concerns regarding your recent experience at our facility. We greatly value your feedback and are dedicated to addressing all patient concerns with the highest level of care.

Upon receiving your letter, we initiated a thorough review of your case. Here are the steps we have taken to address your concerns:

1. **Review:** We reviewed your medical records and conducted interviews with the staff involved in your care to gather a comprehensive understanding of the situation.
2. **Findings:** Our review revealed that (briefly describe the findings: there was a miscommunication regarding your treatment plan).
3. **Corrective Actions:** To address the issues identified, (describe the actions taken).
4. **Staff Training:** We have also provided additional training to our staff to prevent similar issues from occurring in the future.

We sincerely regret that your experience did not meet your expectations. Your satisfaction and well-being are our top priorities, and we are grateful for feedback from our patients and communities, which often gives us the opportunity to improve future care experiences.

If you have any further questions or require additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact (Contact Person's Name) at (Contact Information).

Sincerely,

(Your Name, Title)

(Your Contact Information)

**Within your hospitals Patient Rights OR the Resolution Letter, you must give the patient the name, address and phone number to the Federal/State agency if they wish to further pursue their grievance.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office for Civil Rights
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201
Toll-free: (800) 368-1019
TDD toll-free: (800) 537-7697

OCR Regional Offices: Southeast Region - Atlanta (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)

Barbara Stampul, Regional Manager

Office for Civil Rights

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 16T70

61 Forsyth Street, S.W.

Atlanta, GA 30303-8909

Customer Response Center: (800) 368-1019

Fax: (202) 619-3818

TDD :(800) 537-7697

Email: ocrmail@hhs.gov