Purpose:

Establishing a formal grievance procedure is essential to ensure shelter clients have a transparent, accessible, and equitable process for raising concerns and seeking resolutions. Such a procedure not only upholds the rights of the clients to have their voices heard but also reinforces the shelter's commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in service provisions. By implementing a step-by-step process, the shelter demonstrates its dedication to addressing the needs and concerns of those it serves by creating an environment of trust and respect. This procedure is a critical component of the shelter's operational policies. It is in place to accommodate the fair and timely processing of grievances, thereby contributing to the overall well-being, safety, and satisfaction of both the shelter and its clients. The following proposed grievance serves as a threshold for nonprofits to design or update their current procedures.

- ❖ If the client needs assistance with filing a grievance, the organization will provide reasonable accommodations, including but not limited to access to an interpreter and/or assistance with grievance documentation.

Policy:

Clients can file a grievance anytime while participating in a CoC program. Clients have the right to be free from retaliation when filing a grievance.

Grievance Procedure:

If a client wishes to file a grievance, they must follow a step-by-step process created by the shelter, which implements the basic procedures set forth below. If a client's grievance is directed at or about their case manager, program manager, or executive leadership, they may bypass the direct party involved. After all proper steps have been followed, if a client's grievance has not been adequately addressed, the client holds the right to file a grievance with the Arlington County Department of Human Services (See Step Three)

Step One: The client should speak with the program manager.

- Grievances should begin with program managers.
- Grievances can be submitted in writing or via email. If submitted in writing, the client will receive a copy.
- Emergencies should warrant a 24 to 72-hour response.
    - A Response is defined as an acknowledgment of a grievance.
    - An emergency is defined as a violation of one of the Clients' Bill of Rights (found here)
    - For non-emergencies, the program manager will respond within five business days.
    - The Program manager should provide the client with a copy of the decision.

- The program manager should document the outcomes of the grievance.

Step Two: The client should speak with a member of the organization's executive leadership.

- If not satisfied with the outcomes from the program manager, the client should escalate the grievance to a member of the executive leadership.
- Grievances can be submitted in writing or via email. If submitted in writing, the client will receive a copy.
- Emergencies should warrant a 24 to 72-hour response.
    - A Response is defined as an acknowledgment of a grievance.
    - An emergency is defined as a violation of one of the Clients' Bill of Rights (found here)
    - Someone from the executive leadership team will respond within five business days for non-emergencies.
    - Executive leadership should provide the client with a copy of the final decision.
- Executive leadership should document the outcomes of the grievance.

Step 3: The client should follow the Arlington County Department of Human Services Grievance Policy

- If not satisfied with the outcomes at the organizational level, the client should escalate the grievance to the Arlington County Department of Human Services (DHS), see DHS Grievance Policy

    - ❖ DHS will not consider grievances that have not followed the nonprofit's grievance procedures/processes unless the organization has not followed its grievance protocol