

[At a minimum:]

§482.13(a)(2)(ii) The grievance process must specify time frames for review of the grievance and the provision of a response.

Interpretive Guidelines §482.13(a)(2)(ii)

The hospital must review, investigate, and resolve each patient's grievance within a reasonable time frame. For example, grievances about situations that endanger the patient, such as neglect or abuse, should be reviewed immediately, given the seriousness of the allegations and the potential for harm to the patient(s). However, regardless of the nature of the grievance, the hospital should make sure that it is responding to the substance of each grievance while identifying, investigating, and resolving any deeper, systemic problems indicated by the grievance.

Document when a grievance is so complicated that it may require an extensive investigation. We recognize that staff scheduling as well as fluctuations in the numbers and complexity of grievances can affect the timeframes for the resolution of a grievance and the provision of a written response. On average, a time frame of 7 days for the provision of the response would be considered appropriate. We do not require that every grievance be resolved during the specified timeframe although most should be resolved. 42 CFR 482.13(a)(2)(iii) specifies information the hospital must include in their response.

If the grievance will not be resolved, or if the investigation is not or will not be completed within 7 days, the hospital should inform the patient or the patient's representative that the hospital is still working to resolve the grievance and that the hospital will follow-up with a written response within a stated number of days in accordance with the hospital's grievance policy. The hospital must attempt to resolve all grievances as soon as possible.

Survey Procedures §482.13(a)(2)(ii)

What time frames are established to review and respond to patient grievances? Are these time frames clearly explained in the information provided to the patient that explains the hospital's grievance process? On average, does the hospital provide a written response to most of its grievances within the timeframe specified in its policy?