SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES™
Balancing the Scales of Justice

CLIENT GRIEVANCE PACKET

Dear Applicant/Client:

South Carolina Legal Services is a statewide law firm that provides civil legal services to protect the rights and to represent the interests of low-income South Carolinians. It is our vision that someday all low-income South Carolinians will have full and fair access to justice.

Unfortunately, because of the Legal Services' Corporation Act and regulations, our case priorities, inadequate funding, and insufficient staffing, it is impossible at this time for SCLS to help everyone who seeks our representation. However, SCLS does value the comments of each and every applicant and client and does take your comments about our services seriously.

If you have concerns about any of the following matters, please email us at **grievance@sclegal.org .**

1. Eligibility: this includes the denial of assistance because of financial ineligibility, LSC Act or regulations, or case priorities. It also includes the decision to provide advice and counsel or brief services rather than extended services;
2. The manner or quality of service you received from SCLS staff, including all other grievances; or
3. The manner or quality of service you received from PAI attorney or their staff.

The enclosed materials are offered in an attempt to help you understand SCLS policy regarding your concerns and what steps you can take if you are not satisfied with how we address those concerns.

We look forward to the day when South Carolina Legal Services' vision becomes a reality. Until then, it is our commitment to offer you the opportunity to be heard in a meaningful manner.

Sincerely,

South Carolina Legal Services

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Contact: To submit a grievance, please email grievance@sclegal.org. Your message will be routed to the appropriate Managing Attorney.

APPEAL PROCESS FOR CLIENTS
SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES

South Carolina Legal Services has a two-step process for resolving client or applicant concerns regarding eligibility or the manner of service. First, the Managing Attorney of the office will talk with you and try to resolve the concern to your satisfaction. If the Managing Attorney is able to resolve your concern informally, nothing further needs to happen.

Second, if after speaking with the Managing Attorney, you are still not satisfied, you may engage in our formal grievance procedure. The Managing Attorney will document the complaint. You will be able to include your own written statement if you want to or you can tell the staff member what you want them to write for you. Your concerns should be written as specific as possible and should include the names of all staff and any other persons involved with your concern.

Some definitions that may be helpful to you in understanding our procedures are:

1. **"**Client" includes applicants who were never clients.

2. "Eligibility" is a grievance from an applicant based on a denial of assistance because of financial ineligibility, LSC Act or Regulations, case priorities, or the decision to provide advice and counsel or brief services rather than extended services.

3. "Manner of Service" includes all grievances other than "Eligibility".

4. "Grievance Committee" is a committee of the Board of Directors appointed to hear client grievances. The committee shall consist of three or more members, with the proportion of attorneys to community members roughly in the same proportion as the Board itself.

5. "Reviewer" is the Managing Attorney, the Director of Grants and Compliance (or other staff member designated by the Executive Director), the Executive Director, or member(s) of the Grievance Committee.

6. "SCLS file" is a file kept by SCLS administration to retain copies of all formal client grievances.

There are certain rules that apply to all formal grievance procedures. They are:

1. Once you make your concern known, that concern will be given to the appropriate reviewer no later than five (5) business days after receiving the grievance.

2. The reviewer will then consider your concern, look at your file and do anything that will help them become informed about your concern(s) including doing research, talking with you, staff members, and other persons who may have important information about your concern(s). Staff members may be asked to put what they remember into writing.

3. At each stage of review in the formal grievance procedure, the reviewer may take any actions they think are appropriate. They can agree with the previous decision; they can change some things about the previous decision; they can send your concern back to the previous reviewer with instructions about how they should proceed; or, they can change the decision completely.

4. If your concern ends up being reviewed by the Grievance Committee, we may have to disclose some things that you said in the course of the attorney-client relationship. In that case, we would ask for you to sign a Limited Waiver of Attorney Client Privilege form showing that you want us to share information you told us in confidence with the Grievance Committee.

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FORMAL "ELIGIBILITY" GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

A formal grievance about eligibility – denial of assistance because of financial ineligibility, LSC Act or Regulations, case priorities, or the decision to provide advice and counsel or brief services rather than extended services – will be started by a Client Grievance Form being completed, most likely by the Managing Attorney after determining that we cannot resolve your concern(s) informally.

First Review: The Managing Attorney or other reviewer will review the completed formal grievance form, SCLS policies and any appropriate statutes and regulations that are related to your concern.

You will then receive a written decision as soon as practical after the review. A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file.

You will be told at that time of your right to appeal the decision about your concern(s). If appealing, a copy of the client grievance form and decision will be given to the next reviewer.

Second Review: If you are not satisfied with the decision of the first review, you may appeal to the staff Director designated by the Executive Director.

You will then receive a written decision as soon as practical after the review. A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file.

You will be told at that time of your right to appeal the decision about your concern(s). If appealing, a copy of the client grievance form and decision will be given to the next reviewer.

Third and Final Review: If you are not satisfied with the decision of second review, you may appeal the decision to the Chairman of the Grievance Committee. The Chairman can agree with the previous decision, change it completely or send it back to the second reviewer with further instructions. You will receive a written decision as soon as practical. A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file. **There is no further appeal.**

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FORMAL "MANNER OF SERVICE" GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

A formal grievance about the manner of service you received – all grievances that are not about "eligibility" – will be started by a Client Grievance Form being completed, most likely by the Managing Attorney after determining that we cannot resolve your concern(s) informally.

First Review: The Managing Attorney or other reviewer will review the completed formal grievance form, SCLS policies and any appropriate statutes and regulations and talk with the persons involved.

You will then receive a written decision as soon as practical after the review. A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file.

You will be told at that time of your right to appeal the decision about your concern(s). If appealing, a copy of the client grievance form and decision will be given to the next reviewer.

Second Review: If you are not satisfied with the decision of the first review, you may appeal to the staff Director designated by the Executive Director.

You will then receive a written decision as soon as practical after the review. A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file.

You will be told at that time of your right to appeal the decision about your concern(s). If appealing, a copy of the client grievance form and decision will be given to the next reviewer.

Final Administrative Review: If you are not satisfied with the decision of the second review, you may appeal to the Executive Director.

You will then receive a written decision as soon as practical after the review. A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file.

You will be told at that time of your right to appeal the decision about your concern(s). If appealing, a copy of the client grievance form and decision will be given to the next reviewer.

Grievance Committee Review: If you are not satisfied with the decision of the final administrative review, you may appeal the decision to the Grievance Committee.

The Grievance Committee will be furnished copies of all documents related to your concern and copies of all prior Client Grievance Forms.

A meeting of the Grievance Committee will be scheduled as soon as practical.

You can make an oral and a written statement to the Grievance Committee and you can have another person come with you when you appear in front of the Grievance Committee.

At the same time, the Executive Director or designee can make an oral and a written statement of the facts and the order of what happened in an attempt to resolve your concerns.

What you say and what SCLS says will be recorded.

You then will receive a written decision as soon as practical after the review. The Executive Director and other staff involved will also receive a copy of the written decision.

A copy of the decision will be placed in your file and in the SCLS file. **There is no further appeal.**

APPEAL TO LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

If you believe that you have been discriminated against based disability or any class status protected by federal, state, or local laws and regulations, you have a right to file a complaint with the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). Please contact me as set out above for the current contact person at LSC and their address and/or phone number.