



Ohio Revised Code

Section 3721.17 Grievance procedure.

Effective: September 29, 2013

Legislation: House Bill 59 - 130th General Assembly

(A) Any resident who believes that the resident's rights under sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code have been violated may file a grievance under procedures adopted pursuant to division (A)(2) of section 3721.12 of the Revised Code.

When the grievance committee determines a violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code has occurred, it shall notify the administrator of the home. If the violation cannot be corrected within ten days, or if ten days have elapsed without correction of the violation, the grievance committee shall refer the matter to the department of health.

(B) Any person who believes that a resident's rights under sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code have been violated may report or cause reports to be made of the information directly to the department of health. No person who files a report is liable for civil damages resulting from the report.

(C)(1) Within thirty days of receiving a complaint under this section, the department of health shall investigate any complaint referred to it by a home's grievance committee and any complaint from any source that alleges that the home provided substantially less than adequate care or treatment, or substantially unsafe conditions, or, within seven days of receiving a complaint, refer it to the attorney general, if the attorney general agrees to investigate within thirty days.

(2) Within thirty days of receiving a complaint under this section, the department of health may investigate any alleged violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, or of rules, policies, or procedures adopted pursuant to those sections, not covered by division (C)(1) of this section, or it may, within seven days of receiving a complaint, refer the complaint to the grievance committee at the home where the alleged violation occurred, or to the attorney general if the attorney general agrees to investigate within thirty days.

(D) If, after an investigation, the department of health finds probable cause to believe that a



violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, or of rules, policies, or procedures adopted pursuant to those sections, has occurred at a home that is certified under the medicare or medicaid program, it shall cite one or more findings or deficiencies under sections 5165.60 to 5165.89 of the Revised Code. If the home is not so certified, the department shall hold an adjudicative hearing within thirty days under Chapter 119. of the Revised Code.

(E) Upon a finding at an adjudicative hearing under division (D) of this section that a violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, or of rules, policies, or procedures adopted pursuant thereto, has occurred, the department of health shall make an order for compliance, set a reasonable time for compliance, and assess a fine pursuant to division (F) of this section. The fine shall be paid to the general revenue fund only if compliance with the order is not shown to have been made within the reasonable time set in the order. The department of health may issue an order prohibiting the continuation of any violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code.

Findings at the hearings conducted under this section may be appealed pursuant to Chapter 119. of the Revised Code, except that an appeal may be made to the court of common pleas of the county in which the home is located.

The department of health shall initiate proceedings in court to collect any fine assessed under this section that is unpaid thirty days after the violator's final appeal is exhausted.

(F) Any home found, pursuant to an adjudication hearing under division (D) of this section, to have violated sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, or rules, policies, or procedures adopted pursuant to those sections may be fined not less than one hundred nor more than five hundred dollars for a first offense. For each subsequent offense, the home may be fined not less than two hundred nor more than one thousand dollars.

A violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code is a separate offense for each day of the violation and for each resident who claims the violation.

(G) No home or employee of a home shall retaliate against any person who:

(1) Exercises any right set forth in sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, including, but



not limited to, filing a complaint with the home's grievance committee or reporting an alleged violation to the department of health;

(2) Appears as a witness in any hearing conducted under this section or section 3721.162 of the Revised Code;

(3) Files a civil action alleging a violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, or notifies a county prosecuting attorney or the attorney general of a possible violation of sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code.

If, under the procedures outlined in this section, a home or its employee is found to have retaliated, the violator may be fined up to one thousand dollars.

(H) When legal action is indicated, any evidence of criminal activity found in an investigation under division (C) of this section shall be given to the prosecuting attorney in the county in which the home is located for investigation.

(I)(1)(a) Any resident whose rights under sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code are violated has a cause of action against any person or home committing the violation.

(b) An action under division (I)(1)(a) of this section may be commenced by the resident or by the resident's legal guardian or other legally authorized representative on behalf of the resident or the resident's estate. If the resident or the resident's legal guardian or other legally authorized representative is unable to commence an action under that division on behalf of the resident, the following persons in the following order of priority have the right to and may commence an action under that division on behalf of the resident or the resident's estate:

(i) The resident's spouse;

(ii) The resident's parent or adult child;

(iii) The resident's guardian if the resident is a minor child;



(iv) The resident's brother or sister;

(v) The resident's niece, nephew, aunt, or uncle.

(c) Notwithstanding any law as to priority of persons entitled to commence an action, if more than one eligible person within the same level of priority seeks to commence an action on behalf of a resident or the resident's estate, the court shall determine, in the best interest of the resident or the resident's estate, the individual to commence the action. A court's determination under this division as to the person to commence an action on behalf of a resident or the resident's estate shall bar another person from commencing the action on behalf of the resident or the resident's estate.

(d) The result of an action commenced pursuant to division (I)(1)(a) of this section by a person authorized under division (I)(1)(b) of this section shall bind the resident or the resident's estate that is the subject of the action.

(e) A cause of action under division (I)(1)(a) of this section shall accrue, and the statute of limitations applicable to that cause of action shall begin to run, based upon the violation of a resident's rights under sections 3721.10 to 3721.17 of the Revised Code, regardless of the party commencing the action on behalf of the resident or the resident's estate as authorized under divisions (I)(1)(b) and (c) of this section.

(2)(a) The plaintiff in an action filed under division (I)(1) of this section may obtain injunctive relief against the violation of the resident's rights. The plaintiff also may recover compensatory damages based upon a showing, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the violation of the resident's rights resulted from a negligent act or omission of the person or home and that the violation was the proximate cause of the resident's injury, death, or loss to person or property.

(b) If compensatory damages are awarded for a violation of the resident's rights, section 2315.21 of the Revised Code shall apply to an award of punitive or exemplary damages for the violation.

(c) The court, in a case in which only injunctive relief is granted, may award to the prevailing party reasonable attorney's fees limited to the work reasonably performed.



(3) Division (I)(2)(b) of this section shall be considered to be purely remedial in operation and shall be applied in a remedial manner in any civil action in which this section is relevant, whether the action is pending in court or commenced on or after July 9, 1998.

(4) Within thirty days after the filing of a complaint in an action for damages brought against a home under division (I)(1)(a) of this section by or on behalf of a resident or former resident of the home, the plaintiff or plaintiff's counsel shall send written notice of the filing of the complaint to the department of medicaid if the department has a right of recovery under section 5160.37 of the Revised Code against the liability of the home for the cost of medicaid services arising out of injury, disease, or disability of the resident or former resident.