

*Washington County Family & Children First Council*  
**DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

The local dispute resolution process shall serve as the process that must be used first to resolve disputes among the agencies represented on the county council concerning the provision of services to children, including children who are abused, neglected, dependent, unruly, alleged unruly, or delinquent children and under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and children whose parents or custodians are voluntarily seeking services.

The following local dispute resolution process shall be used to resolve disputes between a child's parents or custodians and the county council regarding service coordination. The county council, through the Family & Children First Service Coordinator (or Help Me Grow Service Coordinator for families enrolled in Help Me Grow), shall inform the parents or custodians of their right to use the dispute resolution process and submit a copy of this document to the parent/guardian. Parents or custodians shall use existing local agency grievance procedures to address disputes not involving service coordination. The dispute resolution process is in addition to and does not replace other rights or procedures that parents or custodians may have under other sections of the Revised Code. Each agency represented on a County Family and Children First Council that is providing services or funding for services that are the subject of the dispute initiated by a parent shall continue to provide those services and the funding for those services during the dispute process.

Conflicts may arise in three distinct types of situations:

- The family is in disagreement with one agency;
- The family is in disagreement with the service plan; or
- One agency is in disagreement with another agency or the service plan

1. The process for handling each of the above situations is dependent on the premise that individuals and agencies will, in all instances, seek clarification and resolution at the Family Team level prior to initiating the formal conflict resolution process. If difficulties in resolution at this level occur, the Council Administrator can be asked to sit on the team as a mediator for conflict resolution. At no time during the dispute resolution process will services to the family be disrupted. This keeps the conflict mediation and dispute resolution as close to the direct level of care as possible. The process itself is a mediating process and is based on a "stay at the table" approach, which is understood and accepted by the participants. The final Family Team plan, which emerges, is the negotiated document and contains "team" solutions.
2. If the Family Team cannot resolve the conflict, a referral can be made by contacting the Council Administrator in writing. Upon receipt of the written referral, the Council Administrator shall present the referral to the Community Options Team at their next regularly scheduled meeting (COT meets twice monthly). The Community Options Team will review all relevant information and issue recommendations within five business days beginning the day after the Community Options Team reviews the referral. For *emergency* dispute resolution, the family or provider brings the emergency situation to the attention of the Council Administrator. (An emergency situation is defined as disruption to an essential service provision, which jeopardizes the safety and well being of the child or family). The Council Administrator will request an emergency meeting of the Community Options Team to review the referral and issue a recommendation within five days of the emergency meeting.
3. If a resolution cannot be found at the Community Options Team level, then the Council Administrator makes a referral to the Executive Committee of the Family & Children First Council. This committee shall review a written statement of the problem and the steps previously taken to resolve it. The Executive Committee shall have fact-finding and

recommending functions and may require any additional information or ask any participants for further details regarding the conflict. All parties to the action may be present during the review by the Executive Committee. Any additional information requested will also be provided to all Family Team members. The Committee will issue a written majority recommendation within 10 working days of review of the referral to the Council Administrator and complainant. The recommendation is then conveyed to the Family Team. This decision is considered to be locally binding.

4. At the next regularly scheduled Council meeting, the Executive Committee will report its actions along with recommended policy changes to improve the overall delivery of services.
5. In the event the Family and/or Agency is not satisfied with the action taken by the Family and Children First Council, the final arbitrator of individual case resolution will be the presiding juvenile court judge. The party may pursue the issue by filing an action with Juvenile Court within seven (7) days of the failed dispute resolution process. Interagency assessment or treatment information shall be submitted to the court. Where the Juvenile Court is a party to the action, a Court in another county shall hear the complaint. Decisions of the Juvenile Court shall be subject to the standard appeal process of the Justice System.

Washington County Family & Children First Council shall assure that there is a process, through the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), for complaint resolution that includes mediation and civil hearing procedures for parents in the Washington County Help Me Grow ‘Part C’ program component. If a complaint is unresolved and the complainant feels their rights relative to any Part C services have been violated, they may forward the complaint to the Ohio Department of Health and/or the Washington County Family & Children First Council for further action. (**See Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Early Intervention Services, Ohio Procedural Safeguards: Early Intervention – pages 15-22**). Discussion of parent’s rights and the HMG complaint process should occur with families at the initial IFSP and all subsequent IFSP reviews.

Parents of children enrolled in the ‘at-risk’ component of HMG shall follow the dispute resolution process as outlined in this Dispute Resolution Process, however, they may also submit their complaint in writing to the Ohio Department of Health.

The Ohio Family & Children First Cabinet Council has an established State Appeals Process to resolve disputes among participants of local Family & Children First Councils when local Council participants agree that reasonable responsibilities are not being shared. Local Councils may access the appeal process only by a majority vote of their local membership.

**ADDRESSES:**

Washington County Family & Children First Council  
202 Davis Avenue  
Marietta, OH 45750  
Phone: 740-376-7081

Washington County Help Me Grow  
202 Davis Avenue  
Marietta, OH 45750  
Phone: 740-374-4954

Appeals Request  
Ohio Department of Health,  
P.O. Box 118  
Columbus, OH 43266-0118  
Phone: 614-644-8389

I \_\_\_\_\_ have been advised of and understand my family’s rights to  
(print name)

use the dispute resolution process. \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature Date