



# Illinois Prison Grievance Procedure

Prepared by the Uptown People's Law Center (updated October 2024)

## Important Things to Know

1. Before filing a lawsuit, an incarcerated person **MUST** complete the entire grievance process. If you file a lawsuit without filing a grievance, the judge may dismiss your case. If you have a grievance, you should start and complete this process as soon as possible.
2. **A grievance must be filed within 60 days of the issue** you are grieving about. There is no time limit to file a grievance about sexual abuse.
3. If you need help filing a grievance, IDOC must provide assistance. Make sure that the person who helps you file a grievance writes their name down on the form.
4. We understand that this process is difficult and may not solve your problem. However, it is necessary for any lawsuit you may file. It makes a record that IDOC knew about your issue. We highly recommend that you complete these steps.

## Pro Tips

1. **Make copies of all documents**, including your grievance, the Grievance Officer's report, and the Warden's decision. You can handwrite your copies. You can also send copies to a trusted person outside of the prison for safekeeping.
2. Include as much detail as you can. Include dates and names of anyone involved. Explain who, what, when, and where. If possible, explain what happened as a timeline.
3. Keep notes for yourself when you complete each step. Take notes on any communications you have with prison staff. Include who you spoke with and when.
4. If you do not receive a response at any step of the process, you can send a letter asking for a status update or file another grievance about the delay. You can try to move to the next step, but your grievance may be sent back. Keep a note that you did not receive a response. Also keep a note of any status requests you make.
5. If the issue happened at a different prison than where you are currently located, you can mail your grievance directly to the Administrative Review Board (ARB). There is an exception: you cannot submit grievances about medical issues or lost property directly to the ARB. File your grievance about medical issues or property in your current prison.

**Administrative Review Board**  
1301 Concordia Court  
P.O. Box 19277  
Springfield, IL 62794-9277

**\*Note: You must send**  
your appeal through U.S.  
mail at your own expense.

**\*\*For more information on IDOC**  
grievance policies, ask the law  
library for Administrative Directive  
04.01.114

# The Grievance Process

**Step 1:** Fill out the grievance form **within 60 days** of the incident or problem.

- Include as many details as you can. Make a copy for yourself to keep. If you have multiple issues, submit multiple grievances.
- If your grievance is about sexual abuse, there is NO time limit under IDOC policy. However, you must file a grievance within two years of the abuse to file a lawsuit.

**Step 2:** Submit the grievance form in the **grievance box** in your unit. The counselor's office should read your grievance and respond to it. They may forward it directly to the Grievance Officer, but this is not common.

- If your grievance is about discipline or sexual abuse, skip this step and send your grievance directly to the Grievance Officer.
- You should get a tracking number in the mail for your grievance. The same tracking number should be on the document that you get back from the counselor. If this doesn't happen, write to the counselor to ask what happened to your grievance. You may need to submit another grievance about this issue.

**Step 3:** If you are not satisfied with the counselor's response, put your grievance form in the **institutional mail box**. The Grievance Officer will review your grievance and then make a report to the Warden/Chief Administration Officer.

- The Warden usually has 2 months to respond and make a final decision. This is not a hard deadline. Sometimes it will take longer to get a response.
- If you do not receive a response within 2 months, you have three options:
  - 1) Send the Warden a request for a response through the institutional mail box.
  - 2) File another grievance asking for a response through the grievance box.
  - 3) Skip to step 4 and write to the ARB that you did not receive a response.

**Step 4:** If you disagree with the Warden's decision, you can appeal it. **Mail a letter to the Administrative Review Board (ARB) within 30 days of the Warden's decision.** The letter should explain why you disagree with the Warden's decision. Include a copy of your original grievance, the Grievance Officer's report, and the Warden's decision.

- The Grievance Officer or Warden may reject your grievance as untimely. This means that it was filed after the 60-day deadline. In your appeal, explain why you did not file your grievance on time. They may consider your grievance if you can show "good cause" for missing the deadline.
- The ARB may conduct an investigation or hearing. They will then send a written report of recommendations to the Director.
- The ARB Director has 6 months to respond to a grievance appeal, "when reasonably feasible under the circumstances." If you do not receive a response within 4 months, write a letter to ARB asking them about the status of their decision.

**Completing the Process:** The grievance process is complete when all four steps have been taken.