



## **CLIENT AND APPLICANT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Prairie State is committed to providing high quality legal services to clients, and to be accountable to the communities we serve. The procedures explained in this pamphlet are intended to provide a fair method for the resolution of disputes.

### **If you are denied services and you do not agree with the decision:**

Prairie State does not receive sufficient funding to enable us to hire enough attorneys to assist all of the people who contact us seeking help. Therefore, we focus our resources on those cases which involve immediate threats to our clients' basic needs, such as food, safety and shelter. In addition, there are many types of cases that we are not allowed to handle because of government restrictions, such as criminal and fee generating cases. If Prairie State denies you legal services, or offers you less assistance than you desire, you may take the following steps:

1. Contact the Managing Attorney of the Prairie State office in your area within a reasonable time of the action denying or limiting your representation. He or she will investigate and respond to your complaint in writing within a reasonable time, normally within ten working days.
2. If you are not satisfied with the Managing Attorney's response, you may make a complaint in writing within ten working days of that response by writing to:

Michael O'Connor, Executive Director  
Prairie State Legal Services, Inc.  
303 N. Main Street, Suite 600  
Rockford, IL 61101-1050

Please provide a phone number or other information about how you can be contacted to discuss your complaint. If you need assistance in preparing a written complaint, someone in the local Prairie State office will assist you at your request.

3. Within ten working days after receiving your complaint, the Executive Director or his or her designee will attempt to contact you to discuss the matter. If you so request, a member of the Prairie State Board of Directors will also participate in this discussion, unless doing so is not practical because a board member is unavailable due to time constraints.
4. Within ten working days after discussing your complaint with you, the Executive Director will make a decision and inform you of it in writing. If the Executive Director, despite reasonable efforts, is unable to contact you to discuss the matter, he or she will make a decision based upon the information contained in your complaint and inform you of this decision in writing within 20 working days of receiving your complaint.

### **If you are dissatisfied with the manner or quality of the legal assistance provided to you:**

1. Contact the Managing Attorney of the Prairie State office in your area within a reasonable time of the action to which you object. He or she will investigate and respond to your complaint in writing within a reasonable time, normally within ten working days.

2. If you are not satisfied with the Managing Attorney's response, you may make a complaint in writing within ten working days of that response by writing to:

Michael O'Connor, Executive Director  
Prairie State Legal Services, Inc.  
303 N. Main Street, Suite 600  
Rockford, IL 61101-1050

Please provide a phone number or other information about how you can be contacted to discuss your complaint. If you need assistance in preparing a written complaint, someone in the local Prairie State office will assist you at your request.

3. Within ten working days after receiving your complaint, the Executive Director or his or her designee will attempt to contact you to discuss the matter. Within ten working days after discussing your complaint with you, the Executive Director will make a decision and inform you of it in writing. If the Executive Director, despite reasonable efforts, is unable to contact you to discuss the matter, he or she will make a decision based upon the information contained in your complaint and inform you of this decision in writing within 20 working days of receiving your complaint.
4. If you do not agree with the Executive Director's decision, you may appeal to the Grievance Committee, by notifying the Executive Director within ten working days after his decision. The Grievance Committee is composed of three members of Prairie State's Board of Directors, one of whom is an eligible client.

You have the following rights in presenting your appeal to the Grievance Committee:

- You will be given the opportunity to present your information at a hearing. This hearing will normally be held by telephone, but if you request, the hearing may be held in-person or by some other reasonable alternative. If the hearing is held by telephone, reasonable arrangements will be made for you to participate at no cost;
- You may be accompanied by another person who can speak on your behalf at the telephone or in-person hearing;
- You may submit a written statement to the Grievance Committee. If you so request, you may dictate a brief statement, and Prairie State will transcribe that statement.
- You may submit other written evidence or documents which you believe are relevant to your appeal.
- The hearing will ordinarily last no longer than one hour, unless the committee finds that there is good cause to provide a longer hearing.
- The Executive Director or his or her designee will also be present at the hearing, in order to answer questions or provide information requested by the committee.
- You will receive a final written decision from the committee within thirty working days after the hearing.

If you require assistance in pursuing your grievance rights set forth herein because of a disability, Prairie State Legal Services will arrange reasonable accommodations to assist you in the filing and presentation of your grievance upon your request. Please advise the Managing Attorney or the Executive Director of any special assistance you need.

Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. provides services to eligible clients without regard to race, color, creed, sex, age, disability, or national origin.

Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act, the U.S. Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Age Discrimination Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the U.S. and Illinois Constitutions. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint. For information, please contact the managing attorney of your local Prairie State Legal Services office.