

Complaints and Appeals

Complaints

What should I do if I have a complaint?

We want to help. If you have a complaint, please call us toll-free at 1-877-639-2447 to tell us about your problem. A FirstCare Member Advocate can help you file a complaint. Just call 1-877-639-2447. Most of the time, we can help you right away or at the most within a few days.

Who do I call?

To make a complaint by telephone, call FirstCare at 1-806-784-4300 or call FirstCare Customer Service toll-free at 1-877-639-2447.

Or, to make a complaint in writing, send it to:

FirstCare Health Plans
Attn: Complaints and Appeals Department
12940 N Hwy 183
Austin, TX 78750

Can someone from FirstCare help me file a complaint?

Yes. If you need help filing a complaint, FirstCare can help. Call FirstCare Customer Service at 1-877-639-2447.

Once we receive your complaint, we will send you a letter letting you know we are working to resolve the problem. This letter will be mailed within 5 business days after your telephone call.

How long will it take to process my complaint? What are the requirements and timeframes for filing a complaint?

We will send you a letter telling you about our decision. You will receive this letter within 30 days after we receive your complaint. Our letter will tell you the medical or plan benefit reason for our decision.

If you have a complaint about an emergency or hospital stay, you will have a decision in one business day.

If I am not satisfied with the outcome, who else can I contact?

If you are not satisfied with the answer to your complaint, you can also complain to the Texas Department of Insurance by calling toll-free to 1-800-252-3439. If you would like to make your request in writing send it to:

Texas Department of Insurance
Consumer Protection
PO Box 149091
Austin, Texas 78714-9091

If you can get on the Internet, you can send your complaint in an email to:
<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/consumer/complfrm.html>

Is there someone outside of FirstCare to talk to for help?

If you cannot get things worked out to your satisfaction with FirstCare, you can speak with someone at the Ombudsman Office with Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). Their number is 1-866-566-8989.

Do I have the right to meet with a complaint appeal panel?

Yes. If you are not satisfied with FirstCare's response to your complaint, you have the right to meet with a complaint appeal panel. The panel is made up of members, providers and FirstCare staff. The panel will meet with you and a final response to your complaint will be completed within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your written request for an appeal.

Appeals

What can I do if my doctor asks for a service for me that's covered but FirstCare denies or limits it?

You have the right to appeal. You can ask for an appeal if you are not happy with FirstCare CHIP's decision. You can call FirstCare Customer Service toll-free at 1-877-639-2447. Our customer service department can help you with your appeal.

How will I find out if services are denied?

FirstCare CHIP will let you or someone you know in writing when a covered service has been denied or limited.

What are the time frames for the appeal process?

You can ask for an appeal if you do not agree with what FirstCare has told you. You or your representative can ask for an appeal. You can ask for an appeal by phone or in writing. If you ask by phone, you must follow up with a completed appeal form. FirstCare CHIP will send the form to you. If FirstCare CHIP does not get the completed appeal form back from you, no other action will be taken on your appeal.

FirstCare CHIP will send you a letter within 5 days after we get your written appeal. This lets you know that your written appeal has been received. FirstCare CHIP will review your request for appeal. You or your representative, and your doctor or health care provider will get a response. This will come within 30 days of when your written request is received.

Your appeal about an emergency or hospital stay will be decided in one business day once we have all the information.

When do I have the right to ask for an appeal?

You can ask for an appeal any time you disagree with FirstCare's decision. The decision can be about ending or limiting health services. If you are not happy with our decision, you can appeal.

Does my request have to be in writing?

You can ask for an appeal by phone or in writing. Call FirstCare Customer Service at 1-877-639-2447 if you need help or you can ask for an appeal by writing to:

FirstCare Health Plans
Attn: Complaints and Appeals Department
12940 N Hwy 183
Austin, TX 78750

If you call FirstCare to request an appeal, you must follow up your phone call with a request in writing.

Your appeal will be sent to an appeal panel. When you ask for an appeal, we will send you a letter within 5 business days. This letter will tell you the date, time, and location of the appeal panel. You can attend the hearing or you can write to the appeal panel. Before the appeal hearing, you will be given instructions for you to submit written comments, documents, or other information relating to the appeal.

Can someone from FirstCare help me file an appeal?

Yes. Call FirstCare Customer Service at 1-877-639-2447.

Expedited Appeals

What is an expedited appeal?

An Expedited Appeal is when the health plan (FirstCare) has to make a decision quickly based on the condition of your health, and taking the time for a standard appeal could jeopardize your life or health.

How do I ask for an expedited appeal? Does my request have to be in writing?

You may ask for an expedited appeal by phone or in writing. Call FirstCare Customer Service at 1-877-639-2447 if you need help. If you call FirstCare to request an expedited appeal, you do not have to follow up in writing.

What are the timeframes for an expedited appeal?

A decision will be made and given to you within 1 working day from the date all information is received. We will notify you by phone to be followed by a letter within 3 days.

What happens if FirstCare denies the request for an expedited appeal?

You or your representative can request an independent review if you are not happy with the decision about your appeal.

Who can help me in filing an expedited appeal?

FirstCare Customer Service can help you with your appeal. Call our Customer Service Department toll-free at 1-877-639-2447.

Independent Review Organization Process

What is an Independent Review Organization (IRO)?

An Independent Review Organization is a system for final administrative review of the medical necessity and appropriateness of health care provided or proposed to patients. The IRO's decision is binding on the health care plan, which pays for the review.

Do I have the right to appeal to an IRO?

If a decision is made to end medical care, you have the right to appeal to an Independent Review Organization. This is a system to make a final decision. The IRO's decision is binding on the health care plan. FirstCare CHIP will pay for the review.

How do I ask for a review by an IRO?

If you choose to appeal FirstCare CHIP's decision to an Independent Review Organization, the procedure below will be used:

- You must complete a "Request for a Review" by an Independent Review Organization form. This is included with the letter telling you about the end of service. Mail or fax (fax number: 1-806-784-4319) this form to the Customer Services Complaint Department.
- The review process will begin once FirstCare gets this form.
- Then, we will tell the Texas Department of Insurance of your request.
- The Texas Department of Insurance will assign your case to an Independent Review Organization. The IRO is not connected in any way to the health plan or to doctors who may have been involved in your child's case.
- You will be told by Texas Department of Insurance of which IRO has been assigned to your child's case.

What are the timeframes for this process?

- The review process should take no more than 20 calendar days.
- If the IRO decides that your child should receive services that were stopped, FirstCare CHIP will pay for that care. If the IRO agrees that the services should have been stopped, the care will not be covered by FirstCare CHIP.

Exception: You have a right to immediate review by an Independent Review Organization if your complaint or appeal is related to a life-threatening condition.