

F.No. S-15/21/2021-(PG)-DARPG(e-7085)
Government of India
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions
Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievance

5th Floor, Sardar Patel Bhawan, Sansad Marg,
New Delhi, dated the 23rd August, 2024

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Comprehensive guidelines for handling the Public Grievances.

The undersigned is directed to say that in line with the directions of the Hon'ble PM during his interaction with the Secretaries to the GOI on 29th June 2024, DARPG has undertaken a review of existing processes to make CPGRAMS more sensitive, accessible and meaningful to the citizen.

In the past, DARPG had introduced several measures for strengthening CPGRAMS and also issued a comprehensive guideline to strengthening Grievance Redressal Mechanism vide this Department OM of even no. dated 27.07.2022, which stand revised/reiterated as under:

1. An integrated user-friendly grievance filing platform

CPGRAMS is a common open platform for registration of complains by the citizens on any issue against any public authority in Central Government or States/ UT. It provides role-based access to all Central Ministries/ Departments as well as States / UTs. In addition to CPGRAMS, Ministries/ Departments are also having their own public grievance platforms for services rendered by them. Most of the States too have their own portals for Public Grievances. Integration of all these platforms is important to provide citizen a single window experience and wider accessibility to various PG platforms. This will help deduplication and save time and efforts of officials from resolving same grievances on multiple portals. Hence integration of all PG portals of Central Government offices and State/ UTs through API shall be a priority to optimize operational efficiency of all PG portals.

2. Appointment of Nodal Officer for Public Grievances

Nodal Officer for Public Grievances plays a pivotal role in ensuring that grievances from citizens are addressed promptly, fairly, and efficiently. While appointing the Nodal officer for PG, the Ministries shall ensure that the nodal officer shall have enough experience, competency and authority to deal with the public complaints. He shall have the knowledge about the work flow and mapping of officers in each and every vertical in the Ministry/Department including attached/subordinate/autonomous bodies. In the Ministries/Departments where large number of Public Grievances are received, it is advised to appoint a dedicated Nodal officer with independent charge on sufficient rank so as to ensure timely and qualitative disposal of public grievances.

3. Role of Nodal Public Grievance officer

An indicative list of activities to be performed by the Nodal Officer for PG is given as follows:

- (i) **Effective categorization:** Performance of CPGRAMS is based on the effective categorization of complaints and their mapping with right authorities. Hence accurate and updated categorization is critical for grievances reaching the right authority in shortest possible time. Nodal PG officer, under the guidance of Secretary, shall undertake review of categorization once in a six months to ensure their relevance and effectiveness for citizen in filing of grievances.
- (ii) **Appointment of Nodal Technical GRO:** Updating of Grievance Redressal Officers (GRO) on CPGRAMS along with their mobile number, ensuring that correct mapping of GROs with the corresponding categories in CPGRAMS etc. is at the heart of the faster grievance resolution process. It is suggested that Nodal GRO appoint a Nodal Technical GRO under him for enabling this process. Updation of Officers' information regarding his/her mobile number, transfer, retirement and all other technical information regarding CPGRAMS of the Ministry/Department needs to rest with the Nodal Technical GRO.
- (iii) **Monitoring pendency:** It is the responsibility of the Nodal Officer to monitor grievances and check quality of disposal. It is the responsibility of Nodal GROs to ensure that the grievances are handled with sensitivity and communication to citizens are polite and respectful.
- (iv) Nodal PG officer can view the performance of other GROs in the nodal PG officer's dashboard in CPGRAMS. He is expected to utilize this facility to review the performance of other GROs in his Ministry.
- (v) DARPG has created a portal for the feedback collected by BSNL on the grievances disposed by the GROs on CPGRAMS. The portal can be accessed on pgportal.gov.in/ccfeedback/. The Nodal officer is expected to analyze the feedback and work on the areas of poor/low feedback.
- (vi) Root Cause Analysis of Public Grievances to identify areas of concerns and address them through systemic reforms is one of the main objectives of the Public Grievance System. DARPG has set up Data Strategy Unit and developed analytics dashboards powered with AI for deeper analysis of grievances. The Nodal Officer can use the facility developed by DARPG to analyse the pain-points in their schemes/ programmes and address them on a sustainable basis.
- (vii) DARPG is publishing monthly reports on CPGRAMS. The Reports contains relative performance of Ministry / Departments including the ranking of Ministries on the parameters of Grievance Redressal and Assessment Index (GRAI). Nodal Officer shall utilize the report for

improving overall performance and ranking of their Ministries/Departments.

- (viii) Nodal officer shall take note of the complaints appearing in the newspaper/ social media etc. and take suo moto action on the complaints.
- (ix) At least one day in a month shall be utilized by Nodal GRO for having meetings with all Grievance Redressal Officers in his Ministry/Department regarding pendency, quality of redressal and complaints being received.

4. Setting up a dedicated Grievance Cell in every Ministry

To support the Nodal GRO, a dedicated Grievance Cell shall be set up in every Ministry. The Cell shall be adequately staffed with resources having domain knowledge of schemes/ programmes of the Ministry and also having experience and skill for data analytics and root cause analysis of grievances. The Grievance Cell will function under the overall supervision of Nodal Grievance Officer.

5. Timelines for resolving the grievances

5.1 The 10 steps reforms initiated in CPGRAMS have significantly brought down the average resolution time. Keeping this in view, the maximum redressal time advised by DARPG, for cases in CPGRAMS is further reduced to 21 days. In such cases, where the redressal requires longer time, an Interim reply may be given stating the reason for the same and expected timeline when the grievance could be resolved.

5.2 There might be certain categories of grievances where resolution of grievance is not possible within the stipulated timelines of 21 days due to procedural intricacies etc. Ministries/Departments may identify such categories and suggest the timelines as a guideline to GROs. DARPG will assist Ministries/Departments in this process through use of an algorithm which will generate the optimal time for resolution of a particular grievance based on past history.

5.3 The grievances of urgent/priority nature have been identified on the existing CPGRAMS system based on individual Ministry level prompts. Nodal GROs may like to validate the tagging of grievances by DARPG and ensure that all GROs prioritize these grievances while undertaking resolution

6. Escalation process: Appointment of Appellate Authorities

CPGRAMS though by nature is an appeal portal as most of the grievances filed on CPGRAMS are against the previous disposals on other grievance portals, yet it offers one more opportunity to the citizen to raise appeal against the disposal of grievance on CPGRAMS. The appeals are received through CPGRAMS portal or through feedback call centers. Appeal workflow in CPGRAMS presently requires appointment of an officer of the Additional /Joint Secretary rank as the Nodal Appellate Authority (NAA). Sub Appellate Authorities (SAA) may be appointed by the Ministries/Departments under the NAA to offer localized redressal of appeals against

GROs. The Appellate Authorities are required to examine the appeal independently and take a view to allow or reject the appeal. The appeal shall be disposed of in a maximum of 30 days.

7. Redressal/ Closure of Grievances

7.1 Grievances shall be redressed under '*whole of the Government approach*'. This means that in no case grievance shall be closed by stating "*Does not pertain to this Ministry/ Department/ Office*" or its equivalent language. Efforts shall be made to transfer the same to the right authority if the subject of the grievance does not pertain to the receiving Ministry.

7.2 It has also been observed that Grievances are sometimes closed by GRO after noting that some document/information is not available. It is to submit that there is an existing mechanism in CPGRAMS to ask additional documentation from the citizen. GROs may seek any additional information/documents through this mechanism. They may also call the citizen and get the additional papers, if needed.

7.3 After redressal the grievance GRO shall file a detailed Action Taken Report (ATR). DARPG has redesigned its existing Action Taken Reports (ATR) on CPGRAMS to ensure faster closure of frivolous cases and meaningful reporting in other cases. In such cases identified by the GRO as frivolous, GROs would not require to submit detailed ATR and feedback will be disabled on such grievances.

7.4 It has been observed that in several cases, while closing the grievance GROs do not upload the Relied Upon Document. As such, GROs must ensure to upload any letter/order issued by the Ministries/Department for redressal of grievances. They also must give valid and speaking reason while closing the grievances, in case of non-acceptance of request of the citizen.

7.5 The disposed grievance will be treated as closed unless the citizen has filed the appeal. If the appeal is received from the citizen against the disposed grievance, the grievance will be treated as closed only after disposal of appeal.

7.6 CPGRAMS has multilingual auto translation facility. This facility shall be utilized and reply to the citizen shall be given in the language grievance was filed.

7.7 GROs are advised to follow the Standard Operating Procedure for handling the grievance on CPGRAMS which is enclosed at Annexure to this Circular.

8. Feedback on disposed grievances

8.1 On resolution of grievance, an SMS/email is sent on the registered mobile number & email address of the citizen. If the citizen is not satisfied with the resolution, they can provide feedback on the portal and raise appeal on the portal itself. DARPG has also set up a call center to survey the citizen response on disposal of grievances. Every disposed of grievances is dialed by the operator and citizen response on the disposal is obtained.

8.2 Going forward feedback will be integrated with other mechanisms like WhatsApp, chatbot etc so that citizens who are not satisfied with their grievance redressal can file an appeal through any of the above mode of feedback. DARPG has created a separate portal <https://pgportal.gov.in/ccfeedback> where all feedback with call records are available. Nodal PG Officer has been given login credentials to access this portal. Ministries may use this portal for detailed analysis of citizen feedback on their programme/ policies and devise internal mechanism to deal with the feedback to make systemic improvements.

9. Analysis of grievances to review impact of the schemes/ programmes and scope for improvements

9.1 Public grievances are direct feedback from the citizens on performance of programmes / policies/ service delivery of the Government. Analysis of grievances provide meaningful insight and indicate the areas that require specific attention. Analysis of grievances is extremely useful for driving efficiency in government programmes and policies.

9.2 DARPG has set up Data Strategy Unit and developed two AI powered analytical tools. These dashboards can be accessed on <https://treedashboard.in/> and <https://dashboard-pmopg.nic.in/igms2/sign-in>. DARPG has already shared login credentials of both the dashboards with the Ministries. The facility of DSU on CPGRAMS may be utilized by the Ministries/ Departments for deeper analysis of their grievances.

10. Benchmarking Performances: Grievance Redressal Assessment Index (GRAI)

DARPG has introduced a comprehensive Grievance Redressal Assessment Index (GRAI). The objective of GRAI is to assist the Ministries/Departments to review, analyses and streamline their internal grievance redressal mechanism with SWOT analysis. GRAI is based on 4 dimensions of Efficiency, Feedback, Domain and organizational Commitment. It ranks the Ministries Departments on their relative performance for effective handling grievances. The rankings are published every month in the monthly reports on CPGRAMS. An award policy be also introduced to recognize the best practices in handling Public grievances.

11. Communication and Awareness

The link of CPGRAMS shall be prominently displayed at the homepage of every Ministry/ Department. The individual schemes/ programmes of the Ministry shall contain the link of grievance portal/ helpline where citizen can contact in case of a grievance. Other mediums of communication including social media handles of Ministry/ Departments shall also be used to create awareness about the grievance/ complaint filing systems in GOI. Success stories and the best practices of CPGRAMS shall be publicized through PIB Statements and social media handles of the Ministries.

12. Training and Capacity Building

DARPG will organize training for GROs on last Friday of every month. User Manual for GRO interface and Citizen interface are also available for self-learning by GROs. A course module on CPGRAMS is available in iGOT. Ministries shall utilize those training facilities to ensure effective and meaningful handling of public grievance. For training of State GROs, DARPG has collaborated with State ATIs under its SEVOTTAM scheme. It supports ATI for training @ Rs 1500 per GRO / per day

13. Review of PG Cases/ PG Appeals in SOMs

To institutionalize the mechanism of grievance resolution, and to ensure quality disposal, the Secretary of the line Ministries/Departments may review disposal process of CPGRAMS in Senior Officers Meetings. Secretary/Addl Secretary/Joint Secretary should also examine disposal of grievances every week and issue necessary direction for improvement in quality of disposal.

14. Annexure:

An illustrative Grievance Handling process is annexed to these guidelines and can be referred to by Nodal GRO/GRO while handling various situations in grievances.

This issues with approval of Competent Authority.

(Parthasarathy Bhaskar)
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India
011-23401429

To

- i. All Secretaries to GOI
- ii. All Chief Secretaries of States/ UTs
- iii. All Heads of autonomous/ Statutory bodies
- iv. Nodal Public Grievance officers of Ministries/Department/Attached and Subordinate organizations of Govt. of India/ State Govts
- v. NIC, DARPG

Copy for information to:-

- i. PMO (Kind Attention: Sh Amit Khare, Advisor to PM)
- ii. Cabinet Secretary
- iii. Secretary to the President Secretariat
- iv. Secretary General, Rajya Sabha Secretariat
- v. Secretary General, Lok Sabha Secretariat,
- vi. Secretary (Coordination &PG), Cabinet Secretariat

Grievance Handling Process - ANNEXURE-A

1. GRIEVANCE HANDLING PROCESS IN CPGRAMS- STEP BY STEP GUIDE

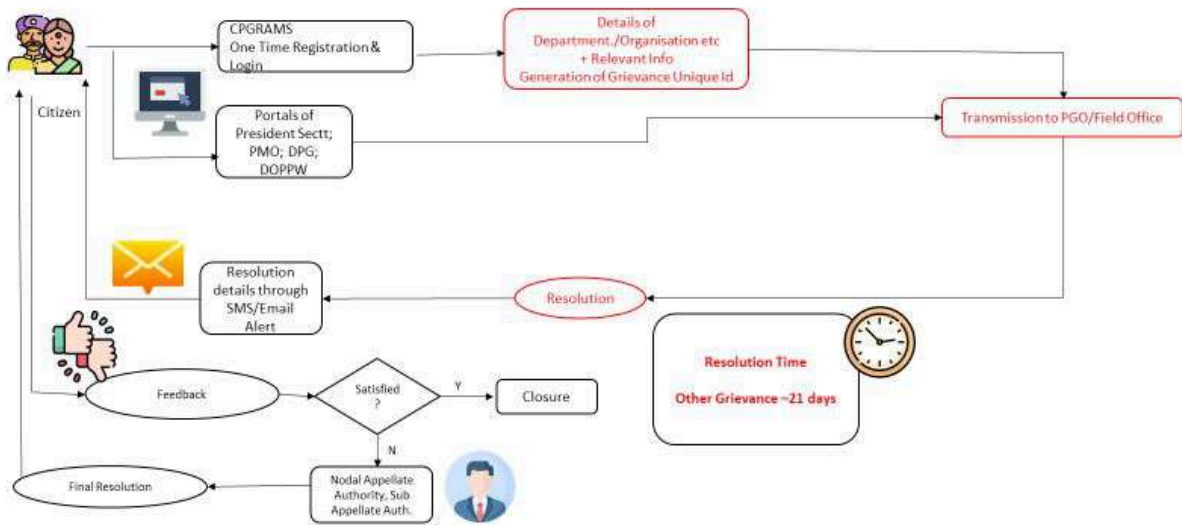
1.1 CPGRAMS is a Centralized portal which receives grievances on various issues ranging from service delivery, demand under schemes, queries on programmes, complaints against malpractices, corruption, discrimination, etc. The portal is connected to all the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India and its States through role-based access to the officers in the portal. When a citizen lodges a grievance, it gets redirected to the concerned authorities, ensuring it is resolved within the given time frame. CPGRAMS is also available in mobile application.

1.2 Going forward Complaints/ grievances received through physical mode/ Whatsapp/Chatbot shall also be registered in CPGRAMS. There is a possibility that the same grievances have been received by multiple authorities. Hence to avoid duplicate registrations in CPGRAMS only the authority concerned with the subject and also the grievance is addressed to them shall register the grievance in CPGRAMS. NIC will develop a protocol to assign unique code to such grievances registered by the Ministries/ Call center

1.3 After successful registration of the complaint a unique registration ID is generated through which the citizen can track status of his complaint. On resolution of grievance an SMS/email is sent to the registered mobile number & email address of the citizen. If the citizen is not satisfied with the resolution, he can provide feedback on the portal and raise appeal on the portal itself. In those cases where self -feedback is not available on the portal, DARPG tries to reach out the citizen through feedback call center to know whether their grievance has been actually resolved or not Unsatisfied citizen has the option to reopen / file an appeal through feedback call. The CPGRAMS process can be explained in the following Chart

1.4 Chart for Grievance Flow:

CPGRAMS Flow



2. References in CPGRAMS not falling under the category of Grievance:

2.1 CPGRAMS Guidelines provides that the following category of references do not fall under the ambit of Public Grievances as they are covered under separate protocols. Following categories are the illustrative list of such references:

- a. RTI Matters
- b. Court related / Sub-judice matters
- c. Religious Matters
- d. Grievances of Government employees concerning service matters
- e. Suggestions
- d. Anything that impacts upon territorial integrity of the country or friendly relations with other countries.

2.2 In case complaint is received under any such categories, it can be closed by the GRO clarifying the rule position to the citizens. DARPG will enhance capability of system for auto identification of such references. However, till such facility is created GRO can identify and mark the complaint under the above categories. He is not supposed to file ATR on those categories and complaints will not go into feedback loop.

2.3 Sometimes frivolous/Spam / abusive / complaints are also received in CPGRAMS. DARPG has developed AI capability to filter those complains at the initial stage. Those grievances are going into Spam box of GRO. If GRO validates the complaint as frivolous/ SPAM then the complaint will be automatically closed and no action will be required on such complaints. Those complaints will not be sent for feedback

2.4 CPGRAMS also receives suggestions from the citizens. The subject specific suggestions may be forwarded to the concerned Division of the Ministries and an acknowledgment may be sent to the citizen. A template for such acknowledgement will be built in the PG portal. However generic suggestions with no substance can be simply closed. GRO is not supposed to act on the suggestion. Once GRO identifies a reference as suggestion, it will not require to file an Action Taken Report and will not go into feedback loop.

2.5 CPGRAMS also receives lots of references demanding a benefit under a scheme. Though they are not a grievance as such, however, those demand shall be noted by the concerned divisions. GRO therefore shall forward all such references to the concerned division and bulk close such references with a polite rule position. Such references shall also be identified by the GRO as a new demand under a scheme and excluded from the feedback loop.

3. Handling complaints:

Different scenarios for a GRO are explained as under:

3.1 Complaint reaches the concerned GRO:

3.1.1 The Grievances shall ordinarily be resolved within a time frame of 21 days. However, grievances identified as priority by the system or where early action is critical such grievances shall be attended to promptly and resolved maximum within 3 days.

3.1.2 If the grievance will take time to resolve beyond the stipulated 21 days an interim reply shall be given to the citizen through interim Action Taken Report (ATR). After final resolution ATR shall be updated with final response. Interim ATR will not go for feedback till the complaint is finally resolved.

3.1.3 If the grievance lacks necessary critical information without which it cannot be processed, the same can be collected either by calling the complainant on his/her registered number by GRO or through feedback call center or use the feature of CPGRAMS for seeking additional information from them complainant. Grievances shall not be closed on the ground of incomplete information without making genuine effort to reach the complainant and get the complete information. Seeking information through feedback call center will require to establish a workflow between GRO and call Center in CPGRAMS. Going forward, DARPG will develop such a system for the benefit of the GROs.

3.1.5 If GRO is not able to get the requisite information despite his best efforts then the grievance can be closed. Since the grievances could not be redressed in such cases those grievances shall not be sent for feedback. They shall be treated under a separate category "**Closed due to insufficient information**". The feedback call

Center will inform the citizen that their grievances could not be resolved due to lack of information (specify information) and they can file again with complete information.

3.1.6 While resolving the grievances if GRO has observed any policy/ process issue that have resulted in grievance he will bring the same to the notice of the concerned Division in Ministry with a copy to the Nodal PG officer.

3.1.7 If the grievance cannot be resolved the, the response to applicant shall contain a reasoned explanation for the same. Such grievances shall not go for feedback loop.

3.2. Complaint got assigned to wrong GRO:

3.2.1 If the grievance does not pertain to GRO, he shall immediately forward the same to the concerned GRO if he knows the correct mapping. If not then it shall be forwarded to the Nodal PG officer of his Ministries/Department/ who will find out the right authority and forward the complaint to them for action. The complaint/ grievance shall be forwarded to the concerned GRO / Nodal; GRO within 48 hours of receipt of the complaint. In no case complaint/ grievance shall be closed by stating that "it does not pertain to this Office ".

3.3. Complaints has multiple issues pertaining to different GROs:

If complaint has more than one issue relating to different GROs, the GRO who has received the complaint will collect input from other GROs and ensure a coordinated redressal within the timelines of 21 days.

3.4. Grievance pertaining to Schemes of Central Ministries implemented through States:

Grievances pertaining to the schemes of Government of India shall be examined and redressed by the concerned Ministries irrespective of the fact that the scheme is implemented through the State Government. The onus of redressal in such complaints are on the concerned Ministry. Therefore, Ministries shall seek information from the implementing agency, examine the reply and take a final call on the resolution to be provided to the citizen. Such grievances cannot be transferred to the States for disposal.

3.5. Corruption Complaints:

3.5.1 Complaint relating to corruption, bribery, harassment or having any other vigilance angle of citizens shall be examined closely under the broad guidelines and timelines prescribed by the DoPT and CVC and in consultation with the CVO of the Ministry. If complaints are found worth to take up than an acknowledgement shall be sent to the complainant. As vigilance cases are governed by the procedure and rules stipulated by CVC and DoPT, no ATR will be needed to be filed nor will such complaints/ grievances will go into the feedback. However, after the action is

completed an ATR for internal use may be preferred by the Ministry/Departments. From the citizen's point of view such complaints may be closed with an interim reply

3.5.2 However, if the complaint is found false, malicious, intentional and filed by habitual complaints time and again then such complainants are flagged and blocked in CPGRAMS

4. Escalation Process:

4.1 CPGRAMS has multichannel feedback and appeal mechanism. Going forward, Citizen can file appeal through Portal, Chatbot, WhatsApp and feedback call center. It shall be ensured that only a single appeal is filed for a grievance.

4.2 Appeals will reach to the officer designated as Appellate authorities. The appellate authorities are the officers next senior to the GRO in the hierarchy. The appellate authority will examine the appeal and take an independent view on the appeal after careful examination of grievances and resolution provided by the GRO. The appeals shall ordinarily be closed within 30 days. Appeals will not go into feedback process.
