



**PUTNAM COUNTY**  
***Board of County Commissioners***

<b>BOARD POLICY 01.001</b> <b>Citizen Concern and Issue</b> <b>Resolution</b>	Effective Date: 12/10/2019
	Date of Latest Revision and approval by Board: 12/10/2019

**PURPOSE:**

This policy is intended to enable Putnam County to, in a prompt and courteous manner, effectively address program and service delivery concerns and issues of citizens. The policy will assist the County in providing excellent service to the public and contribute to continuous improvement of operations. This policy is NOT intended to prevent the citizens of Putnam County from communicating with any Putnam County Commissioner directly.

It is the intent of the County to enhance citizen satisfaction by:

- addressing concerns and issues promptly;
- reviewing concerns and issues, vetting each to ensure findings and responses are accurate and address concerns and issues thoroughly; and
- using identified concerns and issues as opportunities to improve programs, service delivery and government operations.

**POLICY:**

**Definitions and Clarifications:**

A “concern” is an initial expression on a matter of interest or importance and/or possible dissatisfaction on a specific topic that may be addressed with a response or resolution, at the level of department head or lower.

An “issue” is an unresolved concern of importance to a citizen or citizens, related to a program, service, operation, facility, employee and/or employee action that has been escalated above the department head level.

Issues arise when an initial concern is not resolved and/or the County has not satisfactorily met the citizen’s expectation at the department head level or below, and a response or resolution is requested.

Issues may be related to, but not limited to:

- failure to respond to routine requests or expected services;

- inadequate or unsatisfactory services;
- failure to operate in alignment with established policies and/or procedures;
- undue delay in taking action or responding;
- inaccurate or incorrect information; and
- disrespectful or unhelpful employees

## **Process/Procedure for Resolving a Concern and/or Issue**

Citizen engagement is the process of establishing open communications and mutual sharing of information between citizens and County employees designed to identify and address issues for collective action and provide for an accountable and responsive government.

It is the responsibility of the citizen to attempt to resolve concerns by cooperating with County employee(s) directly involved with the concern or issue, where and when appropriate. It is the responsibility of all County employees to attempt to resolve concerns before they become issues needing resolution, and identify opportunities to improve County services and programs.

From initial contact to final resolution, County employees should feel empowered to address concerns and issues within their levels of authority and responsibility, and refer to supervisory and administrative staff when needed. Whenever possible, employees receiving a concern should attempt to resolve it at that time.

Regular interactions and mutual exchanges among citizens and employees are not only expected in the public domain, but are encouraged and desired in a participatory democracy. To that end, cordial and civil dialogue is to be expected by all parties.

Communication between employees and citizens should be characterized by:

- courtesy and honesty;
- active listening to facilitate effective communication;
- complete and accurate information;
- prompt and timely responses to all inquiries; and
- openness and responsiveness to input and feedback.

**In order to effectively address all concerns and issues, the following steps shall be followed for all citizen concerns and/or issues.**

### **Step 1: Employee Engagement**

When a citizen has a concern as defined above, they shall contact the most applicable department related to their concern first. If the citizen is unsure as to which department is most applicable, they may contact County Administration at (386) 329-0205 in order

to ascertain which department is most applicable. If the citizen makes contact with a County Commissioner regarding a concern, the County Commissioner should direct the citizen to the proper department to report the concern so that the concern can be addressed and tracked properly.

Once a concern is received from a citizen, the employee receiving the concern should:

- respond immediately by phone, email, in person, or by written communication to ensure that the concern is fully understood and to acknowledge receipt of concern to the citizen;
- share the concern with other appropriate employees most knowledgeable and/or responsible on the topic area related to the concern.

A knowledgeable/responsible employee should review the concern and provide a response to the citizen immediately if possible or within a reasonable amount of time.

## Step 2: Department Head Engagement

In the event that the employee's response from Step 1 is not satisfactory to the citizen, the citizen may request escalation of the concern to the employee's manager and/or department head (whichever applicable) for review and action. The manager and/or department head will:

- respond immediately by phone, email, written communication, or in person to ensure that the concern is fully understood and to acknowledge receipt of concern to the citizen;
- review the initial concern and response to the citizen from Step 1;
- review any relevant information, codes, policies, and procedures;
- gather necessary information and consult with knowledgeable/responsible employees;
- further research and investigate the concern as required; and
- communicate findings and a proposed resolution, if warranted, to the citizen.

Findings and a proposed resolution, if warranted, will be communicated to the citizen within a reasonable amount of time.

## Step 3: County Administration Engagement

If the citizen is not satisfied with the response and/or proposed resolution communicated by the department head or manager, the citizen may escalate the concern to a formal issue by completing and submitting a *Putnam County Citizen's Issue Resolution Form* directly to County Administration. The Deputy County Administrator or their designee will receive and log the form in a designated database and notify the citizen within three (3) business days that the issue will be further investigated and formally studied.

As part of the study and investigation process, the Deputy County Administrator or their designee may:

- review findings, the response to the citizen and/or proposed resolution in Step 2;
- consult with department heads, employees and the citizen involved, if needed, for full understanding of the issue; and
- evaluate the findings and proposed resolution and identify options and/or other actions and recommendations, if needed, that may be taken to address the issue and/or improve services, programs and operations.

Upon completion of the formal review, the Deputy County Administrator or their designee will summarize all information and findings into a briefing and share with the County Administrator for review and action within twenty (20) business days of receipt of the Issue Resolution Form.

Within ten (10) business days of the briefing with the County Administrator, the citizen will be provided a response by the County Administrator or Deputy County Administrator in writing, with a copy to the department head, that may include:

- findings, position and/or decision of the County on the issue and any recommended resolution to the issue, if warranted;
- reasons for the County's position or decision; and
- any actions the County has, or will take, as a result of the issue being identified.

If more time is needed, the County Administrator or Deputy County Administrator will communicate an expected response date to the citizen.

In cases when a response is provided to the citizen by the Deputy County Administrator, and the citizen is not satisfied with the response, the citizen may request further review and consideration by the County Administrator. In these cases, the County Administrator will review all relevant information and respond to the citizen within ten (10) working days.

#### **Step 4: Board of County Commissioners Engagement**

If the citizen is not satisfied with the final findings, position, and/or recommended resolution of the County Administrator, the citizen may request that the issue be placed on a Board of County Commission Workshop agenda for discussion, or appear before the Board of County Commissioners at a County Commission meeting and present the issue during public comment.

## **Records/Document Maintenance/Reporting**

The Deputy County Administrator shall maintain files of all records and documents relevant to escalated issues. The Deputy County Administrator or their designee will conduct tracking of issues and trends identified through the issue resolution process in the designated database. Review and analysis of compiled data will be summarized into a report for County Administration, not less than annually, and utilized for continual process improvement and enhanced delivery of services and government operations.