

## Filing a complaint

If you have a problem with a business that you cannot solve alone, consider filing a complaint with the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

### Who can file a complaint?

We accept complaints from Wisconsin consumers and from out-of-state consumers dealing with businesses in Wisconsin.

Our primary focus is to ensure fair trade practices under Wisconsin statutes and administrative codes. We mainly provide support for consumer-to-business matters, rather than business-to-business or consumer-to-consumer transactions.

### When to file a complaint?

You can file a complaint with us at any time, but we prefer that you make a reasonable attempt to resolve the matter directly with the business before you contact us. Most businesses depend on satisfied customers, and reputable firms will make an honest effort to resolve problems – but first you must let them know a problem exists. See “How to Resolve a Complaint” for tips on how to complain effectively.

## Why file a complaint?

If you are not getting anywhere with the other party in a timely manner, are unsatisfied with the resolution or are unable to make contact with the company, we may be able to help. Some businesses are happy to work directly with the consumer. Others respond better after Consumer Protection gets involved.

## How to file a complaint?

Complaints must be in writing. You can file online, by mail, or by fax.

When possible, file online by visiting our website at **<http://datcp.wi.gov>**

Select "Filing a Complaint" on the top center area of our home page.

You can also call our hotline at 1-800-442-7128 or (608) 224-4976 and request a form be mailed to you.

Return the completed form with copies (**not originals**) of all documents supporting your complaint.

## How is your complaint processed?

Once we receive your complaint, it is entered into our computer database in the order received and given a file number. That number should be on all correspondence related to your complaint.

A consumer specialist or investigator will contact the business about your complaint. Although we cannot force a resolution, our efforts will often prompt the business to offer a solution to the problem.

You can expect to receive information about your complaint by mail. We will inform you in writing when we get feedback from the business. In most cases, we will receive a written response from the business, but sometimes the business will refuse to respond or we are unable to find a valid address.

If we decide your complaint should be handled by another agency, we will forward your complaint to the appropriate agency and send you a letter telling you where we sent it.

If we believe the business may have violated state consumer laws, we will include that in our correspondence with the business. In some situations, we may send the business a formal warning notice or start an investigation. If the violation is serious and widespread, we may recommend the case to the Department of Justice or to a district attorney for prosecution.

Further action is their decision. Our investigations may lead to prosecutions which can result in convictions, fines, imprisonment, or restitution to victims. However, judgments and money awards can only be made by the court system.

## **How long is the complaint process?**

Most complaints are handled within six to eight weeks, but more complex investigations can take several months.

We can take care of your complaint faster and more efficiently if you fill out the form as completely as possible. Feel free to contact us, if you have questions about the form. We encourage you to submit additional information, but please do not contact us repeatedly for status reports. We ask for, and appreciate, your patience.

## **Still not satisfied?**

Please remember that consumer laws only provide protection in some areas. Consumer Protection cannot offer legal advice or serve as your private attorney. If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may consider:

- Discussing your complaint with a private attorney.
- Taking action in Small Claims Court if it has the power to hear your complaint. Refer to our “Small Claims Court” Fact Sheet for more information.

You can contact an attorney by calling the State Bar of Wisconsin Lawyer Referral Service at: 800-362-9082 or (608) 257-4666. If you meet income requirements, you can also get low-cost legal services by looking up Legal Aid in the yellow pages of your phone book.

## **Complaint forms and information**

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection. Topic specific complaint forms can also be found by selecting Consumer in the main header menu bar of our website.

**Bureau of Consumer Protection  
2811 Agriculture Drive  
PO Box 8911  
Madison WI 53708-8911**

**E-MAIL: [DATCPHotline@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@Wisconsin.gov)**

**WEBSITE: [datcp.wisconsin.gov](http://datcp.wisconsin.gov)**

**Toll-free in Wisconsin: (800) 422-7128**

**(608) 224-4976      FAX: (608) 224-4939**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**