

# Grievances, Complaints & Concerns - 2006 Trends

The Patient Services Department received 361 calls from patients, family members, renal staff, and others requesting assistance with complaints, concerns, barriers to outpatient placement and challenging situations.

The distribution of calls related to grievances, complaints and facility concerns can be seen in the chart below.



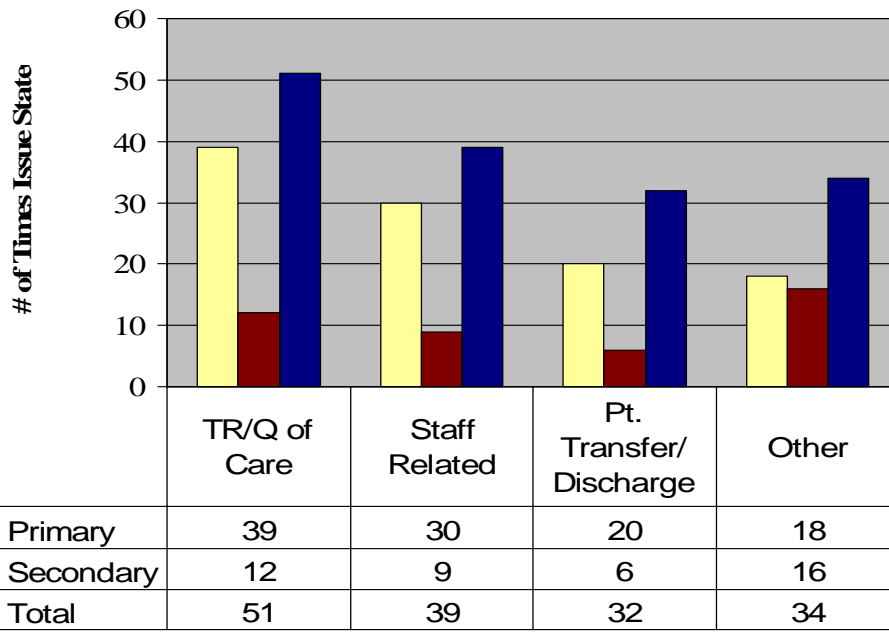
## Grievances

In 2006, two formal grievances were filed with the Network. One grievance was related to being involuntarily discharged and was substantiated and the second grievance was related to sexual harassment by staff and was not substantiated.

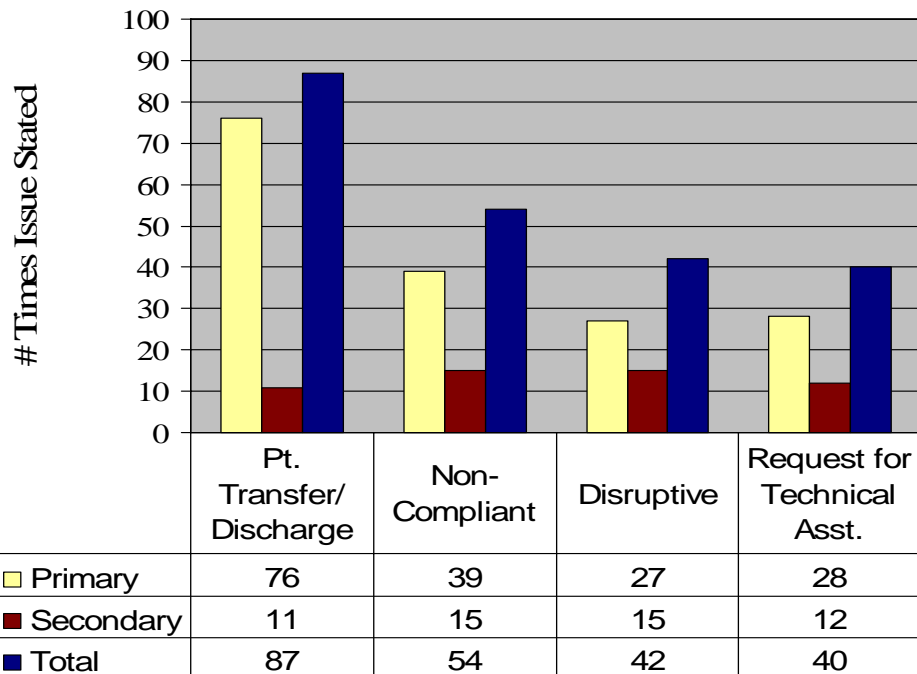
## Complaints

In 2006, the Network received 128 complaints from patients and/or their family members. Their primary categories of concern included: 1) Treatment/Quality of Care, 2) Staff-related, 3) Patient Transfer/Discharge, and 4) Admission Barriers. The Network staff provided resources and referrals, coached patients on how to talk to facility staff, and acted as a go-between when needed. (See chart below.)

## Top Complaints Year 2006



## Top Facility Concerns Year 2006



### *Facility Concerns*

In 2006, the Network received 231 calls from facilities. The primary areas of concern included 1) Patient Transfer/Discharge, 2) Non-compliance, and 3) Disruptive behaviors. The Network also received a number of calls asking for technical assistance which ranged from assistance with behavioral agreements (contracts) to clarification of federal guidelines. In addition to providing technical assistance, examples of Network staff assistance included providing techniques to use with noncompliant patients, educational resources, suggestions for in-service training programs, and suggestions for handling challenging situations. (See chart above.)

### *Involuntary Discharges*

There were 53 patients reported as being involuntarily discharged from Network facilities in 2006. The majority of those discharged were between the ages of 18-54. About 75% were male and approximately 66% were black. The reasons for discharge ranged from threatening behavior to noncompliance.

According to the Federal Guidelines 405.2138(5) (b) (2) “ All patients treated in the facility are transferred or discharged only for medical reasons or for the patient’s welfare or that of other patients, or for nonpayment of fees (except as prohibited by title XVIII of the Social Security Act) and are given advance notice to ensure orderly transfer or discharge.”

CMS does not support discharging patients for noncompliance or anything other than what is stated in the guidelines.

### *Barriers to Admissions*

There were 56 patients reported to the Network in 2006 who experienced problems being admitted to outpatient dialysis facilities. The reasons ranged from medical conditions that could not be accommodated in an outpatient unit to behavior issues of patients. Although the Network did not have any information on 15 of the patients (new to dialysis or patient was anonymous), the majority of the patients who were not new to dialysis and who could not find a facility were: a) between the ages of 18-54, b) male, and c) black.

The Federal Guidelines 405.2136 (3) states “Admissions criteria that insure equitable access to services are adopted by the facility and are readily available to the public.”

It could be helpful for facilities to review their admission policies to ensure that 1) they are specific about the type of conditions they cannot accept and 2) that they do not discriminate against people requesting admission.