

Complaint Case Management

As always, we ask that all customer issues that occur on property are taken care of in the moment. But, there are some cases, where guest issues are not resolved that relate to brand standards, health or safety concerns, cleanliness, improper billing, or staff concerns.

To ensure that we are meeting guests needs promptly and without causing additional frustration in these situations, Customer Relations will now handle all escalated complaints on the first call without requiring the hotel to intervene. This means that hotels will no longer need to respond to complaints in 72 hours, but effective July 1, 2018, hotels will be charged \$100 case management fee for **valid** complaints that arrive to Customer Relations regardless of channel, (voice, email, mail, social media). This does not mean that ALL complaints received will be assessed this service charge, so please see below for what constitutes valid complaints and how you can avoid these fees. [Updated to \$70 fee for Econo Lodge properties]

What is Not a Complaint

Many calls that Customer Relations receives will not be assessed a fee. The following will be excluded from incurring a Case Management Fee, so that charges are only on valid issues within your control:

- **General Guest Comments:** Feedback from guests who have contacted Choice to report issues, feedback or recommendations about the hotel, which are outside the hotel's control to change, like Hotel location, Room size, Noisy traffic. Customer Relations will post the feedback as a comment only. Examples include:
 - Widespread outages (power outage, water line breaks, internet carrier outages)
 - Outside noise (trains, traffic, police sirens, etc.)
 - Building structure (size of room, hotel configuration, location or neighborhood, etc.)
- **Customer Brand Confusion/Expectations:** Guests are, at times, unaware of the differences in service and amenity offerings across brands and may contact Customer Relations due to dissatisfaction. Customer Relations will advise the guest appropriately regarding brand offerings and post the feedback as a comment only.
- **Unrealistic Service Expectations:** Guests are sometimes dissatisfied with Service Issues outside the hotels control. Customer Relations will advise the guest appropriately regarding brand offerings and post the feedback as a comment only. Examples include:
 - Guest comfort (pillow or mattress comfort, exterior lighting entering room etc.)
 - Vending (costs, selection, lost money associated with vending machines)
 - Lost items (hotel cannot find items)
 - Comments related to staff language, ethnicity or cultural bias.
- **Corporate/Hotel Policy:** Guest Relations will reiterate the policy back to the guest and the hotel will not incur a fee. Examples include:
 - Unable to cancel a non-cancellable or OTA rate
 - Other charges (unhappy about \$150 smoking or pet charges, stolen items charges)
 - Checkout times (cannot extend checkout time, or forced to vacate after checkout time)
 - Early check-in not available
 - Deposit requirements
- **System Issues:** If there are reservation errors related to technology, Guest Relations will handle without hotel intervention or a Case Management Fee. Examples include:
 - Comments solely associated with system failures
 - ChoiceADVANTAGE errors
 - CRS Reservation Errors OTA errors or promises made from the Agency
- **Serial Complainers:** Customer Relations maintains a list of customers who serial complain to "game" the system. Complaints from these guests will not be accommodated nor will operators be charged
- **Choice Privileges or Choice Marketing Issues:** As previously, Choice will handle all of these issues without operators incurring a case management fee
- **Issues not on the Valid Complaint List:** See below

What is a Valid Complaint

Complaints will occur when a guest checks out of the hotel and contacts Choice for resolution on issues that are within the operators control to prevent or resolve on site (Cleanliness, Health or Safety, Improper Billing, or Staff Concerns).

NOTE: In these cases, hotels may still avoid a Case Management Fee by effectively resolving on site through providing reasonable alternatives or accommodations to guests then reporting promptly to Customer Relations through the Guest Resolution Form. If reasonable accommodation is offered, a fee can be avoided regardless of whether the guest accepts or declines the offer.

Valid Complaint Reasons:

- **Reasonable Room Cleanliness:** A complaint will be assessed if an operator checks a guest into a room that does not meet reasonable cleanliness standard. Examples include:
 - Dirty carpet, articles found on floor from previous guest including foreign articles, hair, or other items reasonably expected to be cleaned between use
 - Unclean or unmade bed including dirty or unreasonably worn linen
 - Unclean bathroom with dirty surfaces, presence of hair, or other unsanitary items
 - Inoperable or non-functioning items such as TV, remote, phone or Wi-Fi not working properly, broken toilet, shower, mirror, or floor tiles
 - Missing Brand Standard Amenities (soap, lotions, shampoo etc.)
 - Room not serviced during the stay as requested
- **Reasonable Common Area Upkeep:** A complaint will be assessed if a hotel does not address or make accommodation in cases where a guest has reasonable issues with common areas:
 - Unreasonably unclean or inoperable elevator
 - Unclean or non-client brand breakfast area, such as missing Brand Standard items, broken/inoperable equipment, unsanitary food station)
 - Unreasonably dirty Pool or Spa that has bad odors or green water
 - Unclean outdoor areas such as presence of cigarette butts at entry, excess trash on grounds, unsafe, or unsanitary conditions
- **Concerns Related to Health / ADA Guidelines:** A complaint will be assessed if a hotel does not address or make accommodation in cases where a guest has reasonable issues with safety or compliance. Examples include:
 - Bed bugs, roaches, lingering pet/smoke odors etc.
 - Rejection or handling of licensed service animals
- **Reasonable Staff Concerns:** A complaint will be assessed if a hotel does not address or make accommodation in cases where a guest has reasonable issues with service provided by on property staff. Examples include:
 - **Courtesy:** Rude front desk clerk demonstrating discrimination, guest harassment, rude comments, or threats
 - **Presence:** Front desk staff absent for unreasonable amount of time, absent staff when guests require assistance, no answer at front desk phone
 - **Performance:** Staff fails to deliver as promised (wake up call, provide towels or other requests, etc.) or Maintenance fails to fix broken AC, leaks, entertainment systems, etc.
 - **Shuttle:** No-shows or not picking up at scheduled times
- **Reservation/Billing Issues:** A complaint will be assessed if a hotel does not address or make accommodation in cases where a guest has reasonable issues with billing that is in the operator's control. Examples include:
 - Reservation Errors including billing errors, failed to honor 'walk' policy, etc.
 - Improper Charges such as charging for service animals, charging for unused safe, double billing

How to Avoid Case Management Fees:

- The Guest Resolution Form (GRF) advises Customer Relations of efforts taken by the operator to resolve issue during the guests stay or after guest check-out which must be submitted prior to guest contacting Choice
 - *Note: Customer Relations will also view folios and CP point balances for adjustments to see if accommodation was offered to the guest, but timely submission of the GRF is important.*
 - *Note: Customer Relations will assess whether resolutions are reasonable and proportionate to the issue (based on consistent hotel practices).*
- Operators can avoid fees through making Property Issue Containment a priority:
 - Examples of Reasonably Acceptable Resolution:
 - In a case where a guest had no hot water to take shower.
 - Reasonable:
 - Move the guest to a working room for the remainder of the stay, plus CP points toward a future stay.
 - Comp the room.
 - Offer equitable CP points
 - Provide a significant room upgrade for no additional cost.
 - Unreasonable:
 - Only providing an apology
 - A low value of CP points
 - In a case where a guest was checked into room with dirty bathroom.
 - Reasonable:
 - Move the guest to a clean room
 - Discount the night's stay by 20%.
 - Unreasonable:
 - Only providing an apology
 - A low value of CP points
 - Documentation:
 - Right after an action is taken, document the resolution in the Guest Resolution Form
 - Ask guests to verify that everything was taken care of and they are satisfied before they check out
 - Resources Available:
 - Choice Central
 - <https://apps.choicecentral.com/ccweb/content/resources/resserv/voiresdis/CustRel.html>
 - GM Coaching
 - Contact Email: GM_Coaching@choicehotels.com

How to Appeal a Case Management Fee:

- If an operator feels that a Case Management Fee has been charged in error or not consistent with the above, there is a standard appeals document within Choice Central that must be submitted by the hotel within 14 days of being assessed the fee.
- The Guest Feedback Appeals Form (GFAF) displays 4 valid reasons for complaint removal (Intended for different property, sent with errors/inaccurate, Guest Billed correctly, GRF submitted)
- Choice will process appeals within 5 days.

Example Scenarios

Staff Performance – Guest arrived at the hotel before posted check-in time and was angry that the FDC would not allow the guest to get a room now. [COMMENT]; If the Front Desk Clerk handled that guest poorly by responding with anger or rudeness then the issue then becomes [COMPLAINT].

Room Condition – The hotel room was dirty and smelled of smoke upon arrival. Upon notification from the guest, the staff moved the guest to an alternate room and compensated them with a discount that was accepted by the guest. The hotel submits the GRF through the GRR system allowing Customer Relations to view the resolution. The guest calls Customer Relations after checking out; Customer Relations refers to the GRF and logs the event as a comment in the system – thus preventing any charge to the hotel. [COMMENT]

Billing – a) The guest contacts Customer Relations regarding a double charge on their card. Customer Relations reviews the folio and concurs with guest. Customer Relations will immediately contact the hotel to correct the billing [COMMENT], however if the hotel is not able to resolve [COMPLAINT]. Customer Relations will refund with a Check or Points and assess the hotel the cost of resolution plus the \$100 fee. b) The guest contacts Customer Relations due to a billing error; the reservation was made by an OTA, but the guest wants CHI to solve the issue. The Front Desk Clerk kindly advises guest that they must resolve with the 3rd party that booked the reservation. [COMMENT]

Legal / Liability – The guest fell on a slippery floor during their stay and contacts Customer Relations. The guest will be referred to the hotel for resolution. Customer Relations will not attempt to resolve complaints of a legal nature.