

MY EQUIPMENT ISN'T RIGHT, WHAT CAN I DO??

By: Cindi Pichler

What should you do if equipment that you purchased for your disability isn't right?? Maybe the vendor did not take the time to fit the equipment properly, or they talked you into buying something you really didn't want. Maybe the equipment needs repairs, and they aren't fixing it, or honoring the warranty. Maybe they are taking too long to furnish or repair a device you depend on. What can you do??

1. Approach the company first. If you haven't already attempted to resolve your complaint directly with the company, bring your concerns to the attention of the owner or manager. If you remain calm, courteous and friendly a company is more likely to deal with you directly. Also be specific about what you are seeking. If you are still not satisfied after contacting the company, there are multiple avenues you may take.
2. If you are using a funding source to help pay for the equipment, tell the funding source about your concerns. They have a responsibility to spend their money wisely, and may be a valuable ally. Medicare's number is 800-447-8477, and Wisconsin Medicaid's Recipient Services number is 800-362-3002.
3. If the provider has professional credentials, complain to their credentialing organization. How do you know if they have credentials?? Check their business card, or ask the vendor. The most common credentials for Durable Medical Equipment providers are:
 - CRTS (Certified Rehabilitation Technology Supplier)
 - ATS (Assistive Technology Supplier)
 - ATP (Assistive Technology Professional)
 - OTR (Occupational Therapist, Registered).

To contact one of these organizations:

- a. **National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers**, (CRTS credential), POB 4033 Lago Vista TX 78645-4033, 800-976-7787, www.nrrts.org/
 - b. **RESNA**, (ATS credential), 1700 N. Moore St, Suite 1540, Arlington, VA 22209-1903, 703/524-6686, www.resna.org
 - c. **National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy**, (OTR credential), 800 South Frederick Avenue, Suite 200, Gaithersburg, MD 20877-4150, (301) 990-7979, www.nbot.org. Complaints can be emailed to professional.conduct@nbcot.org
4. If the first two options don't produce results, your next step is to use the consumer protection services that are available to everyone. The Better Business Bureau processes complaints against companies located within the State of Wisconsin. The BBB handles complaints about: Misleading Advertising, Improper Selling Practices, Non-delivery of Goods or Services, Misrepresentation, Un-honored Guarantees or Warranty, Unsatisfactory Service, Credit/billing Problems, and Unfulfilled Contracts. Complaints can be filed with the Wisconsin Better Business Bureau by mailing a complaint to Better Business Bureau, P.O. Box 2190, Milwaukee, WI 53201, via e-mail at complaints@wisconsin.bbb.org or online at www.wisconsin.bbb.org. They can also be

reached by phone at (414) 847-6000. The BBB does not take sides in a dispute. It works to facilitate communication between the company and the consumer, to help both sides come to a satisfactory resolution to the complaint. In many cases, dispute resolution, including mediation and arbitration, may be available to help resolve the dispute. If you contact the BBB and the complaint does not fall within the scope of services, you will be referred to the appropriate agency.

5. Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection processes complaints against companies that do business within the State of Wisconsin. Complaints can be filed with Consumer Protection by calling 800-422-7128 or via online at <http://datcp.state.wi.us/cp/consumerinfo/cp/complaint-form/>. Include problem history with date and location of purchase; copies of all documents; and your work and home numbers. Your complaint and the information you provide will be used in efforts to resolve your problem and will typically be shared with the party complained against. It may also be used to enforce applicable state laws. Under Wisconsin's Open Records Law, Wis. Stats. 19.31, your complaint will be available for public review upon request, after this department's action is completed.
6. If your complaint is against a builder or remodeling contractor, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) can be contacted. Complaints can be filed by calling 414-771-4071. You will need to provide the contractor's name, your name and address and they will mail out a complaint form. Members of NARI are full service contractors, design-build firms, manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, subcontractors, lenders and other related professionals who work in the remodeling field. This organization also offers alternative dispute resolution programs.
7. If all other avenues fail, you may wish to seek legal advice or file a case in Small Claims Court.