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| <b>Preparing Authority:</b><br><br>Trace McInturff | <br><br><b>I111 - A2LA Customer Bill of Rights</b> | <b>Publication Date:</b><br><br>03/15/22 |
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# Customer Bill of Rights

At A2LA, our goal is to provide world-class accreditation. Since 1978, we've cultivated a culture of openness and fairness with our customers which has helped build A2LA into the brand it is today! An important part of our culture is to serve with integrity and to treat our accredited organizations as more than just a customer. We are fortunate to accredit many types of organizations that seek continuous improvement and want to establish a high standard of quality. The nature of assessment and its outcomes are inherently challenging for any organization; however, we believe in the competence of our accredited organizations and we believe that every person deserves a voice. A2LA established this *Customer Bill of Rights* to inform our customers of their rights and to provide avenues to exercise these rights during the accreditation process.

## All Customers Should Expect:

- To be treated with honesty and respect by staff and assessors.
- To receive world-class assessment and accreditation services.
- Prompt and courteous service from all points of contact within A2LA.
- Honest and knowledgeable answers to your questions.
- Open dialog with anyone at A2LA, and at any time.

**General Issues:** If you feel that you or your organization has not received treatment consistent with the expectations above, there are avenues available to you with the assurance that A2LA treats your concerns with the highest priority:

- **Concern/Comment:** For general concerns or questions, the best place to start is to contact your Accreditation Officer (AcO) to discuss the issue(s). The AcO is a full time A2LA staff member whose core responsibility is to support customers in navigating the accreditation process. Issues that arise can include anything from assessor concerns, timing of the assessment or other forms of dissatisfaction. The hope is that we can address your concerns quickly to ensure we are meeting your expectations, while also giving us an opportunity to see if any improvements can be made in our process.
- **Formal Complaint Process:** Everyone has the option to formally file a complaint with A2LA with regard to any issue that might arise. You may file a complaint directly with A2LA staff, or from our website at: <http://www.A2LA.org/feedback/complaints.cfm>.

## Assessment Specific Issues

Occasionally, disagreements will arise during assessments due to various circumstances and we have a number of means available for your organizations to communicate with A2LA to resolve them:

**Disputing a Deficiency/Finding:** A2LA has taken significant steps to harmonize the application of the ISO standards that serve as the basis of our accreditation programs to ensure consistency among our staff and assessors. Below are the steps you can take to address a finding that you feel is invalid:

- **During the assessment:** Assessors are fact finders and will point out potential issues as the assessment occurs so your organization has an opportunity to demonstrate how you feel you meet the relevant section of the standard/requirement. The end of the assessment culminates with a formal Exit Briefing in which the assessor(s) verbally discuss any findings (deficiencies) they identified during their assessment.
- **Post Assessment:** If you feel a finding identified during your assessment is not valid you have the ability to formally contest a deficiency in your corrective action response *with no repercussions to your organization*. A2LA will request written justification from both your organization and the assessor to determine the validity of the finding. Upon receipt of all justifications, A2LA staff will then submit this information to the Accreditation Council (AC) to make a decision on the validity of the finding; the assessor(s) at that point are removed from the equation.

Typically, at least three AC Members, who are experts in your field of accreditation, will review the finding and supporting arguments and vote for or against accreditation with an explanation for how they voted. If the finding is upheld by the AC, you then have the option to appeal to a nine member AC Panel which will not contain any of the original three AC members. It is important to note that accreditation concerns very rarely go beyond the initial AC review as they are often addressed adequately at that time.

- **Technical Committee Participation:** Outside of the assessment process, A2LA has technical advisory committees (TAC) in each technical area that frequently meet to discuss important events and issues relating to accreditation. These committees are made up of assessors, technical experts and our customers. In these committees various technical issues can be brought up and discussed from many different viewpoints in order to provide transparency or enact change. Technical Committees are a place to ensure that every organization has a voice in the accreditation process and we invite and encourage all of our customers to participate.

*A2LA Staff is committed to ensuring that you obtain the highest level of customer service and we appreciate open and honest dialog and feedback. If there are any questions or concerns, no matter how small, A2LA would like the opportunity to address them. For additional information on any of the above processes please feel free to contact A2LA at 301 644 3248 or email us at [info@A2LA.org](mailto:info@A2LA.org).*