

Community Relations

UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Compliance Officer

The Governing Board designates the following compliance office to receive and investigate complaints and ensure district compliance with law:

Assistant Superintendent
West Sonoma County Union High School District
462 Johnson Street, Sebastopol, Ca 95472
(707) 824-6403

The Superintendent shall ensure that employees designated to investigate complaints are knowledgeable about the laws and programs for which they are responsible. Such employees may have access to legal counsel as determined by the Superintendent or designee.

(cf. 9124 – Attorney)

Notifications

The Human Resources Manager shall annually provide written notification of the district's uniform complaint procedures to students, employees, parents/guardians, district/school advisory committees, school advisory committees, appropriate private school officials or representatives, and other interested parties.

The Superintendent or designee shall make available copies of the district's uniform complaint procedures free of charge.

The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, or Site Principal shall ensure that complainants understand that they may pursue other remedies, including actions before civil courts or other public agencies. Remedies may include court orders, preliminary injunctions and/or restraining orders.

The above notification shall state that complainants may seek help from agencies such as legal assistance agencies or local mediation centers, or from private attorneys. Local resources include:

California Rural Legal Assistance, Santa Rosa
Sonoma County Legal Aid, Santa Rosa
Connexus Conflict Management, Sebastopol

The notice shall:

1. Identify the person(s), position(s), or unity(s) responsible for receiving complaints
2. Advise the complainant of any civil law remedies that may be available to him/her under state or federal discrimination laws, if applicable

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3. Advise the complainant of the appeal process pursuant to Education Code 262.3, including the complainant's right to take a complaint directly to the California Department of Education (CDE) or to pursue remedies before civil court or other public agencies
4. Include statements that:
 - a. The district is primarily responsible for compliance with state and federal laws and regulations
 - b. The complaint review shall be complete within 60 calendar days from the date of receipt of the complaint unless the complainant agrees in writing to an extension of the timeline.
 - c. An unlawful discrimination complaint must be filed not later than six (6) months from the date the alleged discrimination occurs, or six (6) months from the date the complainant first obtains knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination
 - d. The complainant has a right to appeal the district's decision to the CDE by filing a written appeal within 15 days of receiving the district's decision
 - e. The appeal to the CDE must include a copy of the complaint filed with the district and a copy of the district's decision

(cf. 5145.6 Parental Notification)

Procedures

The following procedures shall be used to address all complaints which allege that the district has violated federal or state laws or regulations governing educational programs. Compliance officers shall maintain a record of each complaint and subsequent related actions, including all information required for compliance with the Code of Regulations, Title 5 Section 4631 and 4633.

All parties involved in allegations shall be notified when a complaint is filed, when a complaint meeting or hearing is scheduled, and when a decision or ruling is made.

Step 1: Filing of Complaint

Any individual, public agency, or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance by the district. (5 CCR 4630)

A complaint alleging unlawful discrimination shall be initiated no later than six (6) months from the date when the alleged discrimination occurred or six (6) months from the date when the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination. (5 CCR 4630)

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A complaint may be filed by a person who alleges that he/she personally suffered unlawful discrimination or by a person who believes that an individual or any specific class of individuals has been subjected to unlawful discrimination. (5CCR 4630)

The complaint shall be presented to the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent or Site Principal. The Assistant Superintendent shall maintain a log of complaints received.

If a complainant is unable to put a complaint in writing due to conditions such as illiteracy or other disabilities, district staff shall help him/her to file the complaint. (5 CCR 4600)

Step 2: Mediation

As part of the investigation process, the compliance officer may informally discuss with the complainant the possibility of using mediation. If the complainant agrees to mediation the compliance officer shall make arrangement for the process. In no event shall mediation be mandatory in resolving complaints.

Before initiating the mediation of a discrimination complaint, the compliance officer shall ensure that all parties agree to make the mediator a party to related confidential information.

If the mediation process does not resolve the problem within the parameters of law, the compliance officer shall proceed with hi/her investigation of the complaint.

The use of mediation shall not extend the district's timelines for investigating and resolving the complaint unless the complainant agrees in writing to such an extension of time. (Title 5, CCR, 4631)

Step 3: Investigation

The compliance officer is encouraged to hold an investigation meeting within five (5) days of receiving the complaint or an unsuccessful attempt to mediate the complaint. This meeting shall provide an opportunity for the complainant, and/or the complainant's representative to repeat the complaint orally.

The complainant and/or the complainant's representative shall have an opportunity to present the complaint and evidence or information leading to evidence to support the allegations in the complaint. (Title 5, CCR 4631)

A complainant's refusal to provide the district's investigator with documents or other evidence related to the allegations in the complaint, or his/her failure or refusal to cooperate in the investigation or his/her engagement in any other obstruction of the investigation, may result in the dismissal of the complaint because of a lack of evidence to support the allegation. (5 CCR 4631)

The district's refusal to provide the investigator with access to records and/or other information related to the allegation in the complaint, or its failure or refusal to cooperate

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in the investigation or its engagement in any other obstruction of the investigation, may result in a finding, based on evidence collected, that a violation has occurred and may result in the imposition of a remedy in favor of the complainant. (5 CCR 4631)

Step 4: Response

Within 60 days of receiving the complaint, the compliance officer shall prepare and send to the complainant, and, upon request, to the California Department of Education (CDE), a written report of the district's investigation and decision, as described in Step #5 below. This time period may be extended by written agreement of the complainant.

Step 5: Final Written Decision

The district's decision shall be in writing and sent to the complainant.

The district's decision shall be written in English and in the language of the complainant whenever feasible or required by law.

This decision shall include:

1. The findings of fact based on the evidence gathered (5 CCR 4631)
2. The conclusion(s) of law (5 CCR 4631)
3. Disposition of the complaint (5 CCR 4631)
4. Rationale for such disposition (5 CCR 4631)
5. Corrective actions, if any are warranted (5 CCR 4631)
6. Notice of the complainant's right to appeal the decision to the California Department of Education within 15 days and procedures to be followed for initiating such an appeal.
7. For discrimination complaints, notice that the complainant must wait until 60 days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the California Department of Education before pursuing civil law remedies (5 CCR 4631; EC 262.3).

If an employee is disciplined as a result of the complaint, this decision shall simply state that effective action was taken and that the employee was informed of district expectations. The report shall not give any further information as to the nature of the disciplinary action.

Appeals to the California Department of Education

If dissatisfied with the district's decision, the complainant may appeal in writing to the California Department of Education within fifteen (15) days of receiving the district's decision. When appealing to the CDE, the complainant must specify the basis for the appeal of the decision and whether the facts are incorrect and/or the law has been misapplied. The appeal shall be accompanied by a copy of the locally filed complaint and a copy of the district's decision. (Title 5, Section 4632)

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Upon notification by the CDE that the complainant has appealed the district's decision, the Superintendent or designee shall forward the following documents to the CDE: (5 CCR 4633)

1. A copy of the original complaint
2. A copy of the decision
3. A summary of the nature and extent of the investigation conducted by the district, if not covered by the decision
4. A copy of the investigation file, including but not limited to all notes, interviews, and documents submitted by the parties and gathered by the investigator
5. A report of any action taken to resolve the complaint
6. A copy of the district's complaint procedures
7. Other relevant information requested by the CDE

The CDE may directly intervene in the complaint without waiting for action by the district when one of the conditions listed in 5 CCR 4650 exists, including cases in which the district has not taken action within 60 days of the date the complaint was filed with the district.

Civil Law Remedies

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies outside of the district's complaint procedures. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to, injunctions and restraining orders. For discrimination complaints, however, a complainant must wait until 60 days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the California Department of Education before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if the district has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of his/her right to file a complaint in accordance with 5 CCR 4622.