

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

870-RULE

Waunakee Community School District

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While staff members are expected to respond to verbally-presented complaints and concerns in a respectful, timely, and otherwise appropriate manner, the primary purpose of this rule is to provide procedures for the handling of public complaints that have been submitted in writing. These procedures are not intended to address complaints of misconduct by the District Administrator, which should instead be submitted in writing to the School Board President.

- A. **Submitting a Complaint** – To ensure that District staff will respond to the issue as a formal complaint under these procedures and to avoid miscommunication, the District strongly encourages all complaints under these procedures to be submitted in writing. Complaints should be first made to the school employee most closely involved in the situation or issue. In particular:
1. Complaints about matters relating to individual employees, if they have not been resolved informally via direct communication with the employee, should be made to the employee's immediate supervisor.
 2. Complaints about a school-level matter should be made to the building principal.
 3. Complaints about a support service (such as transportation), District finances or policies, or other District-level matters should be made to the building principal, the District Administrator, or another supervisor or administrator who is responsible for the function in question.
 4. Complainants not sure whom to contact should contact the office of the District Administrator to obtain further direction.

Staff have discretion to notify a complainant that a verbal complaint is being treated and processed in the same manner as a formal, written complaint under these procedures.

Anonymous complaints are strongly discouraged. The District Administrator will determine what follow-up, if any, is made in response to an anonymous complaint. The further procedures described in this rule will not be applied to anonymous complaints.

There is no absolute deadline for the filing of a complaint. However, the District can usually respond most effectively when the complaint is filed shortly after the occurrence of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint. Timeliness may be considered in the response to any complaint or appeal.

- B. **District Response to a Public Complaint** – Upon receipt of a complaint under these procedures, District staff will first determine how to route and process the complaint. In particular, District staff are expected to choose the most appropriate of the following options:
1. Staff will respond to complaints more appropriately handled by another employee by referring the complaint to the school employee most closely involved in the situation or issue.
 2. If the District staff determines that a general complaint brought forward under these procedures should be processed under another District policy or procedure, staff will inform the complainant of that assessment and route the complaint to that more-applicable process.

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3. In relatively rare circumstances, staff may determine that a complaint is not amenable to processing under any District-established procedure, or that it should be rejected or dismissed for some other reason. If the District Administrator agrees with this assessment, the District Administrator or his/her designee will notify the complainant of the determination and offer the complainant an opportunity to request reconsideration of the dismissal/rejection from the District Administrator.
4. Staff may determine that the complaint will be further processed under these procedures.

Staff and administration have primary responsibility for responding to public complaints. Board members receiving public complaints should refer the complainant to the District Administrator or other appropriate staff person. This is not intended to prevent the Board from discussing the subjects of public complaints or overseeing the proper management of the complaints, but rather to allow the most appropriate "source" for answers or resolution to the complaints to be able to investigate them and respond to them first.

C. **Appeals and Requests for Reconsideration** – Complaints not resolved following communication with the employee(s) most closely involved in the situation or issue may be appealed or brought forward for reconsideration using the following procedure:

1. The complainant shall notify (as he/she determines is most appropriate in light of the specific issue or after consulting with the office of the District Administrator) either the building principal, a support service supervisor or director, or the office of the District Administrator, of his/her desire to appeal an unresolved complaint. Where an administrative employee provided the initial response to the complaint, such notification will automatically be treated as a request for reconsideration.
2. The District will assign an administrative employee to further investigate the complaint and to issue an administrative response to the complainant.
3. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the administrative response on appeal/reconsideration, the complainant may request a final administrative review/reconsideration of the complaint from the District Administrator. The District Administrator will then provide the final administrative response to the complaint.

Complaints not resolved at the District Administrator level may be appealed to the Board. Appeals to the Board shall be made in writing and presented to the Board through the District Administrator. The District Administrator shall in conjunction with other staff prepare a report with information about the complaint, the District's response(s) and recommendations to the Board. The Board shall base its decision on this report unless it desires to meet with the complainant, meet with any staff member, order further investigation, or otherwise supplement the record. The Board reserves the right to summarily affirm or reverse the final administrative response with or without further comment or explanation.

Cross References:

WASB PRG 870 Sample Rule 1

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