

A-209 Community & Parent Complaint Policy & Procedure

POLICY

Community members and/or program participants (parents/guardians) may present complaints to the appropriate person(s) about the Early Learning Program, any ECEAP/Head Start Center staff member, or a ESD 105 staff member. The names of all site staff and administrators, as well as the process for contacting them will be given to all parents/guardians at orientation or by other means at the start of the school year, and upon request. The Community Complaint procedure may be used when the complainant feels that Head Start/ECEAP policies have been violated. Appropriate cases may include, but are not limited to, alleged:

1. Unfair or arbitrary application of enrollment policy
2. Violation of Head Start/ECEAP policies and procedures
3. Inappropriate practices with children
4. Suspected abuse
5. Breach of confidentiality
6. Unethical conduct
7. Discriminatory actions
8. Retaliation

The complainant must receive a response acknowledging the receipt of the Complaint no later than 10 working days from the date of filed complaint.

PROCEDURE

Informal Resolution of Complaints

Complaints about local center issues should first be brought to the relevant staff person or to the local Center Manager, Director or Site Supervisor. Every effort will be made to resolve complaints by informal discussions between the complainant and the staff member or local Early Learning Center Director/Site Supervisor. If the situation is not satisfactorily resolved, the complainant may continue onto a formal complaint. There will be no retaliation against the complainant or the complainant child for bring forward an informal complainant.

Formal Resolution of Complaints

1. Any community member or Early Learning parent/guardian may use the complaint procedure.
2. Formal complaints pertaining to ESD 105 staff or ESD 105's Subcontractor/Vendor shall go immediately to the Executive Director for Early Learning. Complaints relating to Executive Director for Early Learning will be taken to the ESD 105 Superintendent or designee.
3. There will be no retaliation against a complainant or their child for using the complaint procedure. Such alleged action shall constitute grounds for a separate complaint.

The following procedures apply to processing a complaint which is not resolved locally or those that involve ESD 105 staff. These procedures are in addition to any local procedures that may exist within the agency operating ECEAP or Head Start programs.

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Responsibility of Person Filing Complaint (often called the Complainant)

1. The person filing the complaint will put his/her complaint in writing
2. The complaint must be specific and describe conditions or circumstances of the concern
3. The complaint must include information on how to contact the person making the complaint. The complaint should be sent to one of the following:
 - a) Complaints regarding concerns of a local nature, including those that pertain to center staff, should be sent to the local Center Manager/Director.
 - b) Complaints regarding ESD 105 staff or ESD 105's Subcontractor/Vendor should be sent to the ESD 105 Executive Director for Early Learning.
 - c) Complaints concerning the ESD 105 Executive Director for Early Learning should be sent to the ESD 105 Superintendent.

The names and addresses for any of the above officials can be obtained from the ESD 105 Early Learning office by calling 509-575-2885.

Right to Appeal Decision of Center Director or ESD 105 Executive Director

If the validity of a complaint is denied by the Center Director or ESD 105 Executive Director for Early Learning, the complainant will be advised that he/she has a right to a further hearing if he/she is not satisfied with the response. He/she may choose to pursue further his/her concern either through a local sub-contractor's community complaint policy or by sending the complaint to the ESD 105 Executive Director for Early Learning or to the ESD 105 Superintendent if appealing the decision of the Executive Director Appeal Process:

The Executive Director will conduct an investigation of the complaint including contacting the Center Manager/Director as appropriate, and shall respond in writing within 15 working days of receiving the appeal, sending a copy to the Center Manager/Director.

Responsibility of the Official Receiving the Complaint

The official will conduct a thorough investigation of the complaint, which may include a meeting with the complainant. He/she will then respond in writing to the complainant no later than 10 working days after the written complaint is received. This written response will clearly state either:

1. The written complaint has been received and what the next steps are and timeline
2. That the official denies the validity of the complaint, or;
3. That a plan for corrective action has been designed and will be fully implemented in a prompt manner.
4. In the event that the complaint is still not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, he/she may request a formal meeting with the ESD 105 Superintendent or designee and the Policy Council Chairperson, using procedures comparable to the "fair hearing" procedures in WAC 38808 and the Administrative procedures ACT RCW 34.04 for contested cases. The Hearing Board shall schedule a hearing within 15 working days after the meeting. A decision on the complaint will be made by the three people on the complaint hearing board.