

A Guide to Understanding the CCSD Discipline Hearing and Appeal Process

Effective July 1, 2025

◆ Overview of CCSD Discipline Hearings

The student discipline process is managed by the Department of School Support (DoSS). A discipline hearing is scheduled when a student's behavior violation warrants formal review. Beginning in the 2025–2026 school year, all discipline hearings will be conducted by the CCSD Discipline Hearing Panel.

◆ About the CCSD Discipline Hearing Panel

The CCSD Discipline Hearing Panels were created as a result of S.C. House Bill 4014, 2025 Session (S.C. 2025) abolishes the use of constituent boards. The CCSD Discipline Hearing panel is supervised by the CCSD Superintendent and managed by the Associate Superintendent of the Department of School Support (DoSS).

CCSD has established two three-member panels composed of trained district personnel who are committed to ensuring impartial and fair student discipline hearings. Panel members may come from diverse backgrounds such as education, law enforcement, prevention/intervention services, and community outreach. All panel members are trained to:

1. Ensure due process
2. Uphold the CCSD Code of Conduct and Progressive Discipline Plan (PDP)
3. Make informed student placement decisions based on violations

◆ Understanding Due Process

Due process ensures that students are treated fairly and have the opportunity to respond before significant disciplinary action is taken.

Students and parents are afforded the following rights:

1. Legal representation at the family's expense.
2. Written notification of the behavior violation, hearing date/time/location, and the opportunity to attend. Communications will be provided in the language best understood by the parent/guardian.
3. Access to evidence, including videos (if applicable), and the right to present witnesses and challenge evidence. Parents have the right to view the video at the time of the incident, at a scheduled date and time agreed by all parties, or at least no later than 3 days before the scheduled hearing. (S.C. Code 59-63-240).

4. Appeal rights for the student, parent, or school administrator—submitted within 10 school days of the decision.

◆ What to Expect at a Hearing

1. Hearings are conducted by one of the two CCSD panels.
2. Hearings are typically conducted within 3–5 school days after the parent receives notification from DoSS.
3. Each panel includes three members.
4. Hearings may be attended in person or virtually, based on family preference
5. Regular scheduling occurs Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM–2:00 PM.
6. Fridays are reserved for emergency hearings.
7. Evening hearings are offered once weekly for families unable to attend during daytime hours.
8. Decisions are typically issued the same day or within 15 school days of the hearing.

◆ Presentation and Appearance Expectations

Discipline hearings are formal processes. All participants are expected to:

1. Exhibit respectful behavior
2. Dress appropriately

Disruptive conduct may result in:

1. Removal from the hearing
2. The hearing proceeding in absentia (without the disruptive individual present)
3. Rescheduling of the hearing, if necessary

CCSD staff will enforce expectations to ensure that the hearing environment remains safe, respectful, and conducive for all participants.

◆ What is “In Absentia”?

A hearing held in absentia means it proceeds without the student or parent/guardian present—even if their attendance was expected—provided that due process requirements were met.

◆ Legal Representation Protocol

If legal representation is retained for the student, a CCSD attorney must be present. If an attorney appears without prior notice to the district, the hearing will be postponed and rescheduled to ensure proper representation for both parties.

◆ The CCSD Appeal Process

What is an Appeal?

An appeal is a formal request to challenge or review the decision made during the student discipline hearing regarding educational placement or services.

Appeal Levels

Level 1: This option becomes available only after the Discipline Hearing has been conducted.

- The appeal is reviewed by the CCSD Office of Investigations & Compliance.

Level 2: This option becomes available only after the 1st Level of Appeal has been conducted.

- The appeal is reviewed by the CCSD Board of Trustees (BOT).

◆ When to File an Appeal

Appeals may be requested when the student, parent, or school believes that:

1. A procedural error occurred
2. A decision was made in error
3. Relevant facts were not properly considered

◆ Level 1 Appeal Process

1. Initiation: Submit a written appeal within 10 school days of the decision letter, explaining the reason for the appeal.
2. Review: The Office of Investigations & Compliance reviews the case based on existing evidence (This is not a new hearing. No new testimony or evidence is presented).
3. Decision: Issued within 3–5 school days. Outcomes may include:
 - a. Upheld – The original hearing decision remains in place.
 - b. Modified – The original decision is adjusted based on new findings.

◆ Level 2 Appeal Process

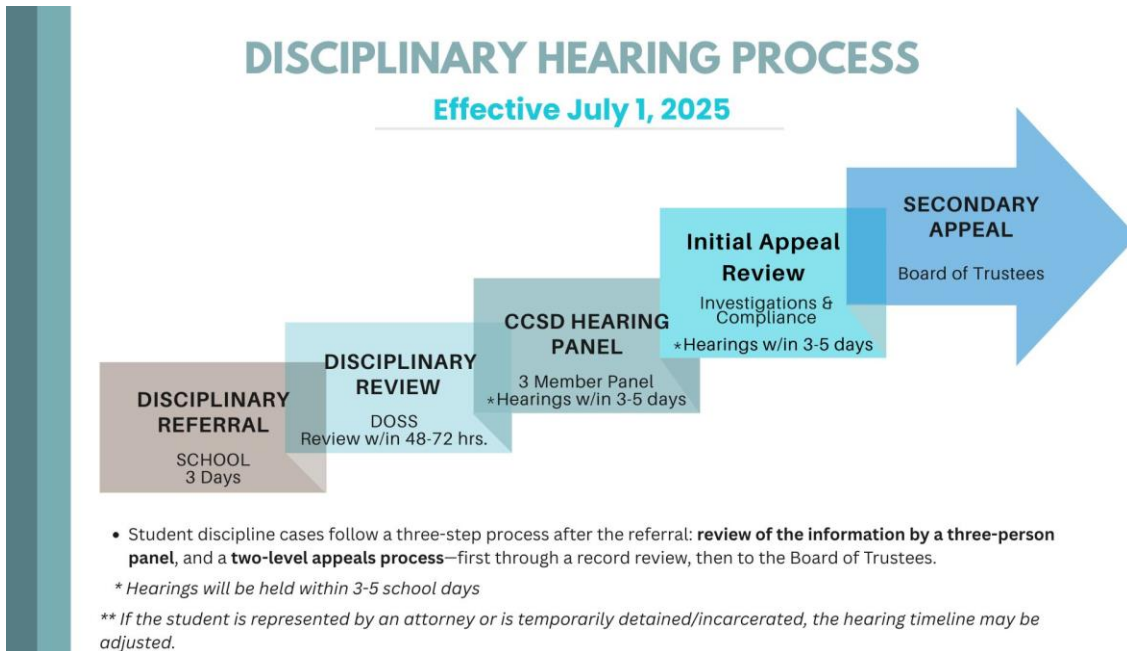
1. Initiation: Submit a written appeal within 10 school days of the Level 1 appeal decision. (Alternatively, request DoSS to forward all materials, including the original appeal letter, to the BOT.)
2. Review: Conducted by the Board of Trustees, based solely on the submitted documentation (No additional evidence or testimony will be accepted).
3. Scheduling: Based on the Board's meeting calendar.
4. Decision: Communicated in writing. Outcomes may include:
 - a. Upheld- The original hearing decision remains in place.
 - b. Modified- The original decision is adjusted based on new findings.

◆ Beyond the CCSD Appeal Process

If a student, parent, or guardian still disagrees with the final decision after completing both levels of the CCSD appeal process, they have the right to **pursue legal action outside of the school district**.

This can include **filing an appeal with the South Carolina Circuit Court**, as allowed under state law. This process is **handled through the legal system**, and families are encouraged to **consult an attorney** to explore this option and receive guidance on how to proceed.

The CCSD Discipline Process in Action



Need Help or Have Questions?

For additional questions or concerns, please contact the **Department of School Support** at:

 **Phone:** 843-745-7150

 **Email:** doss@charleston.k12.sc.us

Thank you,



Dr. Shavonna Coakley

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School Support, Community Engagement & Alternative Programs