

ANN ARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNIFORM GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES
APPLICABLE TO COMPLAINTS ALLEGING VIOLATIONS OF TITLE IX , TITLE VI,
AND THE DISTRICT’S POLICY 5010 (NON-DISCRIMINATION)
AND POLICY 5800 (BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING)

PURPOSE: The purpose of these procedures is to secure, at the lowest possible level, prompt and equitable resolutions of complaints based on violations of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VI"), and/or the Ann Arbor Public Schools Policies 5800 (Anti-Bullying/Cyberbullying) and 5010 (Non-Discrimination) (all of these, collectively, the "Policies").

These procedures shall be available in every school site administrative office and posted on the District website.

I. DEFINITIONS:

A. "Complainant" - A complainant is any person who submits a formal or informal complaint alleging any action or treatment prohibited by the Policies in any District program or activity.

B. "Respondent" - the person alleged to be responsible for the prohibited conduct alleged in a formal or informal complaint.

C. "Day" - The calculation of days in complaint processing, except as otherwise expressly provided, shall exclude Saturdays, Sundays, and federal, state and school holidays or closures.

D. "Complaint Submission Date" - the date on which a written complaint was received by the Responsible Administrator.

E. "Responsible Administrator" - The District Executive Director responsible for the school or program at which the events underlying the complaint occurred, the Title IX Coordinator, Deputy Superintendent for Human Resources, the authorized designee of these individuals, or the administrator designated by the Superintendent, as appropriate.

II. PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS.

A. **Time Limits.** A complaint under this procedure should be filed as soon as possible after the time of occurrence of the alleged violation(s) of the Policies. Failure of a complainant or appellant to comply with any time limitation in the complaint procedure may result in dismissal of the complaint and/or denial of the appeal. Dismissal shall not preclude the individual's right to pursue the complaint through other appropriate external agencies.

B. **Service.** Service of any notice or decision provided for under this procedure shall be deemed effective on the person served as of the date of delivery, if personally served, faxed or emailed, or effective three (3) calendar days of deposit by first class mail if delivered by mail.

C. **Employees.** When a complaint makes allegations involving a Respondent who is an employee of the District, these Procedures shall supplement and not supersede any Investigation Procedures required by the Department of Human Resources & Legal Services.

D. **Confidentiality.**

1. Confidentiality will be maintained to the greatest extent possible. Any information gathered during an informal procedure may be used during a formal procedure, if initiated. While there

can be no assurance of complete confidentiality, complaints under this procedure will be treated as sensitive information not to be shared with others except in limited circumstances. Examples of exceptions to maintaining confidentiality include:

- information the law requires to be reported.
- information imparted to others in supervisory positions in order to further an investigation or halt a discriminatory practice.
- information given to the respondent in order to have sufficient information to respond to the allegations.

2. The District will take all reasonable steps to investigate and respond to a complaint consistent with a request by the complaining party not to disclose his/her name. However, such requests for confidentiality may limit the District's ability to adequately investigate and respond to the allegations raised in the complaint.

3. Requests for confidentiality, therefore, will be evaluated in the context of the District's responsibility to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, and the request will be weighed against whatever factors the District deems relevant, including, without limitation:

- the complainant's age; circumstances that suggest there is an increased risk of future acts of harassment and/or sexual violence under similar circumstances; and
- whether the District possesses other means to obtain relevant evidence (e.g., security cameras or personnel, physical evidence).

4. All parties to a grievance, including the Complainant, Respondent and witnesses, have privacy interests and, therefore, all parties should be cautioned not to divulge or publicize the nature of the proceedings or the identity of those involved outside the scope of the investigation.

III. INFORMAL AND FORMAL PROCESSES.

A. INFORMAL RESOLUTION PROCESS:

Informal resolution may be an appropriate choice when the conduct involved is not of a serious or repetitive nature and disciplinary action is not required to remedy the situation. No formal investigation is involved in the informal resolution process, and the informal resolution process shall not be considered a precondition for the filing of a formal written complaint pursuant to Section III.B., below.

1. A written request for informal resolution must be made within ten (10) days of the date of the alleged incident. The school principal or designee shall determine whether the nature of the problem is such that it is likely to be resolved by agreement on an informal basis.

2. Methods for informal resolution may include, but are not limited to, coaching the person on how to directly address a situation which is causing a problem; mediating the dispute with the parties; restorative practices; developing written behavior expectations of the alleged offender to redirect conduct; assisting with the resolution of a real or perceived problem; or arranging a documented meeting with the alleged offender that involves a discussion of the policy at issue and requirements for compliance.

3. The principal or designee shall document any informal resolution, and a copy of such

documentation shall be forwarded to the Responsible Administrator within three (3) days of resolution.

B. FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES:

Initiation of the formal complaint procedures requires a written complaint. All written complaints regarding harassment or discrimination of students or employees in violation the Policies shall be submitted to the appropriate Title IX Coordinator or the District Executive Director responsible for the school or program at which the events underlying the complaint occurred.

Step 1 - Reporting Complaints.

(a) The Complainant may obtain a Complaint Form from the Title IX Coordinator, Human Resources Department, school principal, or the District website. The Complainant may attach a written narrative explaining the nature of the complaint to the Form. The Complaint Form or narrative shall contain information that describes the conduct that has violated the Policies and identify with reasonable particularity the respondent(s) and any witnesses to the alleged conduct. These procedures shall also apply where the District has actual or constructive notice of a violation of the Policies.

(b) If the Complainant is unwilling or unable to provide a written statement including the information set forth above, but nonetheless expresses their intent to file a formal complaint, the Responsible Administrator shall ask for such details in an oral interview and file a written complaint on behalf of the Complainant. In the event the Complainant is a student with disabilities, the Responsible Administrator will carefully review the reporting student's IEP or 504 plan to determine what specific accommodations that child should have to aid in their reporting such written complaint.

(c) Any District employee who has actual or constructive notice that a violation of the Policies has taken place, or who either reasonably believes a violation of the Policies has occurred or who receives a complaint of a violation of the polices from any person through informal verbal communication or other means (such as email) shall immediately take the following steps to preserve evidence in the event that an investigation is required:

1. Report the incident to the Responsible Administrator.
2. The Responsible Administrator or his/her designee shall obtain written statements from all witnesses to the incident, including staff, students and, if appropriate third parties;
3. In the event that the incident may qualify as a violation of criminal law or meets the definition of abuse and/or neglect, the Title IX Coordinator and/or Responsible Administrator shall: (a) Report the incident to local law enforcement officials pursuant to District procedures; and (b) file a DHS-3200 report pursuant to the District Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Procedures;
4. The Title IX Coordinator and Responsible Administrator and/or their designees shall preserve any evidence of the incident, including, without limitation, incident reports, text messages, images, postings on social media and available video recordings from security cameras.

The above requirements are not intended to limit any District employee's right to file a written complaint pursuant to these Procedures if that individual so chooses.

Step 2 - Determining Applicability of the Procedures.

The Responsible Administrator shall initially review the written complaint to determine whether the matter falls within the scope of these procedures. Within ten (10) days after the Complaint Submission Date, the Responsible Administrator shall initiate an investigation of the matters alleged, or inform the Complainant in writing that the matters alleged in the complaint are not within the jurisdiction or authority of the District to investigate and that the District will not carry out any further investigation. If the matter does not involve allegations of violations of the Policies within the scope of these procedures, the Responsible Administrator shall forward the matter to the proper District administrative authority for review, if appropriate.

Step 3 - Investigation.

(a) The Responsible Administrator shall oversee that an adequate, reliable and impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the principal or designee of the school site where the student is enrolled, the employee is assigned, and/or where the alleged discrimination occurred.

(b) In order to provide a neutral and objective investigation, neither the Responsible Administrator, nor the principal or designee conducting the investigation shall be a party to the complaint in the investigation.

(c) In the event that the Responsible Administrator is not a neutral party, the Superintendent shall designate a neutral and objective administrator to oversee the investigation. Whenever appropriate, the Responsible Administrator may designate an attorney to conduct or assist in the investigation subject to the oversight of the Responsible Administrator.

(d) In conducting the investigation, the designated investigator shall interview all parties identified in the complaint who consent to be interviewed and other witnesses that the investigator determines may provide information relevant to resolving the complaint allegation(s). Both the Complainant and Respondent shall have the opportunity to identify witnesses to be interviewed and provide documentation or other evidence for the designated investigator to review.

(e) The Responsible Administrator shall consider the evidence compiled by the designated investigator and take whatever additional actions the Responsible Administrator deems necessary to complete the investigation.

(f) The Responsible Administrator will maintain documentation of all proceedings, including documentation relied upon in the investigation, which may include written findings of facts, transcripts, notes, or audio recordings.

(g) The Responsible Administrator shall provide to the parties a copy of all evidence to be used in the investigation prior to issuing the Grievance Investigation Report and Recommended Written Determination.

Step 4 - Notice of Resolution.

(a) Notice. The Responsible Administrator or the investigator on the Responsible Administrator's behalf shall notify both the Complainant and Respondent in writing within sixty (60) days from the Complaint Submission Date of the results of the investigation by issuing the Grievance Investigation Report and Recommended Written Determination.

(b) Contents. The Grievance Investigative Report and Recommended Written

Determination shall include:

- Identification of the allegations potentially forming the basis of the grievance;
- A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the formal complaint through the determination, including any notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, and methods used to gather other evidence;;
- Findings of fact supporting the determination;
- Conclusions regarding the application of the Districts' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook to the facts;
- A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation, including a determination regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions the District imposes on the Respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the District's education program or activity will be provided by the District to the Complainant; and
- The District's procedures and permissible bases for the Complainant and Respondent to appeal.

(c) (TITLE IX ONLY) Written Questions. After the Responsible Administrator or the investigator on the Responsible Administrator's behalf has transmitted the Grievance Investigation Report and Recommended Written Determination to the parties and before reaching a determination regarding responsibility, the Responsible Administrator shall afford each party the opportunity to submit written, relevant questions that a party wants asked of any party or witness, provide each party with the answers, and allow for additional, limited follow-up questions from each party. Questions and evidence about the Complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, unless such questions and evidence about the Complainant's prior sexual behavior are offered to prove that someone other than the Respondent committed the conduct alleged by the Complainant, or if the questions and evidence concern specific incidents of the Complainant's prior sexual behavior with respect to the Respondent and are offered to prove consent. The Responsible Administrator must explain to the party proposing the questions any decision to exclude a question as not relevant. The parties should be aware that the District has no ability to compel a party or a witness to respond to the written questions.

(d) (TITLE IX ONLY) Written Determination. A Responsible Administrator who is not the Title IX Coordinator or the investigator, shall consider the totality of the evidence and determine whether the preponderance of the evidence establishes that the alleged violation of the Policies occurred (i.e., it is more likely than not that sexual harassment occurred). The Responsible Administrator shall then inform the parties whether the Grievance Investigation Report and Recommended Written Determination is accepted as is or modified in any respect. The Grievance Investigation Report and Recommended Written Determination shall become final and shall be implemented unless either party appeals as provided in Step 5 - Appeal Rights.

Step 5 - Appeal Rights.

- (a) A party not satisfied with the resolution in Step 4, above, may submit a written appeal within five (5) days to the Superintendent. The District shall offer both parties an appeal from a determination regarding responsibility, and from the District's dismissal of a formal complaint or any allegations therein, on the following bases:

- Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter;
- New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made, that could affect the outcome of the matter; and
- The Title IX Coordinator, investigator(s), or decision-maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter.

(b) As to all appeals, the District shall:

- Notify the other party in writing when an appeal is filed and implement appeal procedures equally for both parties;
- Ensure that the decision-maker for the appeal is not the same person as the decision-maker that reached the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal, the investigator, or the Title IX Coordinator;
- Ensure that the decision-maker for the appeal is properly trained and does not have a conflict of interest;
- Give both parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome;
- Issue a written decision describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result; and
- Provide the written decision simultaneously to both parties.

Step 6 - Complaints to an External Agency.

A party may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education ("OCR") regarding violations of Title IX or Title VI regardless of whether or not a complaint has been filed under these Uniform Grievance Procedures.

If a party is not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision in Step 5, above regarding a grievance alleging a violation of Title IX or Title VI, the party may file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights ("OCR").

OCR's contact information is as follows:

Denver Office
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building
1244 Speer Boulevard, Suite 310
Denver, CO 80204-3582

Telephone: 303-844-5695
FAX: 303-844-4303; TDD: 800-877-8339
Email: OCR.Denver@ed.gov

IV. DISCIPLINE.

Employees and students may be disciplined if it is determined through this procedure that discriminatory action, treatment, harassment or retaliation for complaining, has occurred in violation of federal or state laws or District policies. The Responsible Administrator shall refer the matter to the appropriate District administrator to initiate disciplinary proceedings against the Respondent.

- A. Students. If the recommended disciplinary consequences involve either a long-term suspension or expulsion, the student is entitled to pursue the hearing and appeal rights pursuant to the District's Rights and Responsibilities Guide and Michigan state law.
- B. Employees. If the disciplinary consequence involves discharge or termination, the employee's hearing and appeal rights will be governed by Michigan law and District policies.

V. NON-RETALIATION

- A. Anyone who has made a complaint shall be free from retaliation, coercion, and reprisal in seeking resolution of their complaint. Furthermore, persons acting as witnesses to a complaint, in good faith, shall be free from reprisal.
- B. Retaliation is a separate violation distinct from the initial underlying allegation. Claims of retaliation, submitted in good faith and in writing to the Responsible Administrator, shall be investigated pursuant to these procedures. Individuals who engage in retaliation will be subject to discipline, regardless of whether there has been a finding of cause for the underlying complaint.

VI. FALSE COMPLAINTS.

- A. Individuals who knowingly file a false or misleading complaints alleging a violation of the Policies are subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, dismissal of the complaint.
- B. If the preponderance of the evidence supports a finding that the Complainant submitted a false or misleading complaint alleging a violation of the Policies, the complaint will be dismissed, and the student or employee who submitted the complaint will be recommended for discipline in a manner consistent with the District's Rights and Responsibilities Guide.

VII. RELATIONSHIP OF THESE PROCEDURES AND TIMELINES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.

- A. Nothing in these Procedures should in any way be deemed to discourage the Complainant from reporting acts subject to these Procedures, including acts of sexual violence, to local law enforcement. In the event that the Complainant files a criminal complaint, the Responsible Administrator should not wait for the conclusion of a criminal investigation or criminal proceeding to begin the District's own investigation.
- B. Although the District may need to delay temporarily the fact-finding portion of an investigation while local law enforcement officials are gathering evidence, it is important for the Responsible Administrator to understand that during this brief delay in the investigation, the District must take supportive measures to protect the

Complainant in the educational setting. The District should also continue to update the parties on the status of the investigation and inform the parties when the District resumes its investigation

VIII. SUPPORTIVE MEASURES PENDING FINAL DETERMINATION OF THE COMPLAINT.

- C. “Supportive measures” means non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge to the Complainant or the Respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint or where no formal complaint has been filed. Such measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to the District’s education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party, including measures designed to protect the safety of all parties or the District’s educational environment, or deter sexual harassment.
- D. Supportive measures may include counseling, extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments, modifications of work or class schedules, campus escort services, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties, changes in work or housing locations, leaves of absence, increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus, and other similar measures. The District must maintain as confidential any supportive measures provided to the Complainant or Respondent, to the extent that maintaining such confidentiality would not impair the ability of the District to provide the supportive measures. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the effective implementation of supportive measures.

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