

## **UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

The Governing Board recognized that the Chawanakee Unified School District is primarily responsible for complying with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs. (5CCR4620)

The district shall follow uniform complaint procedures when addressing complaints alleging unlawful discrimination based on age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability in any program or activity that receives or benefits from state financial assistance. Uniform complaint procedures shall also be used when addressing complaints alleging failure to comply with state and/or federal laws in adult education, consolidated categorical aid programs, Local Control Accountability Plan, migrant education, vocational education, child care and development programs, child nutrition programs and special education programs.

The Board encourages the early, informal resolution of complaints at the site level whenever possible.

The Board acknowledges and respects student and employee rights to privacy. Discrimination complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the facts. This includes keeping the identity of the complainant confidential except to the extent necessary to carry out the investigation or proceedings, as determined by the Superintendent or designee on a case-by-case basis.

The Board prohibits retaliation in any form for the participation in complaint procedures, including but not limited to the filing of a complaint or the reporting of instances of discrimination. Such participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades or work assignments of the complainant.

The Board recognizes that a neutral mediator can often suggest a compromise that is agreeable to all parties in a dispute. In accordance with uniform complaint procedures, whenever all parties to a complaint agree to try resolving their problem through mediation, the Superintendent or designee shall initiate mediation. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that mediation results are consistent with state and federal laws and regulation.

## **COMPLIANCE OFFICER**

The Governing Board designates the following compliance officer(s) to receive and investigate complaints and to ensure district compliance with law:

Margaret Ameel, Human Resource, Compliance Officer  
26065 Outback Industrial Way, O'Neals, CA 93645  
P.O. Box 400, North Fork, CA 93643  
(559)877-6209 (559)868-4488 FAX

The Superintendent or designee 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.

## **NOTIFICATIONS**

The Superintendent or Compliance Officer shall meet the notification requirements of the code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 4622, including the annual dissemination and distribution of a written notice of the district's complaint procedures to students, employees, parents or guardians of its students, school and district advisory committees, appropriate private school officials or representative, and other interested parties. The Superintendent or Compliance Officer shall ensure that complainants understand that they may pursue other remedies, including actions before civil courts or other public agencies. Copies of the complaint procedures are available free of charge to any interested party. (T5CCR 4622)

## **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 5 CCR 4632.

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 A COMPLAINT**

Any individual, public agency or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance by the district.

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination may be filed by a person who believes that an individual or any specific class of individuals has been subjected to unlawful discrimination. The complaint must be initiated no later than six months from the date when the alleged discrimination occurred or when the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination (5CCR 4630). The complaint shall be presented to the compliance officer who shall maintain a log of complaints received, providing each with a code number and a date stamp.

### **STEP 2: MEDIATION**

Within 3 days of receiving the complaint, 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 all arrangements for this process. 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 the law, the compliance officer shall proceed with his/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. (5 CCR 4631).

### **STEP 3: INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINT**

The compliance officer is encouraged to hold an investigative meeting within 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 his/her representative to repeat the complaint orally. The complainant and/or his/her representative and the district's representatives shall also have an opportunity to present information relevant to the complaint. Parties to the dispute may discuss the complaint and question each other or each other's witnesses. (5 CCR 4631)

#### **STEP 4: RESPONSE**

Within 60 days of receiving the complaint, the compliance officer shall prepare and send to the complainant a written report of the district's investigation and decision, as described in Step #5 below. (5 CCR 4631)

The Board may consider the matter at its next regular Board meeting or at a Special Board meeting convened in order to meet the 60-day time limit within which the complaint must be answered. The Board may decide not to hear the complaint, in which case the compliance officer's decision shall be final. If the Board hears the complaint, the compliance officer shall send the Board's decision to the complainant within 60 days of the district's initially receiving the complaint or within the time period that has been specified in a written agreement with the complainant. (5 CCR 4631)

#### **STEP 5: FINAL WRITTEN DECISION**

The report of the district's decision shall be in writing and sent to the complainant. (5 CCR 4631) The report of the district's decision shall be written in English and in the language of the complainant whenever feasible or required by law. If it is not feasible to write this report in the complainant's primary language, the district shall arrange a meeting at which a community member will interpret it for the complainant.

This report shall include:

1. The findings and disposition of the complaint, including corrective actions, if any (5 CCR 4631).
2. The rationale for the above disposition (5 CCR 4631).
3. Notice of the complainant's right to appeal the decision within 15 days to the California Department of Education, and procedures to be followed for initiating such an appeal (5 CCR 4631, 4652).
4. 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; Education Code 262.3).
5. A detailed statement of all specific issues that were brought up during the investigation and the extent to which these issues were resolved.

If an employee is disciplined as a result of the complaint, this report 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 15 days of receiving the district's decision. For good cause, the Superintendent of Public Instruction may grant an extension for filing appeals. (5 CCR 4652).

When appealing to the California Department of Education, the complainant must specify the reason(s) for appealing to the district's decision and must include a copy of the locally filed complaint and the district's decision and must include a copy of the locally filed complaint and the district's decision. (5 CCR 4652).

The California Department of Education may directly intervene in the complaint without waiting for action by the district when one of the conditions listed in 5 CCR 4650 exists. In addition, the California Department of Education may also intervene in those cases where the district has not taken action within 60 calendar 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.

For assistance you may contact:

**Madera County Office of Education**  
1105 S. Madera Ave.  
Madera, CA 93637  
(559) 673-6051