

# Community Complaint Policy & Procedure

Policy No. 405

## **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 PSESD 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 ECEAP/Head Start 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 ECEAP/Head Start 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 filled 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 Director/Site Supervisor. Every effort will be made to resolve complaints by informal discussions between the complainant and the staff member or local ECEAP/Head Start Center Director/Site Supervisor/Family Child Care Provider. 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 PSESD staff or a Family Child Care Provider shall go immediately to the Early Learning Associate Superintendent. Complaints relating to Early Learning Associate Superintendent will be taken to the ESD 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 PSESD staff. These procedures are in addition to any local procedures that may exist within the agency operating ECEAP or Head Start programs.

### **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 and/or site Director.
- B. Complaints regarding PSESD staff or Family Child Care providers should be sent to the PSESD Early Learning Associate Superintendent.
- C. Complaints concerning the PSESD Early Learning Associate Superintendent should be sent to the PSESD Superintendent.

The names and addresses for any of the above officials can be obtained from the Puget Sound ESD Early Learning office by calling 425-917-7700.

## Right to Appeal Decision of Center Director or PSESD Executive Director

If the validity of a complaint is denied by the Center Director or PSESD Early Learning Associate Superintendent, 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 PSESD Early Learning Associate Superintendent or to the PSESD Superintendent if appealing the decision of the Associate Superintendent Appeal Process:

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

Approved by Policy Council: September 24, 2013

Approved by Board of Directors: To be approved

ECEAP Performance Standards: A-6, A-10, G-2

Head Start Act: n/a

Head Start Performance Standards: 1304.50(d)