

## Washington State Charter School Commission Complaint Policy

### Purpose and Scope:

The Washington State Charter School Commission’s (Commission) mission is to authorize high quality charter public schools and provide effective oversight and transparent accountability to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students. The Commission values feedback from the community, and as a State Agency, provides the opportunity for public comment at Commission meetings. This Policy identifies additional options that may be used for sharing concerns (Part A).

This Policy also sets out the complaint process for anyone who believes that she/he/they have been subject to discriminatory treatment under state or federal law by the Charter School Commission (Part B). Discrimination, as used in this Complaint Policy, is defined in terms of state and federal laws governing discrimination.

This Complaint Policy does not apply to new school applicant complaints covered by the New School Application (see “Applicant Complaints”, and “Protest Procedures”).

This Complaint Policy does not apply to complaints against charter public schools. In general, complaints against charter public schools should be made through the school’s complaint process. There may be exceptions to this general rule, where the complaints fall under the Charter School Commission’s regulatory oversight role. If a complainant believes the school specific complaint falls outside the school’s complaint process, and/or falls under the Charter School Commission’s regulatory oversight role, please contact Commission staff at [charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us](mailto:charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us).

### Process:

#### Contact Information:

Details of concerns or complaints should be provided in writing by delivering (email, mail, or in person) to one of the following addresses:

#### Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 40996  
Olympia, WA 98504-0996

Email: [charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us](mailto:charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us)

**Physical Address:**

1068 Washington Street SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

Persons with disabilities may request an alternative means of submitting a complaint, such as a personal interview or a tape recording of the complaint. If you need alternative means of submitting a complaint, you may contact the Commission at (360) 725-5511 or [charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us](mailto:charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us). You can also call 711 or (800) 833-6388 to reach the Washington State Relay Service for deaf callers. If you need assistance due to a speech disability, Speech-to-Speech provides human voice for people with difficulty being understood. The Washington State Speech-to-Speech toll-free access number is (877) 833-6341.

Part A. General concerns.

General concerns may be shared in writing through the addresses above. Where a concern involves a Commission staff member, contacting the staff member by phone or in writing to work to resolve the concern is also an option. Working together to resolve concerns or disagreements, when possible, is encouraged.

Part B. Concerns of discriminatory treatment.

1. Anyone who believes that she/he/they have been subject to discriminatory treatment under state or federal law by the Charter School Commission may submit their complaint through this process. The Charter School Commission is committed to carrying out its responsibilities free of discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability.

2. The written complaint must be signed by the individual making the complaint, dated, and must explain in detail the specific acts, conditions, or circumstances alleged. The complaint must include the name, phone number, and address of the complainant. By signing the complaint, the complainant affirms that the information provided is true and accurate to the best of the complainant's knowledge. In some circumstances anonymous complaints and third party complaints may be investigated, but are typically more difficult to investigate.

3. When a complaint covered by this policy is received, complainant will be provided a copy of this policy. Complainants will not be subject to retaliation for making complaints.

4. Complaints should be submitted as soon as possible after the alleged act or acts of discrimination events, and not later than 180 days after the alleged act, or the last act in a pattern of acts.

5. Upon receipt of a complaint, an intake will be conducted by Commission staff and subject to a preliminary evaluation to determine whether an investigation is necessary and/or appropriate. Intake may include initial contact with the complainant and/or the respondent to discuss the complaint and clarify the issues being raised. In some cases, complaints may go through human resources and/or personnel processes rather than this Complaint Policy. Depending on the complaint, Commission staff may determine that specific individuals will not be involved in the screening and/or investigation decision-making process.

6. A decision may be made to decline to initiate an investigation and/or delay initiating an investigation if it is determined that an investigation is not necessary or appropriate under the circumstances. The decision to decline or initiate an investigation will be based on an evaluation of the allegations and consideration of factors such as whether the allegations describe circumstances that could constitute unlawful discrimination and whether the allegations concerns matters over which the Commission has authority. Another circumstance might be that it is a matter that has already been investigated and resolved. An investigation may also be initiated without receipt of a complaint if the Commission becomes aware of facts or evidence that would result in an investigation had the facts or evidence been submitted through the complaint process outlined above.

7. If it is determined during the intake process that an investigation is necessary and/or appropriate, it will be assigned to an investigator or investigation team. Assignment of an investigator or investigative team falls within the discretion of the Executive Director (or designee of the Executive Director). In making a determination of who is designated to investigate the complaint, the Executive Director (or designee) will assess whether one or more employees should be screened from the investigation. The Executive Director (or designee) may assign an investigator or team of investigators consisting of one or more employee, Commission contractor, and/or external investigator. Hiring of an external non-public employee investigator to complete an investigation must be approved by the Commission Board.

8. Once an investigator is assigned, the complainant will be provided the name of the investigator (by email and/or mail). The complainant has five (5) business days to object to the assigned investigator if a bias or conflict of interest is identified. Any objection to the investigator must be signed and written, stating the reasons supporting the allegations of bias

or conflict of interest on the part of the assigned investigator. The objections can be provided by email, U.S. Mail, or in person delivery, addressed to the individual who provided the complainant with the investigator's name. If an objection is received, the Executive Director (or designee) will determine whether or not the assigned investigator will be used. The Executive Director (or designee) has final authority to determine the appropriate investigator to assign to the investigation.

9. In most cases, the goal is to complete the investigation and provide a written report of the results of the investigation to the Executive Director (or designee) within 60 days of receipt of the complaint. Investigations may take longer depending on such factors as the complexity of the allegation, the number of witnesses involved and/or whether an outside investigator is used.

10. After the results of the investigation are provided to the Executive Director (or designee), the Executive Director (or designee) will inform the complainant and respondent that the investigation is completed.

11. At any time during this process, if Commission staff and the complainant agree, the complaint can be resolved, an alternative resolution process can be used, and/or the investigation may be terminated. The goal of the process outlined in this Complaint Policy is to address and resolve problems quickly and effectively. The Commission recognizes that not all complaints require investigation and that it may be appropriate in some circumstances to explore informal resolution options with the parties. The Commission staff will exercise discretion in determining whether to offer or pursue informal resolution to the parties. In making this determination, Commission staff will give due consideration to the wishes of the complainant, but those wishes alone will not be controlling.

12. The procedures and remedies provided by this policy do not prohibit a complainant from pursuing other remedies under applicable federal or state laws.