

Discrimination of District Staff Prohibited

The district will provide equal employment opportunity and treatment for all applicants and staff in recruitment, hiring, retention, assignment, transfer, promotion and training. Such equal employment opportunity will be provided without discrimination with respect to race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably-discharged veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, marital status, 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.

Discrimination is the unfair or unequal treatment of a person or group of persons because they are part of a protected class.

Discriminatory harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility toward an individual or group if it is based on a protected class and creates a hostile environment. Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit harassment against individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit under these laws; or opposing employment practices that they reasonably believe discriminate against individuals, in violation of these laws.

Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people.

In general, harassment is against the law when it creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment, becomes a condition of continued employment, or when it interferes with an individual's work performance.

Some examples of conduct that might constitute discriminatory harassment include:

- Racial epithets or slurs, "jokes," offensive or derogatory comments, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, workplace graffiti, or other verbal or physical conduct based on an individual's or group's protected class.
- Making, posting, e-mailing, or circulating demeaning or offensive pictures, cartoons or other materials in the workplace that relate to race, ethnic origin, gender or one of the other protected categories listed above.
- Verbal acts such as name-calling, graphic and written statements, or other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating.

Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents. The harasser could be a supervisor, co-worker, other employee, or a non-employee who has a business relationship with the District. The victim does not have to be the person harassed, but can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

The Superintendent will designate an individual to serve as the compliance officer.

Yakima School District Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator

Cece Mahre, Deputy Superintendent
104 North 4th Avenue
Yakima, WA 98902
509.573.7039

Definitions

1. **Grievance** means a complaint which has been filed by an employee relating to alleged violations of any state or federal anti-discrimination laws.
2. **Complaint** means a written charge alleging specific acts, conditions or circumstances, which are in violation of the anti-discrimination laws. The time period for filing a complaint is one year from the date of the occurrence that is the subject matter of the complaint. However, a complaint filing deadline may not be imposed if the complainant was prevented from filing due to:
 - 1) Specific misrepresentations by the district that it had resolved the problem forming the basis of the complaint; or
 - 2) Withholding of information that the district was required to provide under WAC 392-190-065 or WAC 392-190-005. Complaints may be submitted by mail, fax, e-mail or hand-delivery to any district school or to the district compliance officer responsible for investigating discrimination complaints. Any district employee who receives a complaint that meets these criteria will promptly notify the compliance officer.
3. **Respondent** means the person alleged to be responsible or who may be responsible for the violation alleged in the complaint.
4. Discrimination is the unfair or unequal treatment of a person or group of persons because they are part of a protected class.
5. Discriminatory harassment exists when (1) the alleged harassing conduct is based on any of the previously listed protected class(es); (2) the conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive as to limit or deny the ability to participate in or benefit from the District's offerings, program, or activities; and (3) the District, upon notice, fails to take prompt and appropriate action to investigate or fails to take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate the hostile environment, prevent its recurrence, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects. The District will be deemed to have notice of the harassing conduct if a reasonable employee knew, or in the exercise of reasonable care should have known, about the conduct. The harassing conduct can be carried out by school employees, students, and non-employee third parties.
6. Prohibited Harassing conduct may include verbal acts and name-calling, graphic and written statements, or other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating. Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents.

Discrimination Complaint Procedure

District employees are eligible to participate in the following complaint procedures. This complaint

procedure is designed to assure that the resolution of real or alleged violations shall be directed toward a just solution that is satisfactory to the complainant, the administration, and the board of directors.

To this end, specific steps will be taken. The district is prohibited by law from intimidating, threatening, coercing, or discriminating against any individual for the purpose of interfering with their right to file a grievance under this procedure and from retaliating against an individual for filing such a grievance.

Complaints concerning or alleging sexual harassment should proceed under Operational Procedure 5013.

1. Informal Process for Resolution

When an individual has a complaint of discrimination or harassment or a concern with equal employment opportunity based on a protected class, he/she will discuss the problem with the immediate supervisor or appropriate compliance officer or designated employee to resolve their concern within 60 days of the circumstances which gave rise to the problem. The individual may also ask the compliance officer to participate in the informal review procedure. It is intended that the informal discussion will resolve the issue. If the individual feels he/she cannot approach the supervisor because of the supervisor's involvement in the alleged discrimination, the individual may directly contact the compliance officer before pursuing formal procedures. If the discussion with the officer or immediate supervisor does not resolve the issue the individual may proceed to the formal review procedures. During the course of the informal process, the district will notify complainant of their right to file a formal complaint.

2. Formal Process for Resolution

Level One: Formal Complaint to District

The complaint must set forth the specific acts, conditions, or circumstances and the protected class alleged to be in violation. Upon receipt of a complaint, the compliance officer will provide the complainant a copy of this procedure. The compliance officer will investigate the allegations within 30 calendar days. The school district and complainant may agree to resolve the complaint in lieu of an investigation. The officer will provide the superintendent with a full written report of the complaint and the results of the investigation.

The superintendent or designee will respond to the complainant with a written decision as expeditiously as possible, but in no event later than 30 calendar days following receipt of the written complaint, unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant or if exceptional circumstances related to the complaint require an extension of the time limit. In the event an extension is needed, the district will notify the complainant in writing of the reason for the extension and the anticipated response date. At the time the district responds to the complainant, the district must send a copy of the response to the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

The decision of the superintendent or designee will include:

- 1) a summary of the results of the investigation;
 - 2) whether the district has failed to comply with anti-discrimination laws;
 - 3) if non-compliance is found, corrective measures the district deems necessary to correct it;
- and

4) notice of the complainant's right to appeal to the school board and the necessary filing information. The superintendent's or designee's response will be provided in a language the complainant can understand and may require language assistance for complainants with limited English proficiency in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Any corrective measures deemed necessary will be instituted as expeditiously as possible, but in no event later than 30 calendar days following the superintendent's mailing of a written response to the complaining party unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant.

Level Two - Appeal to Board of Directors

If a complainant disagrees with the superintendent's or designee's written decision, the complainant may file a written notice of appeal with the secretary of the board within ten (10) calendar days following the date upon which the complainant received the response. The board will schedule a hearing to commence by the twentieth (20) calendar day following the filing of the written notice of appeal unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant and the superintendent or for good cause. Both parties will be allowed to present such witnesses and testimony as the board deems relevant and material. Unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant, the board will render a written decision within thirty (30) calendar days following the filing of the notice of appeal and provide the complainant with a copy of the decision. The decision of the board will be provided in a language the complainant can understand, which may require language assistance for complainants with limited English proficiency in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The decision will include notice of the complainant's right to appeal to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and will identify where and to whom the appeal must be filed. The district will send a copy of the appeal decision to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Level Three - Complaint to the Superintendent of Public Instruction

If a complainant disagrees with the decision of the board of directors, or if the district fails to comply with this procedure, the complainant may file a complaint with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

1. A complaint must be received by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction on or before the twentieth (20) calendar day following the date upon which the complainant received written notice of the board of directors' decision, unless the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction grants an extension for good cause. Complaints may be submitted by mail, fax, electronic mail, or hand delivery.

Equity and Civil Rights Office
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
PO Box 42700
600 Washington St. S.E.
Olympia, WA 98504-7200
Fax: (360) 664-2967
Email: Equity@k12.wa.us

2. A complaint must be in writing and include:

- 1) A description of the specific acts, conditions or circumstances alleged to violate applicable anti-discrimination laws;
 - 2) The name and contact information, including address, of the complainant;
 - 3) The name and address of the district subject to the complaint;
 - 4) A copy of the district's complaint and appeal decision, if any; and
 - 5) A proposed resolution of the complaint or relief requested. If the allegations regard a specific student, the complaint must also include the name and address of the student, or in the case of a homeless child or youth, contact information.
3. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction may initiate an investigation, which may include conducting an independent on-site review. OSPI may also investigate additional issues related to the complaint that were not included in the initial complaint or appeal to the superintendent or board. Following the investigation, OSPI will make an independent determination as to whether the district has failed to comply with RCW 28A.642.010 or Chapter 392-190, WAC and will issue a written decision to the complainant and the district that addresses each allegation in the complaint and any other noncompliance issues it has identified. The written decision will include corrective actions deemed necessary to correct noncompliance and documentation the district must provide to demonstrate that corrective action has been completed.

All corrective actions must be completed within the timelines established by OSPI in the written decision unless OSPI grants an extension. If timely compliance is not achieved, OSPI may take action including but not limited to referring the district to appropriate state or federal agencies empowered to order compliance.

A complaint may be resolved at any time when, before the completion of the investigation, the district voluntarily agrees to resolve the complaint. OSPI may provide technical assistance and dispute resolution methods to resolve a complaint.

Level Four - Administrative Hearing

A complainant or school district that desires to appeal the written decision of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction may file a written notice of appeal with OSPI within thirty (30) calendar days following the date of receipt of that office's written decision. OSPI will conduct a formal administrative hearing in conformance with the Administrative Procedures Act, Chapter 34.05.

3. Mediation

At any time during the discrimination complaint procedure set forth in WAC 392-190-065 through 392-190-075, a district may, at its own expense, offer mediation. The complainant and the district may agree to extend the discrimination complaint process deadlines in order to pursue mediation.

The purpose of mediation is to provide both the complainant and the district an opportunity to resolve disputes and reach a mutually acceptable agreement through the use of an impartial mediator. Mediation must be voluntary and requires the mutual agreement of both parties. It may be terminated by either party at any time during the mediation process. It may not be used to deny or delay a complainant's right to utilize the complaint procedures.

Mediation must be conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who may not: 1) Be an employee of any school district, public charter school, or other public or private agency that is providing education related services to a student who is the subject of the complaint being mediated; or 2) Have a personal or professional conflict of interest. A mediator is not considered an employee of the district or charter school or other public or private agency solely because he or she serves as a mediator.

If the parties reach agreement through mediation, they may execute a legally binding agreement that sets forth the resolution and states that all discussions that occurred during the course of mediation will remain confidential and may not be used as evidence in any subsequent complaint, due process hearing or civil proceeding. The agreement must be signed by the complainant, and a district representative who has authority to bind the district.

4. **Preservation of Records**

The files containing copies of all correspondence relative to each complaint communicated to the district and the disposition, including any corrective measures instituted by the district, will be retained in the office of the district compliance officer for a period of 6 years.

Cross References:

(cf.: 5240 – Resolution of Staff Complaints)

(cf.: 5324 – Military Leave)

(cf.: 5013 – Sexual Harassment)

Legal References:

RCW 28A.400.310	Law against discrimination applicable to districts' employment practices
RCW 28A.640.020	Regulations, guidelines to eliminate discrimination — Scope — Sexual harassment policies
RCW 28A.642	Discrimination prohibition
RCW 49.60	Discrimination — Human rights commission
RCW 49.60.030	Freedom from discrimination — Declaration of civil rights
RCW 49.60.180	Unfair practices of employers
RCW 49.60.400	Discrimination, preferential treatment prohibited
RCW 73.16	Employment and Reemployment
WAC 392-190	Equal Education Opportunity – Unlawful Discrimination Prohibited
WAC 392-190-0592	Public school employment — Affirmative action program

42 USC 2000e1 – 2000e10 Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
20 USC 1681 - 1688 Title IX Educational Amendments of 1972
42 USC 12101 – 12213 Americans with Disabilities Act
8 USC 1324 (IRCA) Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

Adoption Date:

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