

Public Schools of North Carolina

# Effectively Managing Parental Concerns & Complaints


Clear Communication  
Effective Collaboration  
Common Causes

December 2018

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## Clear Communication

- Proactive
- Communication Loops
  - Documentation
  - Follow Through
- Stakeholder Involvement



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## Effective Collaboration

- Stay focused on current issues
- Establish an “open door” policy for a healthy working relationship
- Be responsive
  - Address parental concerns in a timely manner
  - Consult with others
  - Follow through



## Jot Thoughts



## Common Causes of Parental Concerns or Complaints

- Draw a line in the sand
- Use the word NEVER a lot
- Miss deadlines
- Make it personal
- Use a “cookie cutter” approach & not addressing individual needs
- Schedule too little time for meeting
- Send the message that you don’t care



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## Please DON'T Say



“We don’t do...”

“We don’t have...”

“We only have...”

“There are no funds available for...”

“For students with (disability), we always...”



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## Compliance is Critical

Office of Civil Rights  
*Dear Colleague Letter*  
 May 14, 2014

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“I am writing to remind you that the Federal civil rights laws, regulations, and guidance that apply to charter schools **are the same as those that apply to other public schools.** For this reason, it is essential that charter school officials and staff be knowledgeable about Federal civil rights laws. These laws extend to all operations of a charter school, including recruiting, admissions, academics, educational services and testing, school climate (including prevention of harassment), disciplinary measures (including suspensions and expulsions), athletics and other nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, and accessible buildings and technology.”



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## Questions to Ponder:

- What does this letter mean for your Charter School's Mission/Vision?
- How does this impact your ...
  - Recruiting/Admissions?
  - Promotion/Retention?
  - Provision of the Full Continuum of Service?



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## Procedural Mistakes

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## Procedural Mistakes

- Prior notice (Invitation, Handbook, DEC 5)
- Incomplete IEP
- Lack of data used in decision making
- Predetermination
- Lack of parent involvement & consent
- Services are not individualized



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## Early Resolution

Informal Resolution

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## Recognizing the Warning Signs

- Body language
- Request to tape the meeting
- Advocates
- Attorneys
- Tone of voice
- Emotional statements



## Informal Dispute Resolution

- Parent-Teacher Conference
- Parent-Administrator Conference
- Parent-EC Director Conference
- Collaboration with EC Division Consultants
- IEP meeting
- Facilitated IEP Meeting



## Facilitated IEP (FIEP) Meeting

- An FIEP meeting is
  - a voluntary process utilizing an impartial facilitator
  - a collaborative team that shares responsibility for the process and results
  - charged with developing an IEP based on the needs of the students and in consensus



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## Formal Resolution

Mediation  
Formal State Complaint  
Due Process Hearing

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## Mediation

- An informal meeting of parents and school representatives led by a neutral third party, the mediator, who is assigned by Department of Public Instruction- Exceptional Children Division (DPI-ECD).
- A voluntary process, which the parent and LEA control.
- A process that helps the parents and school resolve disagreements concerning the student's identification, evaluation, program, or placement following an IEP meeting when consensus was not reached.



## Formal State Complaint

- A formal state complaint is a signed, written statement to DPI-ECD that alleges a school or LEA is not following:
  - IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and/or,
  - NC Policies Governing Services for Children With Disabilities.



## Formal State Complaint

- Must be filed within one year of alleged violation.
- EC Division conducts an investigation citing facts and conclusions based upon IDEA.
- Corrective action is required for noncompliance.



## Due Process Hearing

- A due process hearing is an adversarial process in which a hearing officer resolves IDEA disagreements between parents and the school districts. The hearing may be requested on any matter involving:
  - Identification
  - Evaluation
  - Education placement and services, and
  - The provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)



## Due Process Hearing

- Before a hearing can be held, parent and LEA must:
  - Agree to waive a resolution meeting or
  - Participate in a resolution meeting within 15 days and/or
  - Participate in mediation



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## Consultants for Dispute Resolution

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## Supports Available

- Regional EC Director's/Coordinator's Meetings
- DPI Sponsored trainings
- State Level Conferences
- [Website](#)



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## Regional Charter Support

### Vacant

Regional Consultant NE, SE, NC, SH

### Karen Little

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