

Procedure for Receiving and Processing Civil Rights Discrimination Complaints – School Meal Programs

1. Purpose

To provide a clear, consistent procedure for food service personnel at Hillcrest Educational Centers to follow when receiving and responding to complaints of civil rights discrimination in the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs, in accordance with USDA and DESE requirements.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to **all food service staff** and addresses complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age, or disability within **Child Nutrition Programs**.

3. Responsibilities

- **Food Service Staff:** First point of contact for receiving and informing complainants of their rights.
 - **Food Service Director (FSD):** Responsible for training staff, overseeing complaint handling, and ensuring timely documentation and submission of complaints.
 - **All Staff:** Required to comply with documentation and non-retaliation expectations.
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4. Complaint Procedure Steps

Step 1: Receive and Inform

- If an individual expresses a concern or allegation involving discrimination:
 - Inform them of their **right to file an official Civil Rights complaint**.

- Let them know the complaint may be submitted **anonymously**.
 - Determine if **parent/guardian notification** is appropriate.
 - Ask if they would like to file an **official complaint**.
 - **If No:**
 - Ask how you can assist.
 - Clarify what action the individual wants taken.
 - Work toward an **informal resolution**, if appropriate.
 - If resolved to the individual's satisfaction, **no further steps** are needed.
 - **If Yes:**
 - Explain the **USDA complaint process**.
 - Ask if they want to file the complaint themselves or need assistance.
 - If self-filing, provide USDA contact info and offer interim support.
 - If they request assistance, proceed to accept, document, and share.
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Step 2: Accept

- Accept the complaint **in any form** (verbal, written, in-person, or electronically).
 - Do **not require** the use of a specific form or designated staff member.
 - Do **not restrict** time, place, or method of submission.
 - If verbal, carefully **transcribe the complaint** using the Complaint Log template.
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Step 3: Document

- Record the complaint using the **Child Nutrition Programs Complaint Log**.
 - Required details include:
 - Complainant name/contact (if known)
 - Method of receipt (verbal/written)
 - Date and location of the incident
 - Basis of discrimination (race, sex, disability, etc.)
 - Names of individuals/organizations involved
 - Staff member receiving the complaint
 - Summary of the issue and actions taken
 - Referral date to USDA (if applicable)
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Step 4: Share

- Forward the completed complaint within **5 business days** to:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
Fax: (202) 690-7442
Email: program.intake@usda.gov
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5. Confidentiality & Retaliation Protections

- All complaints must be handled with **strict confidentiality**.
 - **Retaliation against complainants or staff involved in the process is strictly prohibited.**
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6. Training and Implementation Timeline

Activity	Timeline	Responsible Party	Documentation
Annual Staff Training on Procedures	Each August	Food Service Director	Training agenda, sign-in sheets
New Hire Onboarding Training	Within 14 days of hire	Food Service Director	Orientation checklist
Distribution of Written Policy	At start of each school year	Food Service Director	Staff acknowledgment forms
Training Record Retention	3 years + current year	Food Service Director	Digital & physical files

Training will be conducted during the **monthly compliance training block**.

- A **sign-in sheet** will be collected for each session to verify staff attendance.
- The Workforce Learning manager will maintain a **training file** for audit purposes.