

COMMUNITY COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Reviewing & Assigning New Complaints

Complaints are assigned for investigation on a rotating basis to the dispute resolution team investigators and the dispute resolution team program specialist will provide a copy of the complaint request to the dispute resolution team for review.

If there is a potential conflict of interest that could affect OSPI's ability to conduct an independent investigation and for the investigator to make an unbiased decision, the assistant director of dispute resolution will consider on a case-by-case basis and decide whether to reassign a complaint. Investigators should connect with the assistant director if they have concerns regarding a specific complaint filed. Some factors we consider include:

- District in which the investigator's children (grandchildren, nieces, nephews) attend school.
- District in which the investigator was recently employed.
- Complainant is known to the investigator as relative, friend, neighbor, former client, or acquaintance.
- Other instances wherein the investigator believes there may be a conflict.

Once the complaint is received, our goal is to review the complaint as soon as possible so that within **1-2 business days** of receiving a complete complaint, we determine whether OSPI will open the complaint and send out letters.

A "complete complaint" means it includes all the elements described on **page ##**. Upon receipt of the State complaint filing, the SEA reviews the submission for required components, including:

- Does the letter include facts, which if true, would be a violation of IDEA/State legal requirements addressing the provision of special education?
- Does the complaint allege violations of legal requirements that occurred within the last year?

If elements of the complaint are missing, such as the signature, see "Attempted and Not Opened Complaints," **see pg. ##**. If the complaint is complete, see "Opening a Complaint" on **page ##**.

If the allegations in the complaint are unclear, the assigned investigator should call or email the complainant to request clarification. Be mindful of our goal to send out opening letters within 1-2 business days, and seek clarification right away. When obtaining clarification from the complainant, consider whether you need them to provide clarification or additional information in writing to include with the complaint that has been filed.

If the complaint opens, an opening letter outlining the issues we will investigate is emailed to the school district and the complainant. The letters will also address any matters raised in the complaint that are not subject to investigation, either because they are outside our authority or timeline for investigation. **see pg. ##**

Filing Date

OSEP notes that states have some discretion in determining when a complaint is considered received. The state must ensure that its procedures for the resolution of complaints are timely and uniformly applied. For example, if a complaint is filed on a day that is not considered a business day (e.g., the weekend), a