

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY (Complaint and Compliance Process)**

Centennial BOCES is committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Centennial BOCES must promptly respond to concerns and complaints of unlawful discrimination and/or harassment; take action in response when unlawful discrimination and/or harassment is discovered; impose appropriate sanctions on offenders in a case-by-case manner; and protect the privacy of all those involved in unlawful discrimination and/or harassment complaints as required by state and federal law. When appropriate, the complaint will be referred to law enforcement for investigation.

Centennial BOCES has adopted the following procedures to promptly and fairly address concerns and complaints about unlawful discrimination and/or harassment. Complaints may be submitted orally or in writing.

### **Definitions**

1. "Compliance officer" means an employee designated by the Board to receive complaints of alleged unlawful discrimination and harassment. The compliance officer must be identified by name, address, telephone number and email address. See exhibit AC-E- If the designated individual is not qualified or is unable to act as such the executive director must designate another employee who will serve until a successor is appointed by the Board.
2. "Aggrieved individual" means a student, the parents or guardians of a student under the age of 18 acting on behalf of a student, an employee of Centennial BOCES, or member of the public who is directly affected by and/or is witness to an alleged violation of Board policies prohibiting unlawful discrimination or harassment.

### **Compliance Officer's Duties**

The compliance officer is responsible for conducting an investigation and coordinating all complaint procedures and processes for any alleged violation of federal or state statute or Board policy prohibiting unlawful discrimination or harassment. The compliance officer's duties include providing notice to students, parents/guardians of students, employees and the general public concerning the compliance process; providing training for Centennial BOCES staff regarding the prohibition of unlawful discrimination/harassment in all Centennial BOCES programs, activities and employment practices; disseminating information concerning the forms and procedures for filing of complaints; ensuring the prompt investigation of all complaints; coordinating hearing procedures; and identifying and addressing any patterns of systemic problems that arise during the review of complaints.

The compliance officer may delegate any or all of the foregoing responsibilities as necessary and/or appropriate under the circumstances.

### **Complaint Procedure**

An aggrieved individual is encouraged to promptly report the incident as provided in Board policy and this regulation. All reports received by teachers, counselors, principals or other Centennial BOCES employees must be promptly forwarded to the compliance officer. If the compliance officer is the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited conduct, the complaint must be forwarded to the executive director.

Any aggrieved individual may file, with the compliance officer, a complaint charging Centennial BOCES, another student or any Centennial BOCES employee with unlawful discrimination or harassment. The complaint may be made orally or in writing. Persons who wish to file a written complaint shall be encouraged to use the Centennial BOCES's complaint form.

All complaints must include a detailed description of the alleged events, the dates the alleged events occurred and names of the parties involved, including any witnesses. The complaint must be made as soon as possible after the incident.

The compliance officer must confer with the aggrieved individual and/or the alleged target of the unlawful discrimination or harassment as soon as is reasonably possible, but no later than five calendar days following the Centennial BOCES's receipt of the complaint in order to obtain a clear understanding of the basis of the complaint.

Within five calendar days following the initial meeting with the aggrieved individual and/or alleged target, the compliance officer must attempt to meet with the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited conduct and, if a student, his or her parents/guardians, in order to obtain a response to the complaint. Such person(s) must be informed of all allegations that, in the compliance officer's judgment, are necessary to achieve a full and accurate disclosure of material information or to otherwise resolve the complaint.

At the initial meeting, the compliance officer must explain the avenues for informal and formal action, provide a description of the complaint process, and explain that both the target and the individual alleged to have engaged in prohibited conduct have the right to exit the informal process and request a formal resolution of the matter at any time. The compliance officer must also explain that whether or not the individual files a written complaint or otherwise requests action, Centennial BOCES is required by law to take steps to correct the unlawful discrimination or harassment and to prevent recurring unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation against anyone

who makes a report or participates in an investigation. The compliance officer must also explain that any request for confidentiality will be honored so long as doing so does not preclude Centennial BOCES from responding effectively to the prohibited conduct and preventing future prohibited conduct.

### **Informal Action**

If the aggrieved individual and/or the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited conduct requests that the matter be resolved in an informal manner and/or the compliance officer believes that the matter is suitable to such resolution, the compliance office may attempt to resolve the matter informally through mediation, counseling or other non-disciplinary means. If both parties feel a resolution has been achieved through the informal process, then no further compliance action must be taken. No party may be compelled to resolve a complaint of unlawful discrimination or harassment informally and either party may request an end to an informal process at any time. Informal resolution may not be used to process complaints against a Centennial BOCES employee and may not be used between students where the underlying offense involves sexual assault or other acts of violence.

### **Formal Action**

If informal resolution is inappropriate, unavailable or unsuccessful, the compliance officer must promptly investigate the allegations to determine whether and/or to what extent, unlawful discrimination or harassment has occurred. The compliance officer may consider the following types of information in determining whether unlawful discrimination or harassment occurred:

- a. statements by any witness to the alleged incident,
- b. evidence about the relative credibility of the parties involved,
- c. evidence relative to whether the individual alleged to have engaged in prohibited conduct has been found to have engaged in prohibited conduct against others,
- d. evidence of the aggrieved individual and/or alleged target's reaction or change in behavior following the alleged prohibited conduct,
- e. evidence about whether the alleged target and/or aggrieved individual took action to protest the conduct,
- f. evidence and witness statements or testimony presented by the parties involved,
- g. other contemporaneous evidence, and/or
- h. any other evidence deemed relevant by the compliance officer.

In deciding whether conduct is a violation of law or policy, all relevant circumstances must be considered by the compliance officer, including:

- a. the degree to which the conduct affected one or more students' education or one or more employee's work environment,
- b. the type, frequency and duration of the conduct,
- c. the identity of and relationship between the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited conduct and the aggrieved individual and/or alleged target,
- d. the number of individuals alleged to have engaged in the prohibited conduct and number of targets of the prohibited conduct,
- e. the age of the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited conduct and the aggrieved individual and/or alleged target,
- f. the size of the school, location of the incident and context in which it occurred, and
- g. other incidents at the school.

The compliance officer must prepare a written report containing findings and recommendations, as appropriate, and submit the report to the executive director within 15 calendar days following the compliance officer's receipt of the complaint or five calendar days following the termination of the informal resolution process. The compliance officer's report must be advisory and must not bind the executive director or Centennial BOCES to any particular course of action or remedial measure. Within 10 calendar days after receiving the compliance officer's findings and recommendation, the executive director or designee must determine any sanctions or other actions deemed appropriate including appropriate recommendations to the Board for disciplinary or other action.

To the extent permitted by federal and state law, all parties, including the parents/guardians of all students involved, must be notified in writing of the final outcome of the investigation and all steps taken by Centennial BOCES within five calendar days following the executive director's determination.

### **Hearing Procedure**

For allegations under Section 504 and as otherwise required by law, the aggrieved individual may request a hearing. This hearing procedure will not address guilt or innocence or disciplinary consequences which are instead governed by the Board's discipline policies and procedures.

Centennial BOCES must retain a person to serve as the impartial hearing officer, who must be knowledgeable about Section 504 and/or the ADA, if applicable. The hearing must be informal and must be recorded. Formal rules of evidence do not apply. A student is entitled to be represented by their parent/guardian or by an attorney. An employee is entitled to be represented by an attorney or other representative of their choice. The complainant may appear at the hearing and is entitled to present testimony and other evidence. A Centennial BOCES representative is likewise entitled

to present testimony and other evidence. The hearing must be closed to the public.

Within five calendar days after the hearing, the hearing officer must issue a written decision based upon evidence presented at the administrative hearing, including any remedial or corrective action deemed appropriate. Remedial actions include measures designed to stop the unlawful discrimination or harassment, correct its negative impact on the affected individual, ensure that the conduct does not recur and restore lost educational opportunities.

After the hearing officer has issued the decision, the recording of the hearing, all physical and documentary evidence and all other items comprising the record of the hearing must be returned to Centennial BOCES. Within five calendar days of receiving the hearing officer's recommendations, the executive director or designee will determine any action deemed appropriate.

Either party may seek review of the hearing officer's decision in a court of competent jurisdiction, in accordance with applicable law and applicable timelines for requesting such review.

Nothing contained herein may be interpreted to confer upon any person the right to a hearing independent of a Board policy, administrative procedure, statute, rule, regulation or agreement expressly conferring such right. This process applies, unless the context otherwise requires and unless the requirements of another policy, procedure, statute, rule, regulation or agreement expressly contradicts with this process, in which event the terms of the contrary policy, procedure, law, rule, regulation or agreement will govern.

### **Outside Agencies**

In addition to, or as an alternative to, filing a complaint pursuant to this regulation, a person may file a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR); the Federal Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC); or the Colorado Civil Rights Division (CCRD). The addresses of these agencies are listed below.

Denver Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Education, 1244 Speer Blvd., Suite 310, Denver, CO 80204-3582. Telephone: 303-844-5695. Fax: 303-844-4303. TTY: 303-844-3417. Email: OCR Denver@ed.gov

Federal Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 303 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 410, Denver, CO 80203. Telephone: 800-669-4000. Fax: 303-866-1085. TTY: 800-669-6820. ASL Video Phone: 844-234-5122. Website: <https://publicportal.eeoc.gov>.

Colorado Civil Rights Division (CCRD), 1560 Broadway, Suite 825, Denver, CO 80202. Telephone: 303-894-2997. Fax: 303-894-7830. Email: [DORA\\_CCRD@state.co.us](mailto:DORA_CCRD@state.co.us) (general inquiries),  
[DORA\\_CCRDIntake@state.co.us](mailto:DORA_CCRDIntake@state.co.us) (intake unit)

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Centennial BOCES