



COMPLAINTS

This policy explains the process for bringing informal and formal complaints, and how KIPP DC seeks to address and respond to complaints. This complaint process does not bar individuals from filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state or federal law.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can make a complaint, including students, parents, guardians, visitors, or other third parties.

What kind of complaints can I make?

You may lodge a complaint about any topic pertaining to KIPP DC's schools, programs, or activities, such as concerns about:

- Interpersonal conflicts.
- The educational environment.
- Discrimination, including prohibited harassment as defined in the *Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Education Policy* above.

When should I make an Informal Complaint?

Ideally, you will first attempt to resolve a complaint by bringing it to the attention of staff informally. Informal complaints should be directed to one or more of the following school personnel:

- Teacher
- Counselor
- Vice Principal
- Principal/designee
- Deputy Chief of Schools

These individuals will seek to resolve the complaint through an informal process of cooperative agreement among the affected individuals. If a concern is not resolved at the initial point of contact, individuals are strongly encouraged to escalate the matter to school leadership (e.g., Principal or designee) or appropriate KIPP DC regional leadership before submitting a Formal Complaint.

When should I make a Formal Complaint?

You may file a formal complaint within 90 days of (i) the alleged issue, or (ii) receiving an unsatisfactory resolution of an informal complaint. KIPP DC reserves the right to determine the most appropriate resolution pathway based on the nature of the concerns raised.

How do I make a Formal Complaint?

In order to bring a formal complaint, you MUST fill out and submit KIPP DC's Formal Complaint form [here](#), along with any relevant documents.

You should submit this form within 90 days of (i) the alleged issue, or (ii) receiving an unsatisfactory resolution of an informal complaint.

What happens after I file a Formal Complaint?

After receiving a complaint, KIPP DC will conduct an initial review to determine the appropriate process for resolution. If KIPP DC determines that:

- The concerns raised could be effectively addressed through school-based or regional-level intervention; and
- The matter does not involve allegations that require a formal investigation (e.g., discrimination, harassment, or other legally mandated investigative processes),

KIPP DC may, in its discretion, refer the complaint back to the informal resolution process. In these referrals back to the informal resolution process:

- KIPP DC will ensure that the complainant is elevated to the appropriate decision-maker;

- KIPP DC may facilitate or monitor the informal resolution to ensure timely and appropriate handling; and
- The complainant will be notified of this referral and provided with a clear point of contact for follow-up.

A complainant may request that the matter return to the formal complaint process if the issue is not resolved through the escalated informal process referred back to. Otherwise, formal complaints will involve the following:

1. *Determine Whether a Meeting is Necessary.*

KIPP DC will assess whether clarity is needed regarding the Formal Complaint. If so, KIPP DC will attempt to meet with you by telephone or in person within ten business days after receipt of the Formal Complaint.

2. *Inform You of Your Rights*

KIPP DC will notify you (the “complainant”) of your right, including:

- The right to a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation.
- The right to report a crime to law enforcement.
- Any relevant civil rights laws (e.g., Title IX, Title VI, Title II, Section 504).

KIPP DC will also inform the respondent of their rights and the allegations made against them.

For Complaints Involving Prohibited Harassment (as defined above), KIPP DC will also notify you of:

- The right to request interim measures such as protecting the complainant from retaliation by the alleged aggressor (“the respondent”) and/or third parties, schedule changes, and counseling
- That if the alleged harassment also constitutes child abuse, KIPP DC staff are required to notify CFSA or MPD.
- Resources, services, and information for students and families, including counseling and intervention strategies if necessary.
- Specific training that KIPP DC’s Director of Student Policy and Title IX Coordinator has undergone to conduct investigations of this type.

3. *Conduct an Investigation.*

KIPP DC will conduct a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation of the issues raised by the complainant, including interviewing witnesses, obtaining documentation, and allowing parties to present evidence.

For Complaints Involving Prohibited Harassment (as defined above) KIPP DC will investigate regardless of:

- Whether the police are also investigating.
- Where the alleged harassment occurred (e.g., on-campus, off-campus, online).
- Who the respondent is (e.g., student, employee, non-KIPP DC student or employee).

4. *Make a Determination.*

KIPP DC will determine whether the complaint was substantiated based on the totality of the facts and the circumstances.

For Complaints Involving Prohibited Harassment (as defined above)

KIPP DC will not infer or suggest that a complainant consented to the harassment because of:

- The complainant’s appearance (e.g., clothing, makeup, body type, pregnancy).
- The complainant’s alcohol or drug use.
- The complainant’s sexual history with the respondent or third parties.
- The time or place of the incident.

KIPP DC will determine if the alleged harassment occurred and whether it created a hostile environment using a preponderance of the evidence standard of proof. In determining whether a hostile environment exists, KIPP DC will also evaluate additional factors such as:

- The degree to which the conduct affected one or more students’ education.
- The type, frequency, and duration of the conduct.
- The age, sex, and other protected traits of the alleged harasser(s) and subject(s) of harassment.

5. *Provide a Written Summary of Findings.*

KIPP DC must provide a written summary of findings, including the rationale for the determination, and how to file an appeal. If the complaint is substantiated, these findings will also include proposed resolutions and sanctions generally, as appropriate and not in violation of any confidential policies. KIPP DC strives to provide this summary within 30 business days after receipt of the Formal Complaint.

If you do not receive a written response from KIPP DC within 30 business days, you should contact the Director of Student Policy and Title IX Coordinator (contact information provided below) by email or phone regarding the status of the written summary. For complaints involving student-on-student acts, students will be notified contemporaneously.

Ashley Ogbonna, Director of Student Policy and Title IX Coordinator

Phone: 202-265-5477

E-mail: Ashley.Ogbonna@kipfdc.org

Mail: 1255 Union St. NE Washington, DC 20002

Can I appeal KIPP DC's findings?

Yes. If you are not satisfied with KIPP DC's findings, you may submit a written/emailed request for appeal to the Superintendent within 15 business days of receiving the decision from KIPP DC's Director of Student Policy.

A request for appeal must include:

- The written summary of findings;
- Any relevant evidence; and
- An explanation of the reason for seeking an appeal.

The Superintendent will contact you to schedule a telephone or in-person meeting. This meeting will usually take place within ten (10) business days after the written request for appeal was received.

The Superintendent will provide a final written response explaining the outcome of the appeal. This final written response will typically be provided within 30 business days after receiving a written request for appeal.

Can I appeal the Superintendent's findings?

Yes. If you are dissatisfied with the Superintendent's findings, the next and last step in this process is to contact Shannon Hodge, KIPP DC's CEO and Board of Trustees member via email at Shannon.hodge@kipfdc.org. You should only contact the CEO after taking the steps outlined above.

We anticipate that very few concerns, if any, will be referred to the CEO.