UNIFORM COMPLAINT POLICY

It is the policy of Sage Oak Charter Schools ("SOCS" or "School") to comply with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. The School is the local agency primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing educational programs. The School shall investigate and seek to resolve any complaints alleging failure to comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations including, but not limited to, allegations of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying or noncompliance with laws relating to all programs and activities implemented by the School that are subject to the Uniform Complaint Procedure in accordance with this policy. This complaint procedure is adopted to provide a uniform system of complaint processing ("UCP") for the following types of complaints.

1. Complaints alleging a violation of state or federal law or regulations governing the following programs:
    a. Accommodations for Pregnant, or Parenting Pupils;
    b. Career Technical and Technical Education, and Career Technical and Technical Training Programs;
    c. Compensatory Education;
    d. Consolidated Categorical Aid Programs;
    e. Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against any protected group as identified under sections 200 and 220 and Section 11135 of the Government Code, including any actual or perceived characteristic as set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution, as defined in Section 210.3, that is funded directly by, or that receives or benefits from, any state financial assistance.
    f. Educational and graduation requirements for pupils in foster care, pupils who are homeless, pupils from military families and pupils formerly in Juvenile Court now enrolled in a school district.
    g. Every Student Succeeds Act;
    h. Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP)
    i. Migrant Education;
    j. Physical Education Instructional Minutes;
    k. Pupil Fees;
    l. Reasonable Accommodations to a Lactating Pupil;
    m. School Plans for Student Achievement;
    n. School Safety Plans;
    o. Schoolsite Councils;
    p. Any other state or federal educational program the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) or designee deems appropriate.

2. Complaints alleging that a pupil enrolled in a public school was required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity as those terms are defined below.

a. "Educational activity" means an activity offered by a school, school district, charter school or county office of education that constitutes an integral fundamental part of elementary and secondary education, including, but not limited to, curricular and extracurricular activities.

b. "Pupil fee" means a fee, deposit or other charge imposed on pupils, or a pupil's parents or guardians, in violation of Education Code section 49011 and Section 5 of Article IX of the California Constitution, which require educational activities to be provided free of charge to all pupils without regard to their families' ability or willingness to pay fees or request special waivers, as provided for in *Hartzell v. Connell* (1984) 35 Cal.3d 899. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

   i. A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory or is for credit.

   ii. A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, uniform or other materials or equipment.

   iii. A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment or uniforms associated with an educational activity.

c. A pupil fees complaint and complaints regarding local control and accountability plans ("LCAP") only, may be filed anonymously (without an identifying signature), if the complaint provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance with Education Code sections 52060 - 52077, including an allegation of a violation of Education Code sections 47606.5 or 47607.3, as referenced in Education Code section 52075, regarding local control and accountability plans.

d. If the School finds merit in a pupil fees complaint, or the California Department of Education ("CDE") finds merit in an appeal, the School shall provide a remedy to all affected pupils, parents, and guardians that, where applicable, includes reasonable efforts by the School to ensure full reimbursement to all affected pupils, parents, and guardians, subject to procedures established through regulations adopted by the state board.

e. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to prohibit solicitation of voluntary donations of funds or property, voluntary participation in fundraising activities, or the School and other entities from providing pupils prizes or other recognition for voluntarily participating in fundraising activities.

3. Complaints alleging noncompliance with the requirements governing the Local Control Funding Formula ("LCFF"), LCAP under Education Code sections 47606.5 and 47607.3, as applicable. If the School adopts a School Plan for Student Achievement in addition to its LCAP, complaints of noncompliance with the requirements of the School Plan for Student Achievement under Education Code sections 64000, 64001, 65000, and 65001 shall also fall under this Policy.

4. Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding child nutrition programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 49490-49590 are governed by Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations ("C.F.R.") sections 210.19(a)(4), 215.1(a), 220.13(c), 225.11(b), 226.6(n), and 250.15(d) and Title 5, California Code of Regulations ("C.C.R.") sections 15580 - 15584.

5. Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding special education programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 56000-56865 and 59000-59300 are governed by the procedures set forth in 5 C.C.R. sections 3200-3205 and 34 C.F.R. sections 300.151-300.153.

The School acknowledges and respects every individual's right to privacy. Unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects (to the greatest extent reasonably possible and as permitted by law) the confidentiality of the parties, including but not limited to the identity of the complainant, and maintains the integrity of the process. The School cannot guarantee the anonymity of the complainant. This includes keeping the identity of the complainant confidential. However, the School will attempt to do so as appropriate. The School may find it necessary to disclose information regarding the complaint/complainant to the extent required by law or necessary to carry out the investigation or proceedings, as determined by the Director of Human Resources or designee on a case-by-case basis. The School shall ensure that complainants are protected from retaliation.

Compliance Officer(s)

The Board of Directors designates the following compliance officer(s) to receive and investigate complaints and to ensure the School's compliance with law:

Kerry Cody
Director of Human Resources: Talent and Engagement
1473 Ford St. STE 105
Redlands, CA 92373
(888) 435-4445
kcody@sageoak.education

The compliance officer who receives a complaint may assign another compliance officer to investigate and resolve the complaint. The compliance officer shall promptly notify the complainant and respondent if another compliance officer is assigned to the complaint. In no instance shall a compliance officer be assigned to a complaint in which the compliance officer has a bias or conflict of interest that would prohibit the fair investigation or resolution of the complaint. Any complaint against a compliance officer or that raises a concern about the compliance officer's ability to investigate the complaint fairly and without bias shall be filed with the Superintendent/CEO or designee who shall determine how the complaint will be investigated.

The Superintendent/CEOor designee shall ensure that the compliance officer(s) designated to investigate complaints are knowledgeable about the laws and programs for which they are responsible. The compliance officer may have access to legal counsel as determined by the Superintendent/CEO or designee.

Should a complaint be filed against the Superitendent/CEO, the Board President or designee shall determine how the complaint will be investigated and resolved.

Notifications

The Director of Human Resources or designee shall make available copies of this Policy free of charge. The annual notice of this Policy may be made available on the School's website.

The School shall annually provide written notification of the School's UCP to students, employees, parents or guardians of its students, school advisory committee members, appropriate private school officials or representatives, and other interested parties that includes information regarding allegations about discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The notice will be made available on the School's website.

The annual notice shall be in English. When necessary under Education Code section 48985, if fifteen (15) percent or more of the pupils enrolled in the School speak a single primary language other than English, this annual notice will also be provided to the parent/guardian of any such students in their primary language.

<u>The annual notice shall include the following:</u>

(a) A list of the federal and state programs (types of complaints) that fall under the scope of the UCP and the state and federal provisions that govern complaints regarding child nutrition programs and special education programs.
(b) A statement that the School is primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.
(c) A statement that a pupil enrolled in a public school shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity.

(d) A statement that the School will investigate all allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying against any protected group.
(e) A statement that unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints shall be filed no later than six months from the date the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying occurred, or six months from the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying.
(f) A statement identifying the title of the compliance officer, and the identity(ies) of the person(s) currently occupying that position, if known. The compliance officer shall be knowledgeable about the laws and programs that they are assigned to investigate.
(g) A statement that the School will provide an opportunity for complainants and/or representatives to present evidence or information.
(h) A statement that if a UCP complaint is filed directly with the CDE and the CDE determines that it merits direct intervention, the CDE shall complete an investigation and provide a written decision to the complainant within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, unless the parties have agreed to extend the timeline or the CDE documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.
(i) A statement that the complainant has a right to appeal the School's decision to the CDE by filing a written appeal within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the School's decision, except if the School has used its UCP to address a complaint that is not subject to the UCP requirements.
(j) A statement that a complainant who appeals the School's decision on a UCP complaint to the CDE shall receive a written appeal decision within sixty (60) calendar days of the CDE's receipt of the appeal, unless extended by written agreement with the complainant or the CDE documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.
(k) A statement that if the School finds merit in a UCP complaint, or the CDE finds merit in an appeal, the School shall take corrective actions consistent with the requirements of existing law that will provide a remedy to the affected student and/or parent/guardian as applicable.
(l) A statement advising the complainant of any civil law remedies that may be available under state or federal discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying laws, if applicable, and of the appeal pursuant to Education Code § 262.3.
(m) A statement that copies of the School's UCP shall be available free of charge.

Procedures

The following procedures shall be used to address all complaints which allege that the School has violated federal or state laws or regulations enumerated in the section "Scope," above. The compliance officer shall maintain a record of each complaint and subsequent related actions for at least three (3) calendar years.

All parties named shall be notified when a complaint is filed, when a complaint meeting or hearing is scheduled, and when a decision or ruling is made.

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Step 1: Filing of Complaint

Any individual, including a person's duly authorized representative or an interested third party, public agency, or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance or unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying pursuant to this Policy.

Pupil Fees Complaint
A pupil fees complaint may be filed anonymously, that is, without an identifying signature, if the complaint provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance.

Local Control Accountability (LCAP) Complaint
For complaints relating to LCAP, the date of the alleged violation is the date when the reviewing authority approves the LCAP or annual update that was adopted by the LEA. An LCAP complaint may be filed anonymously, that is, without an identifying signature, if the complaint provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance.

A complaint of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying may be filed by an individual who alleges that that individual has personally suffered unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying or by one who believes any specific class of individuals has been subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying, or by a duly authorized representative who alleges that an individual student has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying. An investigation of alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be initiated by filing a complaint no later than six (6) months from the date the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying occurred, or the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying unless the time for filing is extended by the Director of Human Resources or designee, upon written request by the complainant setting forth the reasons for the extension. Such extension by the Director of Human Resources or designee shall be made in writing. The period for filing may be extended by the Director of Human Resources or designee for good cause for a period not to exceed ninety (90) calendar days following the expiration of the six-month time period. The Director of Human Resources shall respond immediately upon receipt of a request for an extension.

All other complaints under this Policy shall be filed not later than one (1) year from the date the alleged violation occurred. For complaints relating to the LCAP, the date of the alleged violation is the date on which the School Board of Directors approved the LCAP or the annual update was adopted by the School.

The complaint may be filed with the School's Principal, Director, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, or Chief Executive Officer. The complaint shall be presented to the compliance officer who shall maintain a log of complaints received, providing each with a code number and date stamp.

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Complaints filed pursuant to this Policy must be in writing and signed. A signature may be handwritten, typed (including in an email) or electronically generated. Only complaints regarding pupil fees or LCAP compliance may be filed anonymously as set forth in this Policy. If a complainant is unable to put a complaint in writing due to conditions such as a disability or illiteracy, the School staff shall assist the complainant in the filing of the complaint.

Step 2: Mediation

Within three (3) business days of receiving the complaint, the compliance officer may informally discuss with the complainant the possibility of using mediation. If the complainant agrees to mediation, the compliance officer shall make arrangements for this process.

Before initiating the mediation of an unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaint, the compliance officer shall ensure that all parties agree to make the mediator a party to related confidential information.

If the mediation process does not resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, the compliance officer shall proceed with the investigation of the complaint.

The use of mediation shall not extend the School's timelines for investigating and resolving the complaint unless the complainant agrees in writing to such an extension of time.

Step 3: Investigation of Complaint

An administrator or designee shall make all reasonable efforts to investigate any problem within their authority. Investigations shall begin within 10 days of the receipt of the complaint.

The compliance officer is encouraged to hold an investigative meeting within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint or an unsuccessful attempt to mediate the complaint. This meeting shall provide an opportunity for the complainant and/or the complainant's representative to repeat the complaint orally.

The complainant and/or the complainant's representative shall have an opportunity to present evidence or information leading to evidence to support the allegations in the complaint.

A complainant's refusal to provide the compliance officer with documents or other evidence related to the allegations in the complaint, or a complainant's failure or refusal to cooperate in the investigation or the complainant's engagement in any other obstruction of the investigation, may result in the dismissal of the complaint because of a lack of evidence to support the allegation.

The School's refusal to provide the compliance officer with access to records and/or other information related to the allegation in the complaint, or its failure or refusal to cooperate in the investigation or its engagement in any other obstruction of the investigation, may result in a finding, based on evidence

collected, that a violation has occurred and may result in the imposition of a remedy in favor of the complainant.

Step 4: Final Written Decision

The School shall issue an investigation report (the "Decision") based on the evidence. The School's Decision shall be in writing and sent to the complainant within sixty (60) calendar days of the School's receipt unless the timeframe is extended with the written agreement of the complainant. The School's Decision shall be written in English and in the language of the complainant whenever feasible or as required by law.

The Decision shall include:

1. The findings of fact based on evidence gathered.

2. The conclusion providing a clear determination for each allegation as to whether the School is in compliance with the relevant law.

3. Corrective actions, if the School finds merit in the complaint and any are warranted or required by law.
   a. pertaining to complaints of Pupil Fees; LCAP; Physical Education Instructional Minutes, or Course Periods without Educational Content, the remedy shall go to all affected pupils, parents, and guardians;
   b. for all other complaints within the scope of the Uniform Complaint Procedures, the remedy shall go to the affected pupil;
   c. with respect to a pupil fees complaint, corrective actions shall include a remedy where in good faith, by engaging in reasonable efforts, an attempt to identify and fully reimburse all pupils, parents, and guardians who paid a pupil fee within one year prior to the filing of the complaint;

4. Notice of the complainant's right to appeal the School's Decision within thirty (30) calendar days to the CDE, except when the School has used its UCP to address complaints that are not subject to the UCP requirements.

5. Procedures to be followed for initiating such an appeal to the CDE.

If an employee is disciplined as a result of the complaint, the Decision shall simply state that effective action was taken and that the employee was informed of the School's expectations. The Decision shall not give any further information as to the nature of the disciplinary action except as required by applicable law.

Appeals to the CDE

If dissatisfied with the Decision, the complainant may appeal in writing to the CDE within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the School's Decision. The appeal shall be accompanied by a copy of the complaint filed with the School and a copy of the Decision. When appealing to the CDE, the complainant must specify and explain the basis for the appeal, including at least one of the following:

1. The School failed to follow its complaint procedures and/or,

2. The School Decision lacks material findings of fact necessary to reach a conclusion of law, and/or,

3. The material findings of fact in the School's Decision are not supported by substantial evidence, and/or

4. The legal conclusion in the School's Decision is inconsistent with the law, and/or

5. In a case in which the School's Decision found noncompliance, the corrective actions fail to provide a proper remedy.

Upon notification by the CDE that the complainant has appealed the School's Decision, the Director of Human Resources or designee shall forward the following documents to the CDE within ten (10) calendar days of the date of notification:

1. A copy of the original complaint.

2. A copy of the Decision.

3. A copy of the investigation file, including but not limited to all notes, interviews, and documents submitted by the parties or gathered by the investigator.

4. A report of any action taken to resolve the complaint.

5. A copy of the School's complaint procedures.

6. Other relevant information requested by the CDE.

All complaints and responses are public records.

If the CDE determines the appeal raises issues not contained in the local complaint, the CDE will refer those new issues back to the School for resolution as a new complaint. If the CDE notifies the School that its Decision failed to address an allegation raised by the complaint and subject to the UCP process,

the School will investigate and address such allegation(s) in accordance with the UCP requirements and provide the CDE and the appellant with an amended Decision addressing such allegation(s) within twenty (20) calendar days of the CDE's notification. The amended Decision will inform the appellant of the right to separately appeal the amended Decision with respect to the complaint allegation(s) not addressed in the original Decision.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the CDE's appeal Decision pursuant to 5 C.C.R. section 4633(f)(2) or (3), either party may request reconsideration by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction ("SSPI") or the SSPI's designee. The request for reconsideration shall specify and explain the reason(s) for contesting the findings of fact, conclusions of law, or corrective actions in the CDE's appeal Decision. The SSPI will not consider any information not previously submitted to the CDE by a party during the appeal unless such information was unknown to the party at the time of the appeal and, with due diligence, could not have become known to the party. Pending the SSPI's response to a request for reconsideration, the CDE appeal Decision remains in effect and enforceable, unless stayed by a court.

The CDE may directly intervene in the complaint without waiting for action by the School when one of the conditions listed in Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 4650 exists, including but not limited to cases in which through no fault of the complainant, the School has not taken action within sixty (60) calendar days of the date the complaint was filed with the School.

Civil Law Remedies

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies outside of the School's complaint procedures. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to, injunctions and restraining orders. For unlawful discrimination complaints arising under state law, however, a complainant must wait until sixty (60) calendar days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if the School has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of their right to file a complaint.