



Charter School Grievance Policy

*For Charter Schools Authorized by
the Indiana Charter School Board*

Revised April 2019

For more information, please visit the
Indiana Charter School Board website:

<http://www.in.gov/icsb>.

Purpose

One of the primary purposes of Indiana’s Charter School Law is to give charter schools the freedom and flexibility to serve the different learning styles and needs of public school students in exchange for exceptional levels of accountability. The Indiana Charter School Board (“ICSB”) has developed its Charter School Grievance Policy to ensure that a formal procedure exists within each school to address the potential concerns of parents, students, and other community members, while honoring the autonomy afforded charter schools by the charter law. ICSB believes that most grievances are best handled by the schools themselves and seeks to encourage the proper resolution of grievances at the school level.

Please note that ICSB does not authorize all charter schools in Indiana and cannot address complaints against schools not under its authority. Contact information for all charter school authorizers in Indiana may be found in [Appendix A](#).

Charter School Grievance Policy Guidelines

In the event of a conflict between the staff, administrators, or board members of an ICSB school and a parent, staff, or community member (current or former), the grievant must first exhaust all available remedies under a charter school's Grievance Policy.

Accordingly, each charter school approved by ICSB must develop and make available on its website the process the school will use to address complaints or concerns about school or school board policies, practices, or procedures. At a minimum, the policy must provide:

1. A clear description how a parent, staff, or community member may submit a complaint to the school including contact and submission information;
2. A description of the levels of review of the complaint, including at least the school administration and governing board, and the role played by each individual or group in addressing the complaint;
3. A clear description of the process for appealing a decision to the next level(s) of review including contact and submission information; and
4. A reasonable timeline (no greater than fifteen (15) days) within which complaints will be addressed at the school level.
5. The school’s grievance process shall appropriately account for language barriers and provide accommodations to and equal access for families where English is their second language.
6. If the concern involves a student with an IEP or 504 Plan, the school shall follow all State and Federal rules including any ICSB procedures that are aligned with state and federal law.

7. If the concern involves a student safety issue, the school shall immediately notify ICSB's Executive Director.
8. If a complainant feels that the complaint has not been satisfactorily addressed by the school and governing board, the complainant may then bring their concerns to ICSB. Formal complaints may be emailed to indianacharterschoolboard@icsb.in.gov or sent by regular mail to:

Indiana Charter School Board
Re: Charter School Complaint
143 West Market Street, Suite 400
Indianapolis, IN 46204.

Each school must provide a copy of its complaint policy to all parents and students, must post a copy on its website, and must provide a copy upon request.

ICSB Complaint Policy and Process

Before a parent or community member who has a complaint or concern with an ICSB charter school may submit a complaint to ICSB, the complainant must first contact the school and follow the school's formal complaint process. Unless the nature of the complaint suggests that notice to the school would hamper investigation, complaints regarding alleged violations of state or federal law, or violations of the school's charter, ICSB will not address a complaint or concern that has not been first presented to the school.

Under no circumstances will ICSB consider first-impression complaints presented at ICSB public meetings. Individuals will not be permitted to submit a complaint during public comment at a public board meeting.

Complainants must recognize that ICSB does not have authority to intervene in many school level disputes. These include complaints that relate to the satisfaction of the students or parents in the general operations of the school or the handling of specific school-day situations. Examples include circumstances where: a student doesn't like the people in which she is seated around in class; a parent wants her student moved out of one class and put into another; a parent disagrees with the grading scale, level of homework, or grades received; a parent or student is unhappy with a specific teacher; a parent is unsatisfied with the curriculum or extracurricular activities offered by the school; and other complaints of a similar nature.

Please note that all special education complaints, including that a school has not implemented federal or state special education rules, or has failed to comply with an order issued by an independent hearing officer, should be filed with the Indiana Department of Education. See <https://www.doe.in.gov/specialed/special-education-complaints> for more details.

If a complainant has followed the school's Grievance Policy and procedures, and wishes to pursue a concern because it has not been resolved to his or her satisfaction, the complainant may submit the grievance to ICSB in accordance with the following procedures:

1. The complainant must submit the concern in written format to ICSB's Executive Director within fifteen (15) business days after receiving the written decision of the school's governing board. At a minimum the complaint must include the following information:
 - a. The complainant's contact information, including a phone number and/or email address;
 - b. Information about the student (i.e. student grade level, IEP status), if applicable;
 - c. The name of the school;
 - d. The nature of the complaint (including detailed information about the individuals involved and any evidence supporting the claim); and
 - e. Previous steps taken by the complainant to address the complaint, including whether the complainant has followed the school's formal complaint policy and the outcome.
2. Following receipt of a written complaint, ICSB staff will attempt to contact the complainant via email or phone. Complaints initially made via telephone will not be considered until such time as the complainant submits a written complaint with the information described above. Absent substantive and tangible evidence, ICSB will not investigate anonymous formal complaints.
3. Unless the nature of the complaint suggests that notice would hamper investigation, properly submitted complaints regarding alleged violations of state or federal law, or violations of the school's charter, will be sent in writing within five (5) business days to the school leader and the school's designated governing board member.
4. The school has five (5) business days to acknowledge receipt of the complaint, to provide information counter to the allegations in the complaint, or information regarding the steps the school has taken to address the concern. If allegations are made against a school that the school denies, ICSB may conduct a desk audit or onsite audit to determine the legitimacy of the allegations.
5. After review, and to the extent practicable, ICSB's Executive Director will publish his or her conclusions in writing within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the written concern.
6. School level decisions will not be overturned by the Executive Director unless there are compelling grounds that a school discriminated against a protected class, violated its charter agreement with ICSB, failed to follow its own policies, ICSB policies or requirements, or violated any other state or federal law, rule, or policy. Examples where ICSB may intervene include, but are not limited to: child abuse by a member of the faculty or staff; health or safety violations; criminal activity; academic dishonesty; discrimination of students based on race, color, gender, national origin, religion or other protected classes; suspension or

expulsion without due process; failure to adequately maintain and protect student privacy as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; and other complaints of a similar nature.

7. If, after review, the Executive Director concludes that a violation has occurred, the Executive Director will inform the school leader in writing of the violation and direct that the school resolve the situation with the complainant. ICSB may implement procedures and take any actions provided for in law, policy or contract to resolve the issue.

Actions taken by ICSB in response to a formal complaint are dependent on the nature and substance of the allegations. Further, ICSB may have limited authority to address a violation of state or federal law. If ICSB determines that a school is in noncompliance with a state or federal law (for example, a violation of special education laws) which is more properly investigated by another agency (in this case, the Indiana Department of Education), ICSB will refer the complainant to the relevant agency.

ICSB considers a properly submitted complaint to be “closed” when: 1) after investigation, ICSB determines that there is sufficient evidence that the complaint lacks merit; 2) the parties agree that the issue has been resolved; or 3) when the school has demonstrated to ICSB that the school has made a good faith effort to address the concern. A final response will be provided by ICSB’s Executive Director to the complainant regarding the outcome of her formal complaint.

The decision of the Executive Director is final.

Regardless of the outcome, ICSB will make and keep a record of all properly submitted complaints, ICSB communications with the school and complainant, any and actions taken by the school and/or ICSB. This information will be included in the school’s file at the ICSB and will be considered when ICSB staff conducts annual compliance reviews.

Questions

Questions relating to this policy and/or the ICSB complaint process should be submitted to ICSB staff through the telephone number and/or email address below.

Email: indianacharterschoolboard@icsb.in.gov

Telephone: 317-232-7585

Appendix A
Contact Information for Other Indiana Charter School Authorizers

Authorizer	Website and list of Authorized Schools	Telephone/Email
Ball State University Charter School Office	Website Schools	765-285-1336 chrtrschls@bsu.edu
Indianapolis Charter School Board Office of Education Innovation City of Indianapolis	Website Schools	317-327-7458
Education One, LLC Trine University	Website Schools	260-665-4600 Lindsay@education1.org
Grace College	Website Schools	574-372-5100 ext. 6196 charterschools@grace.edu
Calumet College	Website Schools	219-473-4306 dgreene@ccsj.edu