



**University of Southern Indiana Charter Schools Office
Charter School Complaint Policy and Procedure**

I. Purpose

The University of Southern Indiana (USI) Charter Schools Office is committed to ensuring that all students enrolled in USI-authorized charter schools have access to safe, equitable, and high-quality educational opportunities. This policy establishes a process for receiving, reviewing, and addressing complaints regarding the operations of charter schools authorized by USI.

USI recognizes that charter schools are independent public schools governed by their own boards and leadership teams. Therefore, complaints should generally be addressed first at the school level before being submitted to the Authorizer. This policy is designed to ensure concerns are handled fairly, consistently, and in accordance with Indiana law and the terms of each school's Charter Agreement.

II. Scope

This policy applies to complaints concerning a USI-authorized charter school's:

- Compliance with federal, state, or local laws;
- Compliance with the Charter Agreement;
- Governance practices;
- Student rights and protections;
- Enrollment practices;
- Health and safety concerns;
- Operational or financial concerns;
- Educational program implementation; or
- Other matters that may constitute a violation of applicable law or charter requirements.

III. Matters Not Typically Reviewed by USI

USI is not responsible for the day-to-day management of charter schools. Therefore, the following matters should generally be addressed through school-level procedures and are not ordinarily investigated by the Authorizer unless a pattern of noncompliance is alleged:

- Student grades;

- Classroom assignments;
 - Individual disciplinary actions;
 - Personnel decisions;
 - Employment disputes;
 - School-specific policies;
 - Athletic participation decisions;
 - Parent-teacher disagreements; and
 - Other matters that fall within the school's operational authority.
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IV. School-Level Resolution Requirement

Prior to filing a complaint with USI, complainants must first attempt to resolve the matter through the school's established grievance process.

The complainant should generally:

1. Discuss the concern with the appropriate staff member.
2. Appeal the concern to the school administrator or principal.
3. Submit the concern to the school's governing board if the matter remains unresolved.

USI may decline to review complaints when the complainant has not exhausted the school's complaint procedures unless:

- The complaint alleges illegal conduct;
 - The complaint concerns student health or safety;
 - The complaint alleges discrimination or violation of civil rights;
 - The complaint involves fraud, misuse of public funds, or financial misconduct; or
 - Exceptional circumstances exist.
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V. Filing a Complaint with USI

Complaints may be submitted to the USI Charter Schools Office after school-level procedures have been completed.

Required Information

The complaint should include:

- Complainant's name;
- Address, telephone number, and email address;
- Name of the charter school;
- Detailed description of the concern;
- Relevant dates and individuals involved;
- Steps taken to resolve the issue at the school level;
- Copies of supporting documentation; and
- Desired resolution, if applicable.

Anonymous complaints may be considered when sufficient information is provided to allow review, particularly when allegations involve student safety, fraud, or legal violations.

Submission Methods

Complaints may be submitted:

By Email:

dlmills2@usi.edu

By Mail:

University of Southern Indiana
Doug Mills, Associate Director
Charter Schools Office
8600 University Boulevard
Evansville, Indiana 47712

VI. Complaint Review Process

Step 1: Acknowledgment

USI shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint within ten (10) business days.

Step 2: Preliminary Review

The Charter Schools Office shall determine whether:

- The school is authorized by USI;
- The complaint falls within USI's oversight authority;
- School-level remedies have been pursued;
- Sufficient information has been provided; and
- Immediate action is required due to health, safety, or legal concerns.

USI may request additional information from the complainant.

Step 3: Investigation

If warranted, USI may:

- Request information from the charter school;
- Review school records;
- Conduct interviews;
- Conduct site visits;
- Consult legal counsel;
- Review compliance documentation; or
- Take other actions necessary to determine whether the school is complying with applicable requirements.

USI may also refer matters to appropriate governmental agencies when required by law.

Step 4: Resolution

Following review, USI may determine that:

1. No violation occurred;
2. The complaint has been resolved;
3. Additional corrective action is required;
4. The matter should be referred to another agency; or
5. Further monitoring is necessary.

USI shall provide written notice of the outcome to the complainant when appropriate and legally permissible.

VII. Complaints Involving Student Rights

Complaints alleging violations of student rights, including but not limited to:

- Discrimination;
- Harassment;
- Bullying;
- Special education compliance;
- Section 504 compliance;
- Title VI, Title IX, or ADA concerns; or
- Student health and safety issues

may be referred to the appropriate state or federal agency having jurisdiction over such matters. Nothing in this policy limits an individual's right to file complaints directly with governmental agencies.

VIII. Confidentiality

USI shall maintain complaint records in accordance with applicable laws governing public records, student privacy, and personnel confidentiality.

Information may be withheld or redacted when required by:

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA);
 - Personnel privacy laws;
 - Attorney-client privilege;
 - Investigative confidentiality requirements; or
 - Other applicable legal protections.
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IX. Protection Against Retaliation

USI prohibits retaliation against any individual who files a complaint in good faith or participates in a complaint investigation.

Allegations of retaliation may constitute a separate violation subject to review and corrective action.

X. Relationship to Authorizer Oversight

Complaints received through this process may be considered as part of USI's ongoing monitoring and evaluation of charter school performance.

Complaint information may contribute to:

- Compliance monitoring;
- Annual school reviews;
- Charter renewal decisions;
- Corrective action determinations;
- Probationary actions; and
- Other authorizer oversight activities.

A single complaint does not automatically result in a finding of noncompliance; however, patterns of complaints or substantiated concerns may be considered in assessing a school's performance under the Charter Agreement.

XI. Appeals

The determination of the USI Charter Schools Office regarding a complaint investigation is final. This complaint process does not create an additional legal appeal right beyond those otherwise available under applicable law.

Contact Information

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Email: dlmills2@usi.edu

Website: [USI Charter Schools Office](#)