

Responding to Complaints in the School Setting

Participation from everyone attending the self-inspection workshop was encouraged during this agenda item. The audience was encouraged to intermingle and form several different focus groups to discuss all the important aspects related to complaints from school and school district staff, parents and students. Input from all the groups was solicited and presented to everyone in the room. Please take a moment to review these tips and see if there are some things you can put into practice to make your response more effective.

The Dos:

According to members of the audience, here are some things you should always remember to do when responding to complaints:

- ◆ Use good customer service
- ◆ Take every complaint seriously
- ◆ Acknowledge and show empathy when talking to the person expressing the concern
- ◆ Make the complaint a priority
- ◆ Share the plan of action for addressing the issue with the person voicing the concern
- ◆ Document everything and keep documentation up to date
- ◆ Ask enough questions of the person voicing the complaint to get an accurate description of the issue
- ◆ Consider all the available information about the issue when responding to the complaint
- ◆ Use all appropriate staff resources to address the issue
- ◆ Try to respond to the complaint during school hours if appropriate
- ◆ Ask for help from an outside professional to assist in the response process
- ◆ Communicate effectively with all interested parties during the complaint response
- ◆ Follow up in a timely manner
- ◆ Explain to the concerned person what was done and the results of the complaint response
- ◆ Evaluate the current complaint response procedure to see if it was effective and decide if changes are needed

The Don'ts:

According to members of the audience, here are some things you should always try to avoid when responding to complaints:

- ◆ Don't assume anything during the complaint response
- ◆ Don't ignore or put off the complaint response
- ◆ Don't forget to follow through
- ◆ Don't use hearsay – be sure to get your information from a knowledgeable source
- ◆ Don't try to minimize the concern when speaking with the person voicing the concern
- ◆ Don't take the complaint personally
- ◆ Don't use jokes, humor, or sarcasm when responding to the complaint
- ◆ Don't over-promise when describing the response or the expected outcome to the person with the concern
- ◆ Don't try to fix the problem yourself if you are not sure what to do
- ◆ Don't be afraid to use outside resources to help solve the problem (i.e., NEW ESD 101, Health District, etc.)
- ◆ Don't wait to provide information or updates to the person with the concern
- ◆ Don't use email to explain complex issues related to the complaint
- ◆ Don't use a quick fix or band aid to address the issue (i.e., using air fresheners to cover up the mold smell)



Questions?

Please call us at 324-1560 x4 or log on to www.srhd.org

The tips listed above were provided by those in attendance at the 2011 School Self-Inspection Workshop.

