

What is a UCP complaint?

A complaint under the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) is a written and signed statement by an individual, public agency, or organization alleging a violation of federal or state laws governing certain educational programs.

What agencies are subject to the UCP?

The UCP covers alleged violations by local educational agencies (LEAs--school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools) and local public or private agencies which receive direct or indirect funding from the State to provide any school programs, activities, or related services.

What ECS educational programs and services are covered by the UCP?

- After School Education and Safety
- Child Nutrition
- Consolidated Categorical Aid
- Course Periods without Educational Content
- Education of Pupils in Foster Care, Pupils who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Pupils now enrolled in a school district, and Pupils from Military Families
- English Learner Programs
- Every Student Succeeds Act / No Child Left Behind (Titles I–VII)
- Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP)
- Pupil Fees
- Reasonable Accommodations to a Lactating Pupil
- School Safety Plans
- Special Education
- Tobacco-Use Prevention Education

What issues are not covered by the UCP?

Not all complaints fall under the scope of the UCP. Many concerns are the responsibility of the charter school, including classroom assignments, common core, grades, graduation requirements, hiring and evaluation of staff, homework policies and practices, provision of core curricula subjects, student advancement and retention, student discipline, student records, the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, the Brown Act, and other general education requirements. The charter school, however, may use its local complaint procedures to address complaints not covered by the UCP.

In addition, the following complaints are referred to other agencies for resolution and not subject to the UCP:

- Allegations of child abuse are referred to County Departments of Social Services, Protective Services Divisions, or appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Health and safety complaints regarding a Child Development Program are referred to the Department of Social Services for licensed facilities, and to the

appropriate Child Development regional administrator for licensing-exempt facilities.

- Employment complaints are sent to the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.
- Allegations of fraud are referred to the responsible Division Director at the California Department of Education (CDE).

How do I file a UCP complaint and how is it processed?

The charter school's UCP complaint policies and procedures provide the information needed to file a local complaint. Each charter school must annually notify its students, employees, parents/guardians, school and district advisory committees, appropriate private school officials and other interested parties of the charter school's UCP complaint policies and procedures, and the opportunity to appeal the charter school's decision to the CDE. Charter schools must provide their complaint policies and procedures free of charge.

What are the responsibilities of the complainant?

- Receives and reviews the UCP complaint policies and procedures from the charter school.
- Files a written complaint by following the steps described in the charter school's UCP complaint procedures.
- Cooperates in the investigation and provides the charter school investigator with information and other evidence related to the allegations in the complaint.
- May file a written appeal to the CDE within 15 calendar days of receiving the charter school's decision if he or she believes the charter school's decision is incorrect.
- Must specify the basis for the appeal and whether the charter school's facts are incorrect and/or the law is misapplied. The appeal packet must contain a copy of the original complaint to the charter school and a copy of the charter school's decision.
- Where applicable, within 35 calendar days of receiving the CDE's decision or report, may submit a request for reconsideration by the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the CDE. The CDE's decision or report will notify the complainant if there is a right to request reconsideration. The request for reconsideration must designate the finding(s), conclusion(s), or corrective action(s) in the CDE's decision or report for which reconsideration is requested, and the specific basis for requesting reconsideration. The request must also state whether the findings of fact are incorrect and/or the law is misapplied.

What are the responsibilities of the charter school?

- Ensures compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.
- Adopts UCP complaint policies and procedures consistent with the *California Code of Regulations*, Title 5 Sections 4600–4687.

- Designates a staff member to be responsible for receiving, investigating and resolving complaints and makes sure the staff member is knowledgeable about the laws/programs he or she is assigned.
- Must give the filing party an opportunity to present information and/or evidence relevant to the complaint.
- Protects complainants from retaliation.
- Resolves the complaint and completes a written report within 60 calendar days of receipt of the complaint unless extended by written agreement of the complainant.
- Must advise the complainant of the right to appeal the charter school's decision to the CDE within 15 calendar days of receiving the decision.

What are the responsibilities of the CDE?

The UCP authorizes the CDE to process appeals of the charter school's decision on UCP complaints; or, in certain specified situations, to intervene directly and investigate the allegations in the complaint. The CDE:

- Reviews, monitors and provides technical assistance to all charter schools regarding the adoption of UCP complaint policies and procedures by the charter school's governing board.
- Refers a complaint to the charter school for resolution when appropriate.
- Considers a variety of alternatives to resolve a complaint or appeal when:
 1. The complainant alleges and the CDE verifies that, through no fault of the complainant, the charter school fails to act within 60 calendar days of receiving the complaint.
 2. The complainant appeals an charter school decision if he or she believes the decision is factually and/or legally incorrect.
 3. When requested by the complainant, the CDE determines when direct intervention is applicable.
- Requires corrective action by the charter school if noncompliance issues are identified during the investigation.
- Provides monitoring and technical assistance to charter schools to ensure resolution of findings of noncompliance.
- Where applicable, notifies the parties of the right to request reconsideration of the CDE's decision/report by the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the CDE within 35 calendar days of the receipt of the decision/report.
- For those programs governed by part 76 of Title 34 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, notifies the parties of the right to appeal to the United States Secretary of Education.

Additional Information

For additional information, contact the appropriate office listed below, or visit the UCP Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cp/uc>.

Contacts for Programs and Services Covered Under the UCP

After School Education and Safety, *After School Division*; 916-319-0923

Child Nutrition, *Nutrition Services Division*; 800-952-5609

Discrimination, Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, Student Lactation Accommodations, and LGBTQ Resources, *Education Equity UCP Appeals Office*; 916-319-8239

Education of Pupils in Foster Care, Pupils who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Pupils now enrolled in a school district, and Pupils from Military Families, *Coordinated School Health and Safety Office*; 916-319-0914

Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs): Content or Procedures, *Local Agency Systems Support Office*; 916-319-0809; Fiscal, including the California Peer Assistance and Review Programs for Teachers, *School Fiscal Services Division*; 916-322-3024

Every Student Succeeds Act / No Child Left Behind including bilingual education, compensatory education, consolidated categorical aid, economic impact aid, English learner programs, migrant education, school safety plans, *Categorical Programs Complaints Management (CPCM) Office*; 916-319-0929

Course Periods without Educational Content, *Categorical Programs Complaints Management (CPCM) Office*; 916-319-0929

Special Education, *Procedural Safeguards and Referral Services Unit*; 800-926-0648

Tobacco-Use Prevention Education, *Coordinated School Health & Safety Office*; 916-319-0914

Pupil Fees, *Categorical Programs Complaints Management (CPCM) Office*; 916-319-0929

Uniform Complaint Procedures

Authorized by:
*California Code of Regulations, Title 5
Sections 4600-4687*



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