

RCW 43.06B.070 Education system complaints—Uniform access point

—Resolution and referral process. (1) By July 1, 2025, and in compliance with this section, the office of the education ombuds shall create a simple and uniform access point for the receipt of complaints involving the elementary and secondary education system. The purpose of the access point is to provide a single point of entry for complaints to be reported and then referred to the most appropriate individual or entity for dispute resolution at the lowest level of intercession.

(2) Any individual who has firsthand knowledge of a violation of federal, state, or local laws, policies or procedures, or of improper or illegal actions related to elementary or secondary education and performed by an employee, contractor, student, parent or legal guardian of a student, or member of the public may submit a complaint to the office of the education ombuds.

(3) (a) The office shall delineate a complaint resolution and referral process for reports received through the access point. The process must:

(i) Require that the office of the education ombuds assign a unique identifier to a complaint upon receipt before referring the complaint to the appropriate individual or entity for dispute resolution at the lowest level of intercession;

(ii) Link to all existing relevant complaint and investigative processes, such as the special education community complaint process, the discrimination complaint process, the process for reporting complaints related to harassment, intimidation, and bullying, and the complaint and investigation provisions under RCW 28A.410.090 and 28A.410.095; and

(iii) Discourage frivolous complaints and complaints made in bad faith.

(b) The establishment of a process as required in this section does not confer additional authority to the office of the education ombuds to mitigate or oversee disputes.

(4) The office of the education ombuds, in collaboration with the office of the superintendent of public instruction, must develop protocols for the receipt, resolution, and referral of complaints and must design a communications plan to inform individuals who report complaints through the access point about the steps in the complaint resolution and referral process, including when to expect a response from the individual or entity charged with resolving the complaint.

(5) For the purposes of this section, "employee" or "contractor" means employees and contractors of the state educational agencies, educational service districts, public schools as defined in RCW 28A.150.010, the state school for the blind, and the center for deaf and hard of hearing youth. [2024 c 219 s 1.]