

# ROOTS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

**SY 2020-'21**

**FAMILY POLICIES**

## **ADMISSION PREFERENCE POLICY**

Parents of returning students will receive the Re-enrollment form in March of each year and have until the second week in April to re-enroll. Afterwards the order of Admission preference will be:

- \* Children of Staff & BOD Members**
- \* Siblings of Enrolled students**
- \* Children of Roots Alumni**

According to the School Reform Act (Sec 38-1802.06), enrollment in public charter schools is open to all students who are residents of the District of Columbia, and if space is available, to non-resident students who pay tuition at the rate established by DCPS. *Roots PCS will not limit enrollment based on student's race, color, religion, national origin, language spoken, intellectual or athletic ability.*

A Waiting List will be maintained on a first come/first serve basis by receipt of applications and grade level. Should new spaces become available, applicants will be notified via phone.

*If an applicant fails to submit the appropriate documents or attend the August workshop, the first person on the waiting list who meets the criteria will be given the slot. This is also the deadline date for all incomplete enrollment forms.*

## **ROOTS PCS BOD MEETINGS**

1st Quarterly Meeting--August 20, 2020  
2nd Quarterly Meeting--November 19, 2020  
3rd Quarterly Meeting--February 18, 2021  
4th Quarterly Meeting--May 20, 2021

NOTE: ALL Meetings are open to the Public (Entirely)  
Notification will be by: Website & Newsletter.

## **NON- DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

**Roots Public Charter School is an equal opportunity organization committed to non-discriminatory hiring practices and services rendered based on race, color or national origin.**

**Roots PCS, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, special needs, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital and family status in admission or access to, or treatment in its programs and activities.**

**In the operation of the National School Lunch Program, no child will be discriminated against because of race, color, sex national origin, age disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital and family status. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the District of Columbia's Office of Human Rights at: 202-727-3534, or the United States Department of Agriculture's office of Civil Rights at: 202-720-5964.**



## **ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY & TRUANCY POLICY**

If a student is going to be tardy or absent, parents must call to notify the office. If the parent does not call/contact the office the infraction will be recorded as “unexcused”. To be considered “excused”, an absence or tardy must be explained by the parent via phone and /or in writing. Re-admittance after a *three* day absence requires a written note from the parent or a doctor. Students are marked tardy after 9:00am.

If a student is tardy three (3) unexcused times, it equals *one(1)* absence. A parent/teacher conference will be scheduled if a student is absent three (3) times. At this conference, support will be offered & discussed. After five (5) unexcused absences during a term further documentation is required beyond communication by the parent for the absence to be excused. Written documentation support/ intervention plan & Attendance Contract will be implemented. After ten (10) such infractions (unexcused absences) in a school year the student is declared Chronically Truant and may be referred to the appropriate District agencies. The reason for the morning arrival policy, in addition to being a portion of the “ *School Attendance and Truancy Policy* ” is to minimize disruption of the classes and class schedules.

### **EARLY PICK-UP**

If your child is being pick-up before the close of school, the authorized adult is required to report to the Attendance monitor in the main office and present an ID& sign the early Dismissal Log. Please do not proceed to classrooms without checking in at the main office. This person should be on student’s Enrollment contact sheet, or the parent/guardian should make the main office aware prior to the pick-up.

## **EXCUSED ABSENCES**

*The following absences are excused with the proper documentation:*

- \* Illness or some other bonafide medical cause experienced by the student;
- \* Exclusion, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons; A doctor's note is required for a student absent five or more days in a term.
- \* Death in the student's immediate family;
- \* Absences to allow students to visit their parent(s) in the military, immediately before during or after deployment.
- \* Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceeding as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- \* Observance of a religious holiday;
- \* Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities;
- \* Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where DC has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student;
- \* Medical or dental appointments for the student; and
- \* Take our Daughters & Sons to Work Day.

*The following absences are excused without the proper documentation:*

- \* Lawful out of school suspension or suspension or exclusion by school authorities;
- \* An emergency or other set of circumstances approved by an LEA, independent, private or parochial school in conformance with published policies distributed to parents and guardians.
- \* Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where DC has the legal responsibility for the transportation of the student.
- \* Temporary closing of facilities or other emergencies that require suspension of classes, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe & unsanitary conditions, official activities & holidays, and severe weather.

The incidence of students missing more than 10 % of school days within a single school year including excused and unexcused absences is considered Chronic Absenteeism

## **ROOTS PCS RESPONSIBILITIES**

***Roots* will demonstrate in every way possible that we appreciate parental participation and teamwork. The *Roots* staff is dedicated to giving students an enjoyable day of learning and helping parents feel confident that their child is receiving good care. Please feel free to respectfully ask questions when you're in doubt about any events of the day; and tell us if there is something that displeases you. Respectful communication is the key to a good relationship. *Roots*, therefore, reserves the right to terminate services to any family who is disrespectful, offensive, or aggressive to any staff, parents or students. A two-way level of comfort and confidence must exist if *Roots* is to offer the best service to families.**

# STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY

*Roots Public Charter School's* Mission is designed to meet specific needs of all children. The main objective of our discipline policy is to provide positive reinforcement and encouragement. We will use the Applicable Laws: **STUDENT FAIR ACCESS ACT, IDEA, GUNFREE SCHOOLS ACT**, and "**CHAPTER 25**" Our goal is to groom productive leaders for tomorrow using research-based strategies for effective classrooms and individual behavior support to create a safe school climate. There is a process We will include the utilization of progressive measures of discipline that minimize disruption to a student's instructional program and ensure school discipline for students is developmentally appropriate while fostering the health and safety of all of our students. *There will be no corporal punishment.*

Student conduct will be covered by the school's policies and procedures including: **1)** On school grounds immediately before, during, or after school hours; or any time the school is being used for an activity or event; **2)** Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity or event; **3)** On school-sponsored transportation to and from school, or a school-sponsored activity or event; **4)** Off-site activity that contributes to a hostile environment. Any student involved in an altercation; a) conference will be held with the principal, teacher and student, where the student will be counseled and given an opportunity to explain their story to the teacher before a decision is made to call the parent. Procedures for reporting and investigating violations of student conduct standards, process for ensuring parental notice and involvement are outlined in the parent handbook. (*DUE PROCESS*)

Students must be:

- a. Self-motivated**
- b. Self-disciplined**
- c. Respectful**
- d. Obedient.**

1. We will provide clear rules in a nurturing, learning environment.
2. We will find many opportunities to praise and will try to ignore minor misbehavior patterns we wish to weaken.
3. In cases of disruptive behavior, a clear warning will be given and "time-out" when the warning is unheeded.
4. If a child has involved him/herself in excessively deviant behavior, a discipline note that outlines the offense is sent home to be signed by the parent and returned the next school day.
5. In cases of persistent disrespect, disobedience, or dramatic disruption within a day, we reserve the right to have the child picked up immediately by his/her parent. A rule of thumb is twenty-four (24) hours, but as many as five (5) days, suspension can be given. The following infractions may lead to Suspension or Expulsion:

### **Zero Tolerance:**

- Weapons of Any Kind
- Fighting (Physical Altercation)
- Excessive Truancy
- Intimidation with threat of Bodily Harm
- Leaving the School Without Permission
- Drug Possession or Paraphernalia
- All Tier III Infractions from "Chapter 25"

The decision regarding when the child can return will be determined by the ***Student's Fair Access Act*** and approved by principal. Expulsion is rare, however this can happen if the behavior persists or extreme infraction(s) **(Listed above)** occur. However, no student will be suspended more than *20 cumulative days in an academic year* unless: the student's conduct requires emergency removal and a written justification from the principal to the parent will be sent. Cooperation, confidence, and mutual respect between teachers and parents will ensure the positive behavior modification of our children.

Note: *(90% of our student are K-5; out of school suspensions and expulsions are only permitted in limited/individual circumstances: if this student has willfully caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to another person. (FAIR ACCESS ACT)*

All students are subject to disciplinary actions including students with disabilities.

Roots will ensure compliance with procedures for students with disabilities as defined by section **504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** and the ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*** and regulations there under. These actions will not be repetitive to avoid establishing a pattern of removing a student from the classroom setting, placement changes, manifestation determinations, special circumstances, notification and procedural safeguards, thus jeopardizing the student's right to **FAPE**. These Procedural Safeguards align with the ones applicable to students with disabilities under ***IDEA & 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973***.

Any discipline of students with disabilities will be done according to **IDEA** guidelines, regulations, Procedural Safeguards, Resolution meetings, Due Process Hearings and **IDEA** discipline policies for students with disabilities. *This Plan can be translated into a second language if needed for ELL or NEP members of the school community.* A required conference will be held prior to the start of a suspension or expulsion except as provided in §20503.3 (with regard to Separation from the student population. ) A hearing process for review of disciplinary actions that include the following elements:

- a) Neutral decision maker(s) not directly involved in the original discipline decision;

- b) Requirement that Roots will bear the burden of proof;
- c) Determination by Roots whether rules of evidence will apply;
- d) Opportunity for the student/parent representative to present testimony and documentary evidence and to cross examine any school witnesses;
- e) Opportunity for the student or parent representative to be represented at the hearing, including by legal counsel;
- f) description of the possible relief for the student;

An appeals process that provides for appeals of disciplinary decisions to a neutral hearing officer or panel that can overturn disciplinary decisions based on substantive or procedural violations. The appeals reviewer(s) must be different than the hearing officer(s) and have authority over the school, student, and disciplinary decisions;

- g) A process for re-entry of students to school upon completion of suspension or expulsion including a plan for addressing academic and behavioral issues;
- h) Maintenance of disciplinary records, including without limitation records of notices, proposed discipline actions; results of conferences and discipline actions and appeals; and compliance with District and federal data collection and reporting requirements;
- i) Access to the student conduct and discipline policies and procedures through an effective means of communication such as printed copies or electronic links to copies of the policy and procedure on the Roots' website;
- j) Prohibitions with regard to bullying conduct that shall affirm that the Roots does not tolerate bullying of any kind; and

Students who have not yet been determined to be eligible for specialized education services and who engage in behavior that violates a code of student conduct may assert any of the protections provided for in this part, if the public agency had a basis of knowledge, as defined by IDEA, that the student was a child with a disability before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred. *Knowledge* as used in this subsection shall have the meaning set forth in IDEA regulations at 34 C.F.R. § 300.534(b).

A hearing shall be held not more than four school days after a written notice is given to the student's parent/guardian. Upon request, the hearing can be postponed for not more than five school days so that the student's parent, guardian, or representative, can prepare or be in attendance.

Charter school leaders should follow PCSB's guidance for hearings, long-term suspensions and expulsions for the appropriate next steps.

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### **How do you know if the student has a disability?**

Public charter schools, similar to DCPS, are deemed to have knowledge that a child has a disability and thus are subject to the protection of IDEA and discipline policies for students with disabilities if:

- The parent/guardian of the child has expressed concern in writing to appropriate school personnel that the child is in need of special education and related services.
- The behavior or performance of the child demonstrates the needs for such services.
- The parent/guardian has requested an evaluation of the child.
- The teacher of the child or other school personnel have expressed concern about the behavior or performance of the child to the school's special education staff or administrative personnel.



For security purposes, *Roots Public Charter School* has a camera monitoring the entrance doors, playground and classrooms. Entry into the school is supervised throughout the school day. The front office will maintain a *Visitor Log* for scheduled and unscheduled visitors. Roots will comply with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, ensuring that children with disabilities have access to school facilities as required by law. We will carefully consider such requirements in the selection, configuration, or alteration of any existing facility and the planning and construction of any new addition.

Also, RPCS will comply with all regulations for fire safety under the DC Fire Prevention Code, DC Code §5-401et.seq...Monthly *Fire drills* are practiced for student review & safety. Roots will provide training to staff and students, develop fire evacuation and safety plans, plan and execute fire and emergency drills in accordance with all such requirements. Emergency routes and maps and posted in each room and fire drills will be performed monthly.

At Roots PCS during *School Hours*, *ANY use of Cell Phones and other electronic devices such as hand-held games is strictly prohibited.*

If students are caught with any of these devices, *they will be confiscated and returned only to parents.*

*Roots Public Charter School* is designed to meet specific needs of U.S. African youth. Our main objective is to provide positive reinforcement and encouragement. Our goal is to groom productive leaders for tomorrow. Students must be self-motivated, self-disciplined, respectful, anti-bullying and obedient. There will be no corporal punishment of any type. Teaching staff will never use physical punishment i.e. shaking, hitting, pushing and/or kicking. Neither will teachers engage in emotional mal-treatment, psychological abuse or coercion. Bullying in ANY form; (social, physical, verbal or cyber) will not be tolerated. Staff, parents and the school have a role to play in the prevention of *Bullying*, either by the perpetrator or the victim. Any student involved in an altercation will first, have an opportunity to explain their story to the teacher. They will then be counseled before a decision is made to call the parent.

When students are consistently disruptive, disobedient, or disrespectful, the teacher sends a *discipline notice* home. The same day, the teacher is expected to place a copy of the notice in the child's file and also to send an e-mail to the Principal, the Vice Principal, and the School Administrator notifying them that a discipline notice has been sent home. The e-mail assists school leaders to maintain accurate records of disciplinary actions and to assure fair and consistent implementation of the school's discipline policy. Parents are expected to sign the notice and handle their child's



behavior. Upon receiving three (3) discipline notices, the student is given a one (1) day “in-school” suspension. With a fourth (4) discipline slip, the “in-school” suspension for the child is three (3) days. This *Due Process* is outlined in detail in the RPCS Discipline Plan. (*Parents receive a copy at Parent Orientation Workshop*) After the fifth notice the teacher and parent agree upon a behavior plan to address the problem.

**DUE PROCESS:** With parents working together as a team, our students’ education will reflect excellence. It is our policy that students be held accountable for their actions. If a student demonstrates inappropriate behavior, he or she must be dealt with fairly and according to the Roots PC Discipline Policy. We involve and inform parents when these occurrences arise. It is our belief that children of informed parents exhibit little misbehavior. Together, we can keep Roots PCS a place where “children come first,” “appropriate behavior is imperative” and growing can occur in a quality learning environment. Roots PCS maintains high behavioral standards for students. Students must be self-disciplined. Parents must be willing to ensure that their child is obedient, respectful and demonstrates acceptable behavior. The Parent and or student has the right to appeal or file a grievance regarding any school decision. This action begins with the staff member who made the decision. The principal will then hear the appeal and render her decision within two days. The final decision of the principal may be appealed by the Board of Directors who has the final decision.

# **STUDENT/FAMILY POLICIES**

Prior to implementation of a suspension or expulsion, same day notice shall be provided to the parent or guardian of a student who has committed conduct warranting suspension or expulsion. Such notice shall include:

- (a) A description of the misconduct;
- (b) A description of the proposed disciplinary action, including the duration of the suspension or expulsion;
- (c) The authority for the proposed disciplinary action;
- (d) An explanation of the student's rights, including the right to request a conference or hearing; and
- (e) A description of the disciplinary process, procedures, and potential consequences.

Prior to implementation of a suspension or expulsion, the student or parent rep shall have the right to request a hearing, unless the student's conduct involved violence, a threat of violence, or possession of a weapon, in which case the student may be suspended for a period of not more than two (2) school days prior to the hearing and during the pendency of the hearing, which shall be concluded within three (3) school days of the request.

During any period of suspension of three (3) days or more (whether in-school or off-site), Roots shall develop an education plan for the student that enables the student to maintain academic work and obtain academic credit on pace with work that the student would have completed if the student was not subject to any disciplinary action, and shall continue to provide supplemental educational services that may be required for a homeless student, an English language learner, a student under court supervision, or any other subgroup of students identified by federal law of which the suspended student is a member.

Roots will continue to provide educational services to students with disabilities who are suspended or expelled, as required by the **IDEA** and **Section 504**.

Expulsion of students shall be governed by the following requirements:

- (a) Expulsion shall be the appropriate discipline only for the most serious classifications of misconduct that may result in serious physical injury or are a major disruption to the school environment; and
- (b) LEAs shall require that the school consider placement of a student in an alternative education program prior to expulsion.

# **STUDENT/FAMILY POLICIES**

Roots will not consider prior incidents of discipline, including suspension and expulsion, in enrollment decisions, except that an LEA may deny enrollment to a student who at the time of enrollment is subject to a mandated, one (1) year expulsion from another public school of the District for possession of weapon in violation of D.C. Official Code § 38-231 (2001).

# Roots Public Charter School

## DISCIPLINE PLAN

Dear Parents:

Roots Public Charter School, the Public Charter School Board and DCPS require parents to share responsibility for children's behavior at school. Children should know the school's behavior expectations. As outlined in the *Parent Handbook*, coming to school for conferences and volunteering in the classroom will help parents understand and enforce behavior policies established for the benefit of all children.

The RCPS administration and staff will:

- Encourage and understand diverse differences to the best of their ability in the effort to meet the needs of all children.
- Ensure that the Discipline Plan is explained, interpreted, and understood by staff, parents and students.
- Be fair, firm, consistent and committed in enforcing Roots rules and policies of behavior by maintaining communication between home and school.
- Implement specific plans for effective parent, student and staff participation in the periodic review of the RPCS *Code of Conduct*.

***The Roots faculty believes that students are happier and learn better if they are in a courteous and caring atmosphere. We believe that this courtesy must be reflected not only by the staff but also by the students.***

Revisions will be made to this policy as the Board of Directors deem necessary.

This is a copy of the Roots Public Charter School Discipline Policy. Please discuss the school expectations with your child at home, sign the attached form and return to your child's teacher. If you have any questions, please contact me at the school. ***A signed copy of this policy is always available in the front office.***

Sincerely,

Bernida Thompson, Principal.

# CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE PLAN

## **Classroom Rules**

- Follow directions the first time they are given
- Be in the classroom and seated on time
- Raise hand to be recognized before speaking
- Get permission before leaving classroom
- Speak and act respectfully at all times
- Gum is not chewed at school or on field trips at any time
- Students going to the multi-purpose room must be accompanied by an adult
- Students must wear the school uniform to class daily

## **Consequences**

First time a student breaks a rule: Warning

Second time: Writes affirmation X times and possibly no recess

Third Time: Parent Notification

Fourth Time: Call

Severe Case: Send to Principal

## **Rewards**

Students who comply with the rules receive:

- Praise
- Positive notes sent home
- Special Privileges

Teachers send notes to the parent explaining that these are the rules of the classroom and are in effect at all times. Severe misbehavior such as fighting, verbal abuse, or weapons will result in being **Sent to the Principal**. The end result is that there are well-defined rules and pre-determined consequences from the very beginning which establishes classroom control and creates a basis for effective communication with parents. Teachers are able to:

- Judge student behavior fairly;
- Discuss behavior problems more confidently with parents;
- Show empathy and concern toward the student;
- Question to find out why there is a problem.

The reasons for discipline are never vague or arbitrary. An accurate description can be given to the student or parent concerning:

- The rule(s) that the student has broken and
- The consequences of the student's misbehavior.

This a commitment that is very time consuming to prepare, but it is well worth the

effort as it saves the teacher *time* and *energy* in the future. These are some

preventative actions that put parental involvement on the right track from the first day of school and set the stage for a full year of positive parental involvement.

***Roots Public Charter School***  
***15 Kennedy Street Northwest***  
***Washington, D.C. 20011***

**DISCIPLINARY NOTICE**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child is being disciplined (Suspended/ Expelled) for the following infraction(s):

The specific facts to support these charges include:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The administration deems that this charge is a sufficient reason to expel/suspend or reprimand your child. In accordance with school rules your child is required to:

\_\_\_\_\_

Conference with Parent/Guardian: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please remind your child of the importance of obeying school rules so that the incident will not occur again. Please sign the form below and return it to me. If there are any questions concerning our actions, please call the school.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Person Completing Form)

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I have read your letter and discussed the incident with my child.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian



## District of Columbia Superior Court Truancy Referral Checklist

**Directions:** Please check the following items for inclusion in the Truancy Referral and attach this sheet to Truancy Referral Form.

### **School/Student Information**

- ☐ District of Columbia Superior Court Truancy Referral Form
- ☐ Student Enrollment Form
- ☐ DC Residency Verification Form
- ☐ Current Course Schedule with Teacher Names
- ☐ Progress Report/Report Card

### **Attendance**

- ☐ Daily attendance record for current school year (certified true copy); include period attendance if applicable
- ☐ Attendance intervention plan
- ☐ Documentation of all attendance interventions checked on Truancy Referral Form (include date(s), person(s) conducting the intervention, person(s) in attendance, and detailed notes regarding the intervention/follow-up)
  - ☐ Phone call
  - ☐ Letter
  - ☐ Certified letter
  - ☐ In-person conference
  - ☐ Student Support Team or Attendance Committee meeting
  - ☐ Referral to in-school resource
  - ☐ Referral to community-based organization
  - ☐ Home visit

### **Additional items**

- ☐ SAT 9, DC-BAS, DC-CAS and/or other relevant test data (if available)
- ☐ 504 Plan/Bi-lingual Education Plan (if applicable)
- ☐ Individualized Education Plan (if student is enrolled in special education)
- ☐ TANF/DHS Form (if applicable)
- ☐ DC Housing Authority Verification Enrollment Form (if applicable)



# **DC Superior Court Truancy Referral**

## **Section 1: School/Student Information**

(please place the following items in order behind this sheet)

- ☐ District of Columbia Superior Court Truancy Referral Form
- ☐ Student Enrollment Form
- ☐ DC Residency Verification Form
- ☐ Current Course Schedule with Teacher Names
- ☐ Progress Report/Report Card





# DC Superior Court Truancy Referral

## Section 2: Attendance

(please place the following items in order behind this sheet)

☐ Daily attendance record for current school year (certified true copy); include period attendance if applicable

☐ Attendance intervention plan

☐ Documentation of all attendance interventions checked on Truancy Referral Form (include date(s), person(s) conducting the intervention, person(s) in attendance, and detailed notes regarding the intervention/follow-up)

☐ Phone call

☐ Letter

☐ Certified letter

☐ In-person conference

☐ Student Support Team or Attendance Committee meeting

☐ Referral to in-school resource

☐ Referral to community-based organization

☐ Home visit



# DC Superior Court Truancy Referral

## Section 3: Additional Items

(please place the following items in order behind this sheet)

- ☐ SAT 9, DC-BAS, DC-CAS and/or other relevant test data (if available)
- ☐ 504 Plan/Bi-lingual Education Plan (if applicable)
- ☐ Individualized Education Plan (if student is enrolled in special education)
- ☐ TANF/DHS Form (if applicable)
- ☐ DC Housing Authority Verification Enrollment Form (if applicable)

# **STUDENT/FAMILY POLICIES**

## **GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

The policy of Roots PCS is that all employees, students, parents, and visitors have the right to voice their complaints or grievances about matters pertaining to the school. The following grievance procedure should be employed to ensure that complaints receive full consideration.

Roots' grievance process can be used to:

1. Address complaints and concerns pertaining to educational environment, employment arrangements, or interpersonal conflicts; and
2. Resolve complaints of discrimination and harassment based upon race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or otherwise.

The procedures set forth below may be used by a grievant who is an employee, student, parent, or visitor. The identities of the grievant and respondents (the individuals against whom the allegations in the grievance are directed) will not be disclosed except as required by law or policy, or as necessary to fully investigate the grievance.

### **Other Considerations**

The existence of this procedure does not bar a grievant from also filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state or federal law.

A grievant may file an informal or formal grievance, and is not required to file an *informal* grievance prior to filing a *formal* one.

# STUDENT/FAMILY POLICIES

## *Informal Grievance*

Because most difficulties can be resolved by communicating a concern to someone, a grievant is encouraged to discuss their concern or harassment complaint promptly and candidly with their immediate supervisor, or the Principal.

1. Individuals alleging discrimination, harassment, or retaliation pursuant to this Grievance Procedure must send the informal grievance to the Principal within 45 calendar days of the date of the actions or failures to act being grieved. This timeframe may be waived by **Roots**. The informal grievance must include the name of and contact information for the grievant, briefly describe the alleged discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, and signed by the grievant.
2. The Principal shall complete an investigation of the informal grievance within 10 calendar days of the receipt by Roots of the grievance.
3. The Principal shall schedule a meeting with the grievant that shall take place within 14 calendar days of **Roots'** receipt of the grievance. If the grievant agrees, this meeting may include the individual against whom the grievance was filed and other individuals, as necessary. Within 21 calendar days of the receipt by **Roots** of the grievance, the Principal shall send a decision letter to the grievant which shall include the specific issues raised in the grievance, the resolution or failure to resolve, the remedies to be provided, if any, and the grievant right to request a formal grievance. A copy of the decision letter

## SCHOOL SAFETY/SECURITY POLICY

For security purposes, *Roots Public Charter School* has a camera monitoring the entrance doors, playground and classrooms. Entry into the school is supervised throughout the school day. The front office will maintain a *Visitor Log* for scheduled and unscheduled visitors. Roots will comply with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, ensuring that children with disabilities have access to school facilities as required by law. We will carefully consider such requirements in the selection, configuration, or alteration of any existing facility and the planning and construction of any new addition.

1. Individuals alleging discrimination, harassment, or retaliation pursuant to this Grievance Procedure must send the informal grievance to the Principal within 45 calendar days of the date of the actions or failures to act being grieved. This timeframe may be waived by **Roots**. The informal grievance must include the name of and contact information for the grievant, briefly describe the alleged discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, and signed by the grievant.
  2. The Principal shall complete an investigation of the informal grievance within 10 calendar days of the receipt by **Roots** of the grievance.
  3. The Principal shall schedule a meeting with the grievant that shall take place within 14 calendar days of **Roots**' receipt of the grievance. If the grievant agrees, this meeting may include the individual against whom the grievance was filed and other individuals, as necessary.
  4. Within 21 calendar days of the receipt by **Roots** of the grievance, the Principal shall send a decision letter to the grievant which shall include the specific issues raised in the grievance, the resolution or failure to resolve, the remedies to be provided, if any, and the grievant right to request a formal grievance. A copy of the decision letter, the complete record of the investigation, and notes concerning meetings with and negotiations between the parties shall be maintained by the Principal.
- The grievant is not required to discuss his/her complaint with the alleged harasser or perpetrator in any manner or for any reason prior to initiating a formal grievance.

### **Formal Grievance**

1. Individuals who want to file a formal grievance alleging discrimination, harassment, or retaliation pursuant to this Grievance Procedure must send the formal grievance to the Principal within 45 calendar days of the date of the actions or failures to act being grieved. For those who filed informal grievances, this timeframe is 30 calendar days of their receipt of the decision letter to the Principal. This timeframe may be waived by **Roots PCS**. The formal grievance must be signed by the grievant, and include the following:
  - a) The name of and contact information for the grievant;
  - b) A clear and concise statement of the allegations;

- c) A statement concerning how the actions or failures to act were discriminatory, constituted harassment or a failure to adequately address harassment, or were retaliatory;
  - d) The names of the respondents;
  - e) For those who filed informal grievances, a copy of the decision letter;
  - f) The requested remedies; and
  - g) Whether a non-participating observer will be brought to the hearing (representatives, advocates, or other participants are not permitted at the hearing).
2. Within (7) calendar days of the receipt by the school of the formal grievance, the Principal shall appoint a Formal Grievance Panel and provide them with the grievance, all evidence submitted with the grievance, all information and evidence relating to the immediate intervention, if any, and, for those cases for which informal grievances were filed, the record of the investigation of the informal grievance and the decision letter. The Formal Grievance Panel shall be comprised of individuals, including a chairman, who have received adequate training on the Grievance Procedures how to conduct a hearing and the issue raised by the grievance, and who are not directly or indirectly involved in the actions or failures to act that are the subject of the formal grievance.
3. The Formal Grievance Panel shall complete an investigation of the grievance within 14 calendar days of the receipt by Roots of the grievance, except that, for those cases for with informal grievances were filed, it may elect to rely on the record of the investigation of the informal grievance and the decision letter instead of conducting an investigation.
4. The Formal Grievance Panel shall schedule a Grievance Hearing for a date within 21 calendar days of the receipt by Roots PCS of the formal grievance, and shall provide the grievant and respondents with at least 3 calendar day's written notice of the Grievance Hearing. The Hearing Notice shall include the allegations, the general manner in which the hearing will be conducted, the rights of the grievant and respondents at the hearing, including the rights to submit documentary evidence and verbal testimony, and the right of the grievant to cross-examine respondents and witnesses and rebut evidence. The grievant and the respondents shall bring all

witnesses and/or evidence to the Grievance Hearing, except that evidence previously submitted by the grievant in the informal or formal grievance process. The Formal Grievance Panel shall conduct the hearing, accept evidence, determine the order in which evidence will be presented and witnesses examined and cross-examined, identify any additional witnesses or evidence relevant to the grievant, and question the grievant, respondents, and/or witnesses.

5. Within 28 calendar days of the receipt by Roots PCS of the request for a Grievance Hearing, the Formal Grievance Panel shall make and send a decision to the grievant and respondents which shall include the specific issues raised in the grievance, the applicable standards, the facts alleged, specific findings concerning the merit or lack of merit of each allegation, the basis for the decision, the remedies to be provided, if any, and the grievant right to appeal the decision.

### **Appeal Process**

1. A grievant who is dissatisfied with the Formal Grievance Panel decision must send an appeal within 14 calendar days of their receipt of the decision to the Board of Trustees. The Appeal must be signed by the grievant and include the following:
  - a) The name and contact information for the grievant;
  - b) A copy of the Formal Grievance Panel decision; and
  - c) A statement concerning the specific flaws in Formal Grievance Panel decision and why that decision should be reversed.
2. Within 14 calendar days of the receipt by the Board of Trustees of the grievance, it shall send a final decision letter to the grievant. This final decision letter is not subject to appeal. The Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, **Attorney Gilda Sherrod-Ali**, who can be reached at: **202-544-2299** or at **[gildaali@verizon.net](mailto:gildaali@verizon.net)**.

### **Prohibition Against Retaliation**

Roots PCS pledges that it will not retaliate against person who files a complaint in accordance with this policy, or any person who participates in proceedings related to this policy.

Additionally, Roots PCS will not tolerate any form of retaliation against any person who makes a good faith report or complaint about perceived acts of harassment, discrimination, or concern, or who cooperates in an investigation of harassment, discrimination, or a concern.

Any person who is found to be engaging in any kind of retaliation will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action per *the Roots PCS Whistleblower Policy (Staff Hand Book)*

### ***Modification***

Roots PCS may approve modification of the foregoing procedures in a particular case if the modification (a) is for good cause, and (b) does not violate due process rights or policies of Roots Public Charter School.

### **Formal Federal Agency Complaint Procedures**

A grievant also has the right to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights by:

1. mailing the complaint to:  
Director, District of Columbia Office, Office for Civil Rights (OCR),  
U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, District of Columbia Office  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-1475
2. faxing it to (202) 453-6021; or
3. filing it electronically at: <http://www.ed.gov/ocr/complaintprocess.html>



### **The Right To File A Complaint**

If parents believe that their rights have been violated, they may file a formal complaint with the Dept of Education (OMB No.1880-0544).

A complaint must include specific allegations of the facts detailing reasons that a violation of the statute or the implementing regulations occurred. Individuals who want to complete the complaint may do so in its entirety by submitting it either by mail or electronically.

The alleged violation will be investigated by the SPPO (**S**tudent **P**riate **P**olicy **O**ffice)

## **Student Privacy Act**

### **What is FERPA?**

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974** helps protect the privacy of student education records. The *Act* provides for the right to inspect and review education records, the right to seek to amend those records and to limit disclosure of information from the records. The intent of the legislation is to protect the rights of students and to ensure the privacy and accuracy of education records. The *Act* applies to all institutions that are recipients of federal aid administered by the Secretary of Education.

### **What rights does FERPA afford students with respect to their education records?**

#### **STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO INSPECT AND REVIEW THEIR**

**EDUCATIONAL RECORDS.** A student seeking to review their records should contact the Office at the Roots PCS campus and ask for a Records Review Request form. Roots PCS must comply with the request to review the records within 45 days of receiving the request. Parents may request copies of their child's records. However, the school may refuse to duplicate records in situations where the student has outstanding financial or other obligations to the school.

#### **STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEEK TO AMEND THEIR EDUCATIONAL RECORDS.**

A school must inform eligible students or parents how it defines the terms "**school Official**" and "**legitimate educational interest**" in its notification of FERPA rights.

Parents may ask by written consent (FERPA allows) "school officials"; i.e. Roots personnel; including school administrators; health staff, counselors, attorneys, trustees, disciplinary committee members, teachers and other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions. to obtain access, or amend a record if they believe it is inaccurate or misleading. *This is only done providing that it is determined that these parties "school officials" have "legitimate educational interest" in the information if the official needs to review the education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility; ex: SPED teacher.* If it is determined an amendment is needed, they should write to the Director, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, and specifying why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the decision is not to amend the record as requested by the parent, Roots staff will notify the parent of the decision and advise them of the right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. If the parent requests a hearing, the Director or designee shall gather the records which are being challenged and appoint a committee of one faculty member, one administrator, and a member of the Student Support staff to hold a hearing with the parent to review and discuss the information in question.

The following conditions will be met: *The hearing must take place within 45 days of the written request of the parent at a time which is convenient for both*

*the parent and the other parties involved. Minutes shall be recorded from the hearing.*

1. "Due process" shall be the guideline used for the conduct of the meeting.
2. If the records cannot be mutually agreed upon, the parent has the right to submit information for the file to explain more adequately the information in question.

## **PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION FROM THEIR EDUCATIONAL RECORDS.**

With certain exceptions (described below), Roots PCS may not release personally identifiable information unless the parent has given prior consent in writing. A parent may contact the Admissions Office at any campus for Consent to Release Information forms.

**The following are exceptions to non-disclosure. ROOTS PCS personnel may release information without the parent's written consent in the following situations. Although RPCS does not promote the widespread release of "directory information," FERPA regulations permit the release of such information to anyone without the parent's consent.** 1) School may disclose directory information without consent if the student is a dependent student. 2) To comply with a judicial order; to the victim of an alleged crime of violence or non-forcible sex offense. *(Other exceptions are outlined in FERPA regulations at CFR 99.31; Detailed copy issued to parents upon request. )* Directory information is defined as that information which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Designated directory information at RPCS includes the following:

- Student name, parent or guardian name, address, telephone listing
- E-mail address
- Date & place of birth
- Field of study at **ROOTS PCS**
- Participation in officially recognized activities
- Dates of attendance at **ROOTS**
- Promotion and awards received
- Photograph
- Educational institution most recently attended
- Enrollment status
- Academic or grade level

**Parents have the right to refuse to permit the release of directory information, by making a request in writing.**

Contact the Records/Admissions Office for information. Parents should be aware that requesting non-disclosure may have negative consequences. For instance ROOTS personnel will not be able to confirm the student's attendance to a prospective school; their names will not be listed. Parents also have the right to "opt-out" of the public, non-consensual disclosure of directory information to third parties. If this happens then information may not be disclosed to such parties.

**A complete copy of these regulations are available to parents upon request.**

# FERPA General Guidance for Students

Get the Latest on FERPA at [familypolicy.ed.gov](http://familypolicy.ed.gov) (<http://familypolicy.ed.gov?src=ferpa-s>)

- **Frequently Asked Questions** (<http://familypolicy.ed.gov/faq-page?src=ferpa-s>)
- **FERPA for parents and students** (<http://familypolicy.ed.gov/ferpa-parents-students?src=ferpa-s>) and **school officials** (<http://familypolicy.ed.gov/ferpa-school-officials?src=ferpa-s>)
- **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)** (<http://familypolicy.ed.gov/ppra?src=ferpa-s>)
- **Guidance and Notices** (<http://familypolicy.ed.gov/content/ferpa-school-officials-guidance-and-notices?src=ferpa-s>)

The following guidance provides eligible students with general information about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This document is a compilation and update of various letters and guidance documents previously issued that respond to a variety of questions about FERPA. While this guidance reflects our best and most current interpretation of applicable FERPA requirements, it does not supersede the statute or regulations. We will attempt to update this document from time to time in response to questions and concerns.

FERPA is a Federal law that is administered by the Family Policy Compliance Office (Office) in the U.S. Department of Education (Department). 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99. FERPA applies to all educational agencies and institutions (e.g., schools) that receive funding under any program administered by the Department. Parochial and private schools at the elementary and secondary levels generally do not receive such funding and are, therefore, not subject to FERPA. Private postsecondary schools, however, generally do receive such funding and are subject to FERPA.

Once a student reaches 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, he or she becomes an "eligible student," and all rights formerly given to parents under FERPA transfer to the student. The eligible student has the right to have access to his or her education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, the right to have control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the records (except in certain circumstances specified in the FERPA regulations, some of which are discussed below), and the right to file a complaint with the Department. The term "education records" is defined as those records that contain information directly related to a student and which are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution.

FERPA generally prohibits the improper disclosure of personally identifiable information derived from education records. Thus, information that an official obtained through personal knowledge or observation, or has heard orally from others, is not protected under FERPA. This remains applicable even if education records exist which contain

that information, unless the official had an official role in making a determination that generated a protected education record.

Under FERPA, a school is not generally required to maintain particular education records or education records that contain specific information. Rather, a school is required to provide certain privacy protections for those education records that it does maintain. Also, unless there is an outstanding request by an eligible student to inspect and review education records, FERPA permits the school to destroy such records without notice to the student.

## Access to Education Records

Under FERPA, a school must provide an eligible student with an opportunity to inspect and review his or her education records within 45 days following its receipt of a request. A school is required to provide an eligible student with copies of education records, or make other arrangements, if a failure to do so would effectively prevent the student from obtaining access to the records. A case in point would be a situation in which the student does not live within commuting distance of the school.

A school is not generally required by FERPA to provide an eligible student with access to academic calendars, course syllabi, or general notices such as announcements of specific events or extra-curricular activities. That type of information is not generally directly related to an individual student and, therefore, does not meet the definition of an education record.

Under FERPA, a school is not required to provide information that is not maintained or to create education records in response to an eligible student's request. Accordingly, a school is not required to provide an eligible student with updates on his or her progress in a course (including grade reports) or in school unless such information already exists in the form of an education record.

## Amendment of Education Records

Under FERPA, an eligible student has the right to request that inaccurate or misleading information in his or her education records be amended. While a school is not required to amend education records in accordance with an eligible student's request, the school is required to consider the request. If the school decides not to amend a record in accordance with an eligible student's request, the school must inform the student of his or her right to a hearing on the matter. If, as a result of the hearing, the school still decides not to amend the record, the eligible student has the right to insert a statement in the record setting forth his or her views. That statement must remain with the contested part of the eligible student's record for as long as the record is maintained.

However, while the FERPA amendment procedure may be used to challenge facts that are inaccurately recorded, it may not be used to challenge a grade, an opinion, or a substantive decision made by a school about an eligible student. FERPA was intended to require only that schools conform to fair recordkeeping practices and not to override the accepted standards and procedures for making academic assessments, disciplinary rulings, or placement determinations. Thus, while FERPA affords eligible students the right to seek to amend education records which contain inaccurate information, this right cannot be used to challenge a grade or an individual's opinion, or a substantive decision made by a school about a student. Additionally, if FERPA's amendment procedures are not applicable to an eligible student's request for amendment of education records, the school is not required under FERPA to hold a hearing on the matter.

## Disclosure of Education Records

Under FERPA, a school may not generally disclose personally identifiable information from an eligible student's education records to a third party unless the eligible student has provided written consent. However, there are a number of exceptions to FERPA's prohibition against non-consensual disclosure of personally identifiable information



from education records. Under these exceptions, schools are permitted to disclose personally identifiable information from education records without consent, though they are not required to do so. Following is general information regarding some of these exceptions.

One of the exceptions to the prior written consent requirement in FERPA allows "school officials," including teachers, within a school to obtain access to personally identifiable information contained in education records provided the school has determined that they have "legitimate educational interest" in the information. Although the term "school official" is not defined in the statute or regulations, this Office generally interprets the term to include parties such as: professors; instructors; administrators; health staff; counselors; attorneys; clerical staff; trustees; members of committees and disciplinary boards; and a contractor, volunteer or other party to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions.

A school must inform eligible students of how it defines the terms "school official" and "legitimate educational interest" in its annual notification of FERPA rights. A school official generally has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Additional information about the annual notification of rights is found below in this guidance document.

Another exception permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from an eligible student's education records, without consent, to another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll. The sending school may make the disclosure if it has included in its annual notification of rights a statement that it forwards education records in such circumstances. Otherwise, the sending school must make a reasonable attempt to notify the student in advance of making the disclosure, unless the student has initiated the disclosure. The school must also provide an eligible student with a copy of the records that were released if requested by the student.

FERPA also permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from education records without consent when the disclosure is in connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to: determine the eligibility for the aid; determine the amount of the aid; determine the conditions for the aid; and/or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. With respect to this exception, the term "financial aid" means payment of funds provided to an individual (or payment in kind of tangible or intangible property to the individual) that is conditioned on the individual's attendance at a school.

Another exception permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from education records without consent when the disclosure is to the parents of a "dependent student" as that term is defined in Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code. Generally, if either parent has claimed the student as a dependent on the parent's most recent year's income tax statement, the school may non-consensually disclose the eligible student's education records to both parents under this exception.

Postsecondary institutions may also disclose personally identifiable information from education records, without consent, to appropriate parties, including parents of an eligible student, in connection with a health or safety emergency. Under this provision, colleges and universities may notify parents when there is a health or safety emergency involving their son or daughter, even if the parents do not claim the student as a dependent.

FERPA also permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from education records without consent when the disclosure is to the parents of a student at a postsecondary institution regarding the student's violation of any Federal, State, or local law, or of any rule or policy of the institution, governing the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance. The school may non-consensually disclose information under this exception if the school determines that the student has committed a disciplinary violation with respect to that use or possession and the student is under 21 years of age at the time of the disclosure to the parent.

Another exception permits a school to non-consensually disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records when such information has been appropriately designated as directory information. "Directory information" is defined as information contained in the education records of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory information could include information such as the

student's name, address, e-mail address, telephone listing, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended, grade level or year (such as freshman or junior), and enrollment status (undergraduate or graduate; full-time or part-time).

A school may disclose directory information without consent if it has given public notice of the types of information it has designated as directory information, the eligible student's right to restrict the disclosure of such information, and the period of time within which an eligible student has to notify the school that he or she does not want any or all of those types of information designated as directory information. Also, FERPA does not require a school to notify eligible students individually of the types of information it has designated as directory information. Rather, the school may provide this notice by any means likely to inform eligible students of the types of information it has designated as directory information.

There are several other exceptions to FERPA's prohibition against non-consensual disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records, some of which are briefly mentioned below. Under certain conditions (specified in the FERPA regulations), a school may non-consensually disclose personally identifiable information from education records:

- to authorized representatives of the Comptroller General of the United States, the Attorney General of the United States, the U.S. Secretary of Education, and State and local educational authorities for audit or evaluation of Federal or State supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs;
- to organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the school making the disclosure for the purposes of administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, or improving instruction;
- to comply with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena;
- to the victim of an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense concerning the final results of a disciplinary hearing with respect to the alleged crime; and
- to any third party the final results of a disciplinary proceeding related to a crime of violence or non-forcible sex offense if the student who is the alleged perpetrator is found to have violated the school's rules or policies. The disclosure of the final results only includes: the name of the alleged perpetrator, the violation committed, and any sanction imposed against the alleged perpetrator. The disclosure must not include the name of any other student, including a victim or witness, without the written consent of that other student.

As stated above, conditions specified in the FERPA regulations at 34 CFR § 99.31 have to be met before a school may non-consensually disclose personally identifiable information from education records in connection with any of the exceptions mentioned above.

## Annual Notification of Rights

Under FERPA, a school must annually notify eligible students in attendance of their rights under FERPA. The annual notification must include information regarding an eligible student's right to inspect and review his or her education records, the right to seek to amend the records, the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information from the records (except in certain circumstances), and the right to file a complaint with the Office regarding an alleged failure by a school to comply with FERPA. It must also inform eligible students of the school's definitions of the terms "school official" and "legitimate educational interest."

FERPA does not require a school to notify eligible students individually of their rights under FERPA. Rather, the school may provide the notice by any means likely to inform eligible students of their rights. Thus, the annual notification may be published by various means, including any of the following: in a schedule of classes; in a student handbook; in a calendar of school events; on the school's website (though this should not be the exclusive means of

notification); in the student newspaper; and/or posted in a central location at the school or various locations throughout the school. Additionally, some schools include their directory information notice as part of the annual notice of rights under FERPA.

## Law Enforcement Units and Law Enforcement Unit Records

A "law enforcement unit" means any individual, office, department, division or other component of a school, such as a unit of commissioned police officers or non-commissioned security guards, that is officially authorized or designated by the school to: enforce any local, State, or Federal law, or refer to appropriate authorities a matter for enforcement of any law against any individual or organization; or to maintain the physical security and safety of the school. The law enforcement unit does not lose its status as a law enforcement unit if it also performs other, non-law enforcement functions for the school, including investigation of incidents or conduct that constitutes or leads to a disciplinary proceeding against a student.

"Law enforcement unit records" (i.e., records created by the law enforcement unit, created for a law enforcement purpose, and maintained by the law enforcement unit) are not "education records" subject to the privacy protections of FERPA. As such, the law enforcement unit may refuse to provide an eligible student with an opportunity to inspect and review law enforcement unit records, and it may disclose law enforcement unit records to third parties without the eligible student's prior written consent. However, education records, or personally identifiable information from education records, which the school shares with the law enforcement unit do not lose their protected status as education records because they are shared with the law enforcement unit.

## Complaints of Alleged Failures to Comply with FERPA

FERPA vests the rights it affords in the eligible student. The statute does not provide for these rights to be vested in a third party who has not suffered an alleged violation of their rights under FERPA. Thus, we require that a student have "standing," i.e., have suffered an alleged violation of his or her rights under FERPA, in order to file a complaint.

The Office may investigate those timely complaints that contain specific allegations of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a school has violated FERPA. A timely complaint is defined as one that is submitted to the Office within 180 days of the date that the complainant knew or reasonably should have known of the alleged violation of FERPA. Complaints that do not meet FERPA's threshold requirement for timeliness are not investigated.

If we receive a timely complaint that contains a specific allegation of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a school has violated FERPA, we may initiate an administrative investigation into the allegation in accordance with procedures outlined in the FERPA regulations. If a determination is made that a school violated FERPA, the school and the complainant are so advised, and the school is informed of the steps it must take to come into compliance with the law. The investigation is closed when voluntary compliance is achieved.

Please note that the eligible student should state his or her allegations as clearly and specifically as possible. To aid us in efficiently processing allegations, we ask that an eligible student only include supporting documentation that is relevant to the allegations provided. Otherwise, we may return the documentation and request clarification. This Office does not have the resources to review voluminous documents and materials to determine whether an allegation of a violation of FERPA is included. An eligible student may obtain a complaint form by calling (202) 260-3887. For administrative and privacy reasons, we do not discuss individual allegations and cases via email. Please mail completed complaint forms to the Office (address below) for review and any appropriate action.

## Complaint Regarding Access

If an eligible student believes that a school has failed to comply with his or her request for access to education records, the student may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date of the request for access to the education records; the name of the school official to whom the request was



If an eligible student believes that a school has failed to comply with his or her request for access to education records, the student may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date of the request for access to the education records; the name of the school official to whom the request was made (a dated copy of any written request to the school should be provided, if possible); the response of the school official, if any; and the specific nature of the information requested.

## Complaint Regarding Amendment

If an eligible student believes that a school has failed to comply with his or her request for amendment of inaccurate information in education records or failed to offer the student an opportunity for a hearing on the matter, the student may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date of the request for amendment of the education records; the name of the school official to whom the request was made (a dated copy of any written request to the school should be provided, if possible); the response of the school official, if any; the specific nature of the inaccurate information for which amendment was requested; and evidence provided to the school to support the assertion that such information is inaccurate.

## Complaint Regarding Disclosure

If an eligible student believes that a school has improperly disclosed personally identifiable information from his or her education records to a third party, the student may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date or approximate date the alleged disclosure occurred or the date the student learned of the disclosure; the name of the school official who made the disclosure, if that is known; the third party to whom the disclosure was made; and the specific nature of the education records disclosed.

This guidance document is designed to provide eligible students with some general information regarding FERPA and their rights, and to address some of the basic questions most frequently asked by eligible students. You can review the FERPA regulations, frequently asked questions, significant opinions of the Office, and other information regarding FERPA at our Website as follows:

[www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html) (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html>)

If, after reading this guidance document, you have questions regarding FERPA which are not addressed here, you may write to the Office at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-8520