

## HillView Montessori Charter School Complaint Policy

HillView Montessori Charter School places high value on grace, courtesy, respect and responsibility. As such we encourage parents/guardians and staff to develop open lines of communication with each other for the benefit of the children attending the school. However, we acknowledge that from time to time, situations may arise that are upsetting. If a parent/guardian, student, staff member or other individuals or groups are not satisfied with a school decision, policy or act or believes that HVM has violated or is violating any provision of M.G.L.c.71 Section 89 or 603 CMR 1.00 they may do the following:

- 1. Discuss the complaint with the staff member that has direct responsibility for the problem.**
  - Within a week, take the complaint directly to the staff member involved (in the case of violation of laws or issues with school-wide policies, the Executive Director would be the appropriate staff member) to resolve the problem through discussion.
  - HVM is committed to using communication to work out problems and therefore, if needed, the two parties involved may request mediation from the staff member's immediate supervisor.
  - If the aggrieved person is not satisfied, within a week they must move to step 2.
- 2. Discuss the complaint with the staff member's immediate supervisor.**
  - If a solution is not found between the two parties involved then it should be taken to the staff member's immediate supervisor for discussion including use of mediation as necessary. If the original complaint was with the Executive Director and discussion (as mentioned in step 1) has not worked, move directly to step 3.
  - This should continue through the ranks until the complaint has been discussed with the Executive Director.
  - If the complaint has not been satisfactorily addressed after talking with the Executive Director, move to step 3. This should occur no later than a month from the original complaint.
- 3. Submit the complaint in writing to the Executive Director.**
  - The Executive Director may speak to all parties involved and will try to resolve the issue through discussions with those people. Otherwise, within two weeks, the Executive Director will give a written decision concerning the complaint, giving the reasons for the decision.
  - If the Executive Director's written decision is unsatisfactory, move to step 4 within 1 week.
- 4. Submit the complaint in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.**
  - Upon receiving the written complaint, the Chair shall request copies of all written communications from Step 3.
  - The Chair shall convene a committee of the Board (with no fewer than 3 people) that shall meet within 10 working days to discuss the issues. Those involved in the complaint shall have a right to attend the meeting.
  - The committee of the Board of Trustees will conduct reviews to ensure compliance with the law. HVM and the specific individuals involved will cooperate to the fullest extent with the review.
  - The committee of the board shall decide on the matter by majority vote and shall respond in writing to the person issuing the complaint and the Executive Director no later than 30 days from the receipt of the complaint.

- If the committee of the board is unable to reach a decision and/or the complaint is of such a nature that it might interfere with the normal functions of the school, then the committee shall bring this matter to the full board for consideration.
- 5. If the Board of Trustees written decision is not sufficient, the complaint may be submitted in writing to the Commissioner of Education.**

### **Exceptions to Procedural Steps**

HVM recognizes that there may be certain circumstances in which it may be inappropriate to resolve a problem as prescribed above. Therefore, the following exceptions are instances where some of the steps above may be bypassed to seek a resolution by the next higher authority:

- The complaint or problem involves a known or suspected violation of the law;
- The complaint or problem is clearly not within the authority of the staff member's supervisor to resolve.
- A parent, guardian or other individuals or groups, who believe that a charter school has violated or is violating any state or federal law or regulation regarding special education, may file a complaint directly with the Department of Education.

### **Harassment and Discrimination**

HVM is committed to protecting the rights and dignity of students, parents and staff. A fair and productive environment shall be maintained, free of harassment and discrimination. Offenders are subject to immediate disciplinary action.

It is HVM's policy to provide equal opportunities for all current and prospective student, parents and staff and to ensure that those opportunities are provided without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, sexual orientation, or disability and to make reasonable accommodation for individuals' mental or physical disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Harassment of students, parents or staff occurring in the school or in other settings in which these groups may interact is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.

Harassment may be defined as unwelcome or unsolicited verbal, physical or sexual conduct which is made a term or condition of employment; is used as the basis for employment decisions; creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. If harassment is personally experienced a supervisor or the Executive Director is to be contacted immediately.

HVM takes allegations of harassment seriously and will respond promptly to filed complaints. Where it is determined that inappropriate conduct has taken place, HVM shall impose such corrective action as is necessary up to and including termination of employees and expulsion of students.

Examples of what may be considered harassment are the following:

- *Verbal Harassment:* Derogatory or vulgar comments regarding a person's race, sex, religion, ethnicity or physical appearance; gossip regarding one's sex life, suggestive or insulting comments, sexual epithets, jokes, reference to sexual conduct, etc.
- *Physical Harassment:* Infliction of unwanted bodily contact.
- *Sexual Harassment:* Unwelcome sexual advances or comments, gestures or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Distribution of written, electronic or graphic material having the same effect. Also, the use of one's authority and power to coerce another individual into sexual relations or to punish the other for his/her refusal.

***Complaints of Harassment:***

If any student, parent or staff member believes that she/he has been subjected to harassment, he/she has the right to file a complaint. This may be done in writing or orally to the Executive Director.

***Investigation:***

All complaint allegations are investigated promptly and fairly. Investigators may include the Executive Director and the Staffing Committee of the Board. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent that it is practical under the circumstances. The process will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint, the alleged offender and any witnesses. When the investigation is completed, HVM will inform both parties of the results. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, HVM will work to eliminate the offending conduct and when appropriate, impose disciplinary action, up to and including termination of any employees that may be involved.

***State and Federal Remedies:***

In addition to filing a complaint with HVM, a formal complaint may be filed with either or both of the government agencies listed below. Using our complaint process does not prohibit anyone from filing a complaint with these agencies.

- The United States Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC)      Tel: (617) 565-3200  
One Congress Street – 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02114
- The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)      Tel: (617) 727-3990  
One Ashburton Place Room 601  
Boston, MA 02108