

Report to the Commission on
Improving the Academic
Achievement of Minority and
At-Risk Students and the
Joint Legislative Education
Oversight Committee on the
*Hotline to Collect Complaints Alleging
Disparate Treatment of Minority Students
and Students from Low-Income Families*

November, 2000

Prepared by: Division of School Improvement
Contact: Elsie Leak



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education . Department of Public Instruction

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Michael E. Ward, State Superintendent

Introduction

Section 8.28(f) of the HB 1840 requires the State Board to develop a plan to establish a hotline to collect complaints alleging disparate treatment of minority students and students from low-income families. In developing the plan, the Board shall give strong consideration to the following:

1. The establishment of teams to review and categorize the complaints for reporting annually to the General Assembly;
2. The appropriate number of hotline personnel who speak and understand Spanish;
3. A mechanism, where warranted, for the Board to respond to and secure an independent and impartial investigation of systemic problems revealed through the complaints;
4. A procedure for the Board to report individual complaints, unless the person making the complain requests otherwise, to the appropriate local school administrative unit so that it also may investigate; and
5. The criteria for a local investigation that assures fair and impartial investigation.

Hotline Guidelines and Procedures

Preface

As the Guidelines are reviewed, it is important to note that the State Agency now receives and responds to numerous complaints on a daily basis. Some can be addressed at the State level, but many times the concerns have to be referred to a particular local school system. It is very clear that the authority to address most complaints resides with the local school systems. Systemic problems (LEAs, school, or classroom) revealed through the hotline should be referred to the LEA for investigation. This makes it critical for local school systems to establish a systematic process for receiving and responding to complaints if one isn't currently in place.

If the hotline is implemented, care must be taken to ensure that it is not viewed as denying access to some parents because they are not members of a minority group or members of a low-income family.

Introduction

The proposed hotline staff includes five (5) professional staff members. This number is required to adequately discharge the responsibilities outlined in the statute. Having five (5) will also permit a team of three to conduct an onsite investigation while two (2) continue to receive and respond to complaints received. The volume of complaints may be monitored over a period of time and adjustments made in the number of hotline staff members, as appropriate.

1. The hotline staff will include five (5) full-time bi-lingual (English and Spanish) employees who will work eight hour per day. The hotline personnel will maintain a log of all calls that include date and time of the call, LEA/school cited, person registering the complaint (unless he/she requests not to reveal his/her identity), and a detailed description of the complaint. These employees should have good computer and telephone skills. One of the five shall be designated the lead staff person and will coordinate the activities of the group.
2. The hotline staff will log all calls, but will respond expeditiously to those concerns for which information is readily available.
3. Review Teams, composed of members of the hotline staff, will review and categorize the complaints on a monthly basis. The staff will compile the monthly reports in order to produce an Annual Report to be received by the State Board of Education and submitted to the General Assembly.

4. The Review Teams will prepare reports of the individual complaints and systemic problems (LEA, school and/or classroom) to be sent to the appropriate LEAs so that the LEA also may investigate. These reports will categorize the complaints by LEA and include date/time of complaint, schools cited, if any, person(s) registering the complaint and a description of the complaints. An LEA report will be prepared when at least ten (10) complaints are registered. The completed reports will be reviewed by the coordinator of the hotline staff and submitted to the LEAs, the State Board of Education and the Legislative Commission for Closing the Achievement Gap. A copy of the report shall be provided to the Associate Superintendent for Instructional and Accountability Services.
5. Each LEA shall establish and publicize a contact number and the procedure it will use to receive and respond to concerns at the local level. These procedures shall be submitted to the hotline staff so they will know how to advise callers to access the help provided at the local level.
6. A summary of the documented complaints will be presented to the State Board on a quarterly basis. Systemic (statewide) problems revealed through the complaints will be brought to the State Board's attention on a monthly basis or as necessary. An independent and impartial investigation of systemic problems will be conducted under the direction of the State Board of Education. A sub-committee will be appointed by the State Board. The primary task of the Investigating Committee will be fact finding. The Investigating Committee will be composed of three members of the hotline staff. The Investigating Committee will be provided mediation/facilitation training, receive support and guidance from the DPI legal staff and receive a full orientation to the current educational reform initiatives occurring in North Carolina public schools.
7. Criteria to consider when conducting a fact-finding investigation that assures a fair and impartial examination of a specific problem that has statewide implications:
 - a. LEAs shall receive notification fifteen (15) days prior to the onsite visit.
 - b. The notice should also include a list of the person(s) to be interviewed, and documents to be examined.
 - c. The Investigating Committee shall do some data gathering prior to the onsite visits, when appropriate and necessary.
 - d. The Investigating Committee will organize the data collected from individuals and documents and present a report to the State Board. The report may also include recommendations.
 - e. The State Board will discuss the report and any recommendations given.
 - f. The State Board will decide on an appropriate response to the fact-finding report. Options include: (a) revising an existing State Board policy, (b) establishing a new policy, (c) establishing a new process or procedure, or (d) deciding that no action is needed.

Hotline Budget Plans

Option 1	<u>Traditional Hotline</u>	\$365,755.00
	Five (5) Full-time professional employees salary and benefits (\$73,151.00)	
	One (1) Toll-free hotline installation	\$200.00
	Training	\$2,000.00
	Computers (Five)	\$15,000.00
	Printer (One, networked)	\$4,000.00
	Office supplies	\$3,000.00
	Office Furniture	\$6,500.00
	Desks	
	Chairs, Ergonomic	
	File cabinets (Two)	
	Telephone installation	\$200.00
	Telephones (Five)	\$500.00
	TOTAL	\$397,155.00

Option 2	<u>Hotline that can access up to 148 languages</u>	\$365,755.00
	Five (5) Full-time professional employees salary and benefits (\$73,151.00)	
	One (1) Toll-free hotline installation	\$200.00
	Monthly minimum fee of \$50 or \$2.20 to \$4.50 per minute)	\$600.00
	Training	\$2,000.00
	Computers (Five)	\$15,000.00
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