

How to Handle Complaints of Discrimination in the Onalaska School District

The Onalaska School District strives to have fair and equal treatment of all persons, including employees, students, parents and patrons of the Onalaska School District. This document and attachment is for setting forth procedures for making a complaint by parents, employees, and others in the Onalaska School District regarding discrimination.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is the unfair or unequal treatment of a person or a group because they are part of a defined group, known as a *protected class*. Discrimination can occur when a person is treated differently, or denied access to programs, services or activities because they are part of a protected class. Discrimination can also occur when a school or a school district fails to accommodate a student or employee's disability.

Harassment (based on protected class) and sexual harassment can be forms of discrimination when it creates a hostile environment.

What is a Protected Class?

A protected class is a group of people who share common characteristics and are protected from discrimination and harassment by federal and state laws. Protected classes defined by Washington State Law include:

- Sex
- Race/Color
- Creed/Religion
- National Origin
- Disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal
- Sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity
- Honorably discharged veteran or military status

What Should I do if I believe my child or I am being discriminated against?

You should report your concerns to your child's teacher or to the building principal immediately. This will allow the school to respond to the situation as soon as possible. If you cannot meet with the teacher or principal, you may contact your school district's main office. Each school district has someone responsible for responding to complaints about discrimination. In Onalaska School District, this is the Onalaska Superintendent, who also has the job of Title IX Coordinator.

If the problem cannot be resolved with a meeting, you have the right to file a complaint with the Onalaska School District. You can file a formal complaint by writing a letter to the Superintendent that describes what happened and why you think it is discrimination. It is helpful to include what you want the district to do to resolve this complaint.

What will the District and the Superintendent Do?

Attached is the process used by the district to address complaints of discrimination. The attachment shows how to first address the concern with the Onalaska Superintendent. If it is not resolved with the Superintendent, then you have the right to appeal to the School Board. If it is not resolved with the School Board, you have the right to appeal the Board's decision to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Each of these steps and timelines is laid out in the attachment A.