

Notifying School Administrators of Harassment Concerns

The following are 10 suggested steps to follow when parents choose to formally notify school administrators about their concern of harassment based on the child's disability.

1. In writing, address the notification to a specific person and date the letter.
2. Write the letter to a person who has the authority to investigate and the authority to correct the wrong.
3. Note that the school district is a recipient of federal financial assistance.
4. State the past or continuing discriminatory activity against your child.
5. State that the school district has control over both the site of the discrimination and over any school personnel involved.
6. Explain that the discrimination was not a single act but was severe and pervasive.
7. Tell how the discrimination excluded your child from continued participation in school or denied your child the benefits to which other students in school have access.
8. Explain, as well as you can, what you would like the school to do to stop the discrimination or to remediate the harm the discrimination has done to your child.
9. Ask for a copy of a school district grievance procedure under Section 504 (even if your child has an IEP under IDEA). Not having this information may result in continued discrimination.
10. State that if the person receiving this letter does not investigate or does not take effective corrective action, that you may claim that the district showed deliberate indifference to the discrimination. *You may also want to add a date you expect to hear back from the district in regards to your letter.*

These steps are adapted from attorney Reed Martin's "10 steps to making a successful complaint". This information is educational and not intended to be legal advice. Reed Martin is an attorney with over 34 years experience in special education law and recognized as one of the nation's leading experts. He can be reached through email at connie@reedmartin.com or www.reedmartin.com

Discussion Tip: In what situations might a formal complaint be the most effective? In what situations might a more informal approach be effective?

