



## Preparing for a Disciplinary Hearing Parent and Student Guide

### What to Expect

- Disciplinary hearings are not formal legal proceedings. There is not a courtroom or judge. Each district differs in how they handle hearings, but there should be an impartial hearing officer. There is usually a panel of decision-makers that may include school administrators, school board members and/or community member.
- The hearing officer should explain how they will run the hearing. Again, it differs by district. Typically, the school administrator will share their recommendation and evidence first. Then the student will have a chance to speak. The student does not have to speak.
- After the student and parent speaks, your advocate or support people may speak. You may want to share letters from support people.
- The hearing panel may then have questions for the student about the incident.
- Typically, students are allowed to speak one last time.
- The panel may deliberate with the family in the room or may ask you to leave.
- Decisions are sometimes shared at that time or may be shared with the family later.
- Hearings typically last 60-90 minutes.

### Checklist for Families

- Do you have the disciplinary packet with all of the evidence (student statements)? Have they provided the [7 factor checklist](#), required by law? Families should get this before the hearing.
- Have you reviewed the code of conduct? It should define the infraction, tell you the range of disciplinary action allowed and protections you have.
- Please ask 2-3 people to write a statement of support for the student. These can include coaches, religious leaders, mentors, extended family members, teachers, etc. If you don't have an advocate, invite 1-2 supporters to come with you.
- If there is concern about safety, try contacting a mental health provider for a safety assessment in writing that you can bring to the hearing.
- The student should prepare his or her statement. (template follows)
- Parents should prepare their statements. (template follows)
- Plan to dress nicely. Dress pants or khakis, dress shirt tucked in, tie if possible. No hats.



### **Student Statement Prompts**

*Students are not required to speak but are strongly encouraged to do so. Students should at least write notes ahead of time and practice their statements several times before the hearing.*

**My Name is ...**

**I am sorry for ...**

**If I could do everything all over again, I would ...**

**I have learned ....**

**If I come back to school, things will be different because I ...**

**I want to come back to school because ...**

**Thank you again for your time.  
Again, I am very sorry and I hope I can come back to school.**



## **Parent Statement Prompts**

*Parents are not required to speak, but we typically encourage it. Parents often become very emotional or feel too angry to speak, so if you do want to speak, please consider writing your statement in advance. You can always submit your written comments if you are unable to speak out loud.*

### **Introduce yourself and your child. What do the panelists need to know about your child?**

*Example: My son is a kind, caring young man, who loves Pokemon and playing with his friends. He has struggled with ADHD and getting bullied in school, but he typically gets along with his peers. He is not a violent kid.*

**Note that you do not want to excuse the behavior but explain what happened that day from your perspective. Is there more to the story you feel the panel should know? Did a suspected or diagnosed disability impact this behavior at all?**

**How has this incident impacted your child? How has it impacted your family?**

### **Explain what you have done in response to this incident.**

*Example: Multiple serious conversations, seen therapist more often, had a med review, signed up for substance abuse assessment.*



**What has your child learned from this incident from your perspective? How can the panel be certain it will not happen again?**

**Describe your request for action from the panel. Do you think your child would do better in an alternative setting? Do you think your child can be successful in that school but needs a behavior plan? Would community service help?**

**Explain your hopes and dreams for your child and what this particular school means to him and your family.**



### **“Cross Examination” Questions**

*Every disciplinary hearing is unique and questions will be specific to the incident, but here are common questions we hear that students should be prepared to answer.*

**What were you thinking?**

**Didn't you know this was against the rules? If so, why did you do it?**

**You say this was a one-time thing, but how do we know that?**

**How do we know it's safe to bring you back to school?**

**What specifically are you doing to do differently if we let you back into school?**