

How to File a Charter School / Authorizer Complaint

This document explains how to file a complaint with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) about possible violations of state law. The complaint system is free. The intention of this document is to provide helpful, general information to the public. It does not constitute legal advice nor is it a substitute for consulting with a licensed attorney. The information below should not be relied upon as a comprehensive or definitive response to your specific legal situation. This document may not include a complete rendition of applicable state and federal law.

STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE FILING A COMPLAINT

Before filing a complaint, MDE encourages parents or other persons to first contact the school board and/or authorizer, who may be able to help resolve the issue. View the [Charter School](#) or [Authorizer list](#).

If your complaint involves bullying, please contact MDE's [School Safety Division](#) instead of filing a complaint with the charter school division.

WHO MAY FILE A COMPLAINT?

Anyone, including an organization, may file a complaint with MDE.

WHAT TYPES OF CONCERNS HAVE PEOPLE EXPRESSED ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS / AUTHORIZERS THROUGH THE COMPLAINT PROCESS?

The following are examples of the types of issues that MDE has addressed through the complaint system:

- Does the charter school have a properly constituted school board?
- Is the charter school using an improper admission policy or procedure?
- Are the charter school's board members trained?
- Were the charter school board elections timely and properly conducted?
- Is the authorizer providing appropriate oversight and monitoring of its charter school(s)?

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT

[Use the online form to submit a complaint to MDE](#). By selecting the "submit" button on the form, you have filed your complaint electronically with MDE.

If you do not have access or the ability to submit the form electronically, you can provide a signed, written statement.

WRITTEN STATEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Include your name, address and telephone number in addition to the name of the charter school and/or authorizer. Your written complaint must include specific facts supporting the claim that a charter school and/or authorizer has violated a requirement of state charter law along with a proposed resolution to the alleged violation.

WHERE TO SEND THE WRITTEN, SIGNED COMPLAINT

By mail or in person:

Minnesota Department of Education
Attn: Phillip J. Trobaugh, Charter School Liaison
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, Minnesota 55113-4266

By fax:

Attn: Phillip J. Trobaugh, Charter School Liaison
Fax number: 651-582-8291

WHAT DOES MDE DO ONCE IT RECEIVES THE COMPLAINT?

- When MDE receives the written complaint, the Charter School Liaison (CSL) reviews the written complaint to determine the issues for investigation.
- The CSL will contact the person who filed the complaint to acknowledge receipt and to discuss the claims, facts, or issues and may amend the complaint based on this discussion.
- For complaints related to a specific charter school, the CSL will send an issue letter to the authorizer (copying the charter school board chair) with details about the original written complaint and any new information or allegations determined through discussions with the complainant. The Complainant will also receive a copy of this issue letter.
- During the investigation, the CSL will, among other things:
 1. Contact staff from the authorizer / charter school to get additional information or assist in resolving the disagreement.
 2. Determine whether the investigation requires phone contacts, requests for written documentation, on-site reviews, interviews, consultations with educational specialists or other methods needed to successfully resolve the complaint.
- The CSL will review all relevant information and MDE will make an independent determination as to whether the charter school / authorizer violated state laws or rules.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR MDE TO RESOLVE THE COMPLAINT?

MDE generally has 60 business days to resolve the complaint. This timeline starts the day MDE receives the written letter of complaint. MDE may extend this 60-day timeline.

HOW DO I GET THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION?

MDE writes a final determination and sends a copy to all parties.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MDE FINDS LEGAL VIOLATIONS?

If the charter school / authorizer committed violations that require corrective action, MDE can take a number of steps, such as alerting the charter school's authorizer of such violations and recommending corrective steps. In some situations, MDE has authority to withhold funds from a charter school, and/or terminate the contract between the charter school and authorizer.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information, you may call MDE at 651-582-8597 or go to the [Minnesota Department of Education, Charter Center web page](#).