

### Formal Process continued

The next step in the formal process is a review by the appropriate director or supervisor. Upon receipt of the referral, the director or supervisor will:

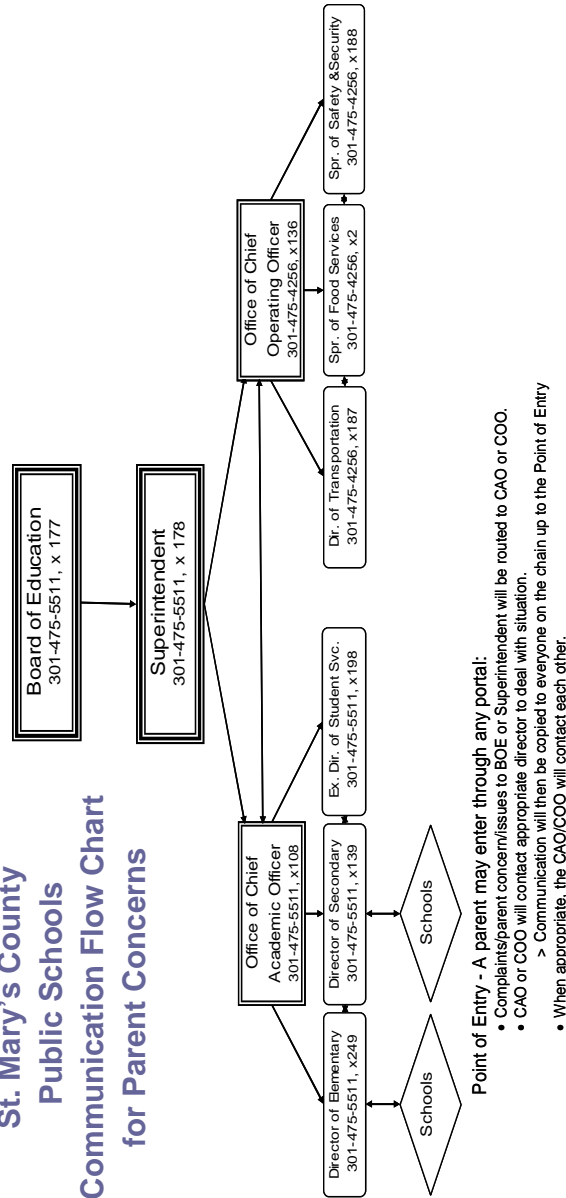
- Contact the parent
- Confer with the parent, principal, and other appropriate staff members regarding the concern
- Document any decisions or agreements made and forward copies to the principal and parent within five school days, or sooner, of receipt of documentation from the principal

If the parent is not satisfied with the decision of the director or supervisor, the parent or guardian may request that the matter be reviewed by the Chief Operating Officer (COO) or the Chief Academic Officer (CAO). A parent desiring this review must submit a written request to the office of either officer. The written request should outline the current concern or issue and identify any specific outcome or relief desired by the parent or guardian.

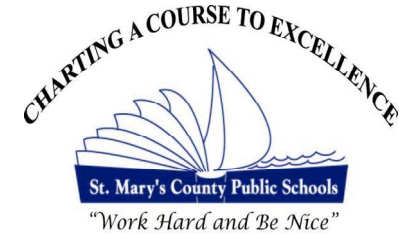
If the parent is not satisfied with the decision of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) or the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), the parent or guardian may request that the matter be reviewed by the Superintendent of Schools.

The processes outlined in this brochure are to serve as a guide and are not to be used for resolving complaints that are specifically governed by other existing laws or local regulations or appeals filed under Section 4-205 of the Education Articles of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

**St. Mary's County  
Public Schools  
Communication Flow Chart  
for Parent Concerns**



# A Parent's Guide to Resolving School Concerns and Complaints



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## What to do when you have a concern...

All St. Mary's County Public School System (SMCPS) employees are committed to parental, family, and community involvement in the educational process. We believe that our staff should encourage and engage parents, families, and community members as partners in educating our children. Together we can ensure success in school.

It is recognized that there will be times when a parent, guardian, or custodian may need to ask school system employees to address a concern.

**This brochure outlines the role of each individual and the steps to follow when addressing school-based concerns.** We will continually strive to resolve all inquiries or problems as quickly as possible so that we can reach a mutual understanding that serves in the best interest of every SMCPS student.

**When a concern or issue develops, we encourage parents and guardians to direct their concerns to the school staff member most closely involved in the issue.** Communications and understanding of all perspectives are important in developing a fair and mutually beneficial solution to any concern. Every effort should be made to work with the school-based staff and administration to resolve problems and concerns. This informal process is designed to quickly address concerns. If this informal process fails to provide a resolution, a parent or guardian may choose to file a formal complaint and seek review at a higher administrative level. Both processes should always protect the confidentiality and preserve the dignity of everyone involved.

### Informal Process

The first step to resolving concerns and issues is to address them with the school staff member who is most closely and directly involved.

Through a process of cooperative agreement, the affected individuals can usually reach a mutually effective resolution.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the parent(s) should be referred to the school's administrative team (the principal or assistant principal).

The second step in resolving the concern is to contact a member of the school's administrative team. The school-based administrator will take into consideration the needs of all parties as well as all applicable SMCPS policies and procedures. The administrator will confirm that the parent has attempted to resolve the issue or concern with the classroom teacher or other school-based staff member, as appropriate.

If the concern requires the involvement of other central administration departments, the administrator will assist the parent in accessing the appropriate office.

Central administration personnel will respond to the parent within three school days, or sooner, and inform the school based administration of the response.

If the concern has not been resolved through the informal process, the parent or guardian may request a meeting with the school principal to initiate the formal process.

### Formal Process

The first step in the formal process is to request a meeting with the school administrator or principal. During this meeting, the facts and circumstances surrounding the concern should be outlined in writing. The principal or his/her designee will contact the parent within three school days, or sooner, to arrange a mutually agreed upon meeting date and time. The principal or designee will furnish the parent with a copy of this brochure and explain the formal process.

After the meeting, the principal will document any agreements that are made between parties and summarize the outcome of the meeting in writing, identifying each area of agreement, and detail any future steps to address any unresolved issues.

The principal or his/her designee will contact the parent within five school days, or sooner, to follow-up with the parent and identify any further action that needs to be taken.

If the concern still remains unresolved or the concern directly involves the principal, the parent will be referred to the appropriate director or supervisor. The principal will forward any and all supporting documents regarding the concern to the appropriate director or supervisor. Parents may and will be encouraged to submit applicable documentation to the appropriate director or supervisor.