



SAES Grievances Regarding Accredited Schools Policy (Revised June 2023)

Members of the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES) are expected to operate in accordance with SAES Membership Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

Accredited member schools are typically governed such that there are multiple levels at which to resolve a concern or complaint. It is likely, therefore, that a person or persons with complaints about a school will be able to resolve any concerns with a school at one level or another within the school itself. Accordingly, SAES will not investigate complaints unless all means and levels of appeal have been exhausted at any given school.

SAES understands that a person or persons who believe(s) they were seriously wronged by a school has the right to file litigation against a school or to ask the police or other relevant governmental agency or other authority to investigate. SAES will take no action, including investigative action, other than reporting obligations that may arise on any complaint while the matter is under investigation by police or governmental or other authority, litigation or threatened litigation, or judicial consideration.

In the event that a complainant has exhausted all avenues of communication at a school, and the matter is not under investigation by police or governmental or other authority, litigation or threatened litigation, or judicial consideration, SAES may review the issue if lodged by a formal complaint. The decision to review the complaint is wholly at SAES's discretion, and SAES is under no obligation to act as an arbiter of the merits of such complaint.

As an accrediting association, SAES is concerned that each of its schools acts in the best interests of its students and families as defined by the mission of the school and the standards of the Association. Therefore, if SAES decides to investigate a complaint brought to it, it will only inquire about complaints that are substantially supported by valid allegations of pervasive practices that could seriously impair the quality and effectiveness of an institution's program and operations, and which are in conflict with either the Membership Requirements and/or Accreditation Standards of the association. SAES will not intervene on behalf of individuals concerned about specific, singular incidents that may have remedy within the organization's governance or administrative structures.

If the alleged circumstances appear to be both contrary to Membership Requirements and/or Accreditation Standards and of a pervasive nature, SAES may at its sole discretion initiate a confidential inquiry (described below) with the knowledge of and in consultation with the appropriate parties at the school or organization. Findings will be reported to the SAES Standards Committee of the Board of Directors for its consideration. Should SAES's deliberations lead to an adverse recommendation for a change of the institution's membership and/or accreditation status, the institution has available to it the appeals procedure established and published in the SAES Accreditation Handbook.

Because SAES is an accreditation association, the only actions that SAES can take resulting from a complaint are those pertaining to the school's accreditation status. SAES cannot redress a grievance resulting from a decision at a school or an action, or inaction, except through accreditation. SAES will only review complaints related to schools that are both members of and accredited by SAES.

Guideline for Receiving and Reviewing Complaints

1. A complaint describing the allegations against an SAES accredited member must be submitted electronically via an email delivered to grievance@swaes.org, or via a written, signed, dated, and received at the SAES office address. The official grievance must include an appropriately signed and dated copy of the attached release and waiver.
2. A properly submitted complaint received by the SAES office will be acknowledged in writing via email or return mail and initially reviewed by the Executive Director in consultation with the SAES Board President, the Director of Accreditation, and/or the Standards Committee Chair.
3. If, as a result of these reviews, the complaint is determined to be outside of the scope of the policies, practices, or purview of the association, the complainant will be so informed in writing and, as appropriate, directed to the person or persons who might be able to address the complaint.
4. If, as a result of these reviews, the complaint is determined to be within the scope of the association's policies, practices, or purview, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the chief administrative officer of the institution who will be asked to respond to the complaint and notify the association of its response in writing within 30 days.
 - If the chief administrative officer of the school is the subject of the complaint, the executive director will send it to the organization's board chair, vice-chair or other board officer who will also be asked to respond to the complaint and notify the association of its response within 30 days.
5. The executive director of SAES will review the response from the institution with the Director of Accreditation, the SAES Board's Executive Committee, and/or the Standards Committee Chair, which will decide that the matter be a) closed, b) redirected to another party for further action or c) referred to the full Standards Committee for review and response.

6. Within 90 days, the Standards Committee will review the referred complaint and consider possible actions to be taken. The Standards Committee may recommend to the SAES Board certain actions which may include taking no action (b) asking the school to submit a written explanation and status report of the area of concern, (c) recommending a change of the institution's membership and/or accreditation status, (d) giving the institution a condition until such time as the Standards Committee determines that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved. Within 30 days of a SAES Board meeting related to the complaint, the institution will be informed in writing about the action(s), if any, recommended by the Standards Committee and approved by the SAES Board
 - In the case that a complaint or grievance involves an SAES Board Member or Standards Committee Member or his/her school, the SAES Board Member or Committee Member will be required to recuse him or herself from all Board and/or Committee discussions, deliberations and votes related to the grievance.
7. At any point in the process, the complaint may also be referred to SAES legal counsel, law enforcement authorities, and/or other authorities depending on the nature of the complaint and/or evidence provided.
8. Any decisions may be appealed, in writing, to the Executive Committee of the SAES Board, whose word is final.

RELEASE AND WAIVER

I, the undersigned individual(s), hereby request that the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (“SAES”) investigate a complaint that I have against a member school that has been accredited by SAES. The name of the school and its address is:

In consideration of SAES’s receipt, processing, and possible investigation (if any) of my complaint, I unconditionally waive and release SAES, its officers, board members, committee members, employees, volunteers, agents, insurers and lawyers from any and all claims, causes of action, suits, damages, rights to attorney fees, and demands whatsoever in law or equity by reason of any matter, cause or thing whatsoever, and particularly, but without limitation of the foregoing general terms, by reason of any claims or actions arising from any federal or state statutory claim, local ordinance, or common law, including any form of alleged negligence, invasion of privacy, defamation, libel, slander, breach of confidentiality, breach of contract, fraud, misrepresentation, tort, emotional distress, breach of fiduciary duty, or any other types of claims known or unknown. I expressly acknowledge and agree that the information that I have submitted to SAES may be disclosed to the school or individuals against whom I have asserted the claims, SAES’s Board and Committees, its member schools, employees, volunteers, lawyers, insurers, investigators, and other third parties, and that I have no reasonable expectation of privacy in the information I have given or that I may later be asked to share with SAES or others. I further acknowledge that this Waiver and Release is intended to operate to bar any past claims I may have as well as any claims that may arise as a result of my communications with SAES or others relating to my complaint submitted to SAES whether or not presently known to exist and whether or not I fully appreciate the nature of any potential claims.

I further agree that if the complaint I have submitted to SAES involves my child/children or a child or children over whom I have legal authority, this Release and Waiver applies equally and unconditionally to waive any claims he, she, or they may have against SAES. Additionally, I hereby consent to the school against which my complaint is made, releasing to SAES any and all information related to me, my family, my minor child, my complaint and/or our relationship with or enrollment at the school.

I further acknowledge that SAES has not promised to investigate my claim. Moreover, even if SAES does investigate my claim, SAES may not notify me of the result of the investigation or action taken (if any).

Names and ages of children involved in complaint. (This must be completed for the complaint to be considered).

Name:

Age: _____

Name:

Age: _____

Name:

Age: _____

Name:

Age: _____

Executed by:

Name 1: _____

Individually and as Parent or Legal Guardian of: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name 2: _____

Individually and as Parent or Legal Guardian of: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____