

R277. Education, Administration.

R277-211. Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission (UPPAC), Rules of Procedure: Notification to Educators, Complaints and Final Disciplinary Actions.

R277-211-1. Authority, Purpose, and Oversight Category.

- (1) This rule is authorized by:
 - (a) Utah Constitution Article X, Section 3, which vests general control and supervision over public education in the Board;
 - (b) Section 53E-6-506, which directs the Board to adopt rules regarding UPPAC duties and procedures; and
 - (c) Subsection 53E-3-401(4), which allows the Board to make rules to execute the Board's duties and responsibilities under the Utah Constitution and state law.
- (2) The purpose of this rule is to provide procedures regarding:
 - (a) notifications of alleged educator misconduct;
 - (b) review of notifications by UPPAC; and
 - (c) complaints, consents to discipline, and defaults.
- (3) Title 63G, Chapter 4, Administrative Procedures Act, does not apply to this rule under the exemption of Subsection 63G-4-102(2)(d).
- (4) This rule is categorized as exempt as described in Rule R277-111.

R277-211-2. Initiating Proceedings Against Educators.

- (1)(a) The Executive Secretary shall refer a case to UPPAC to make a determination if an investigation should be opened regarding an educator upon receiving a notification of alleged educator misconduct implicating a violation of Rule R277-217, Educator Standards, or Utah law.
- (b) The Executive Secretary may refer a case to UPPAC upon the Executive Secretary's own initiative.
- (2) If an informant seeks to report information to UPPAC concerning alleged educator misconduct, the informant shall submit an allegation of misconduct to the Executive Secretary in writing, including the following:
 - (a) the informant's:
 - (i) name;

- (ii) position, such as administrator, teacher, parent, or student;
- (iii) telephone number;
- (iv) address; and
- (v) contact information;
- (b) information about the educator against whom the allegation is made:
 - (i) name;
 - (ii) position, such as administrator, teacher, candidate; and
 - (iii) school or LEA; and
- (c) the facts on which the allegation is based and supporting information.

(3) If an informant submits a written allegation of misconduct as provided in this rule, the Executive Secretary shall notify the informant of a final action taken by the Board regarding the allegation.

(4)(a) Proceedings initiated upon the Executive Secretary's own initiative may be based on information received through a telephone call, letter, newspaper article, media information, notice from another state, or by other means.

(b) The Executive Secretary may also recommend an investigation based on an anonymous allegation, notwithstanding the provisions of this rule, if the allegation bears sufficient indicia of reliability.

(5)(a) The USBE Internal Audit Department shall refer to UPPAC and the LEA any complaint against an educator that would violate Rule R277-217, Educator Standards, or Utah law.

(b) The Executive Secretary shall consult with the educator's LEA and request any relevant evidence from an educator's LEA concerning a complaint referred under Subsection (5)(a).

(6) If an investigation is opened or an expedited hearing is conducted under this rule, the Executive Secretary shall permanently maintain all written allegations, subsequent dismissals, actions, or disciplinary letters related to a case against an educator in the UPPAC case file.

R277-211-3. Review of Notification of Alleged Educator Misconduct.

(1)(a) Upon receipt of a notification of alleged educator misconduct, the Executive Secretary shall review the notification with UPPAC and UPPAC may:

(i) dismiss the matter if the alleged misconduct does not involve an issue that UPPAC should address;

(ii) recommend an expedited hearing as described in Sections R277-211-5; or

(iii) open an investigation if the alleged misconduct involves an issue that warrants investigation by UPPAC.

(b) In considering whether to open a case regarding an allegation of educator misconduct, UPPAC shall consider the known facts and circumstances surrounding the allegation to determine whether opening a case is warranted.

(c) UPPAC shall open a case most readily when the evidence shows that:

(i) the alleged misconduct involves the physical or emotional safety and well-being of a student;

(ii) the alleged misconduct had a highly visible impact on the educator's school community;

(iii) the alleged misconduct has the potential to damage the integrity of the education profession;

(iv) the educator's LEA recommends the Board investigate the matter; or

(v) the educator has received prior UPPAC discipline.

(2)(a) Before a UPPAC investigator's initiation of an investigation, the Executive Secretary shall send an investigative letter to the following:

(i) the educator to be investigated;

(ii) the LEA that employs the educator; and

(iii) the LEA where the alleged activity occurred.

(b) The Executive Secretary shall place a flag on the educator's CACTUS file after:

(i) sending the educator an investigative letter; and

(ii) directing UPPAC staff to begin gathering evidence relating to the allegations.

(c) The Executive Secretary may not place a flag on an educator's CACTUS file if the educator agrees to an expedited hearing under Section R277-211-5 unless the expedited hearing panel recommends a full investigation.

(3)(a) The investigator shall review relevant documentation and interview individuals who may have knowledge of the allegations.

(b) The investigator shall prepare an objective and independent investigative report supported by the evidence and Rule R277-215 including:

- (i) the findings of the investigation;
- (ii) the educator standards that the educator may have violated; and
- (iii) the applicable disciplinary presumptions.

(c) If the investigator discovers additional evidence of unprofessional conduct beyond the original allegations, the investigator may include the additional evidence of misconduct in the investigative report provided that the educator has had the opportunity to respond to the additional evidence.

(d) The investigator shall submit the investigative report to the Executive Secretary.

(e) The Executive Secretary shall add the investigative report described in Subsection (3)(d) to a UPPAC meeting agenda.

(f) The investigative report described in Subsection (3)(d) shall become part of the UPPAC case file.

(4) The investigator may prioritize an investigation over other longer pending cases if:

- (a) the educator poses an ongoing risk to students;
- (b) the case needs to be expedited to accommodate a crucial witness;
- (c) the ongoing investigation creates unusual uncertainty for the educator's LEA or community;
- (d) the educator is unemployed as a result of the allegations; or
- (e) the educator requests expedited consideration for good cause.

(5) UPPAC shall review the investigative report and take one of the following actions:

- (a) Recommend that the Board clear the CACTUS flag and take no action; or
- (b) make an initial recommendation consistent with the evidence and Rule R277-215.

- (6) After receiving an initial recommendation from UPPAC for action, the Executive Secretary shall:
- (a) prepare and serve a complaint; or
 - (b) negotiate and prepare a proposed consent to discipline.
- (7) Upon request of an educator, UPPAC will provide a copy of the UPPAC case file and UPPAC evidence file to the educator.

R277-211-4. Expedited Hearings on Criminal Charges in lieu of Initial UPPAC Review.

(1) In a case involving the report of an arrest, citation, or charge of an educator, which requires self-reporting by the educator under Section R277-217-4, the Executive Secretary, with the consent of the educator, may schedule the matter for an expedited hearing in lieu of initially referring the matter to UPPAC.

(2)(a) The Executive Secretary shall hold an expedited hearing within 60 days of the criminal court disposition, unless otherwise agreed upon by both parties.

(b) An expedited hearing panel shall conduct an expedited hearing on a criminal charge and include the following additional invited individuals where possible:

- (i) the educator;
- (ii) the educator's attorney or representative;
- (iii) a UPPAC attorney; and
- (iv) a representative of the educator's LEA.

(3) The panel may consider the following matters at an expedited hearing on a criminal charge:

- (a) an educator's oral or written explanation of the events;
- (b) a police report;
- (c) a court docket or transcript;
- (d) an LEA's investigative report or employment file; and
- (e) additional information offered by a participant in the expedited hearing if the Executive Secretary deems it probative of the issues at the expedited hearing.

(4) After reviewing the evidence described in Subsection (3), the expedited hearing panel shall make written findings and a recommendation to UPPAC consistent with the evidence and Rule R277-215 to do one of the following:

- (a) close the case;
- (b) close the case upon completion of court requirements;
- (c) recommend that the Board issue a letter of education or letter of warning;
- (d) open a full investigation; or
- (e) recommend action by the Board, subject to an educator's due process rights under Rule 277-210 through Rule R277-217.

(5) An expedited hearing on a criminal charge may be recorded, but the testimony from the expedited hearing is inadmissible during a future UPPAC action related to the allegation unless the educator stipulates to admitting the recording.

(6) If the Board fails to adopt UPPAC's recommendation, UPPAC may open a full investigation or issue a complaint.

(7) An expedited hearing panel may proceed under this section with only two voting panel members with the stipulation of the educator.

R277-211-5. Expedited Hearings on Minor Violations of the Educator Standards.

(1) Upon review of an allegation of educator misconduct, UPPAC may recommend conducting an expedited hearing if:

- (a) the material evidence provided by the informant does not appear to be disputed;
- (b) the allegations, if true, implicate the presumption for a letter of warning under Subsection R277-215-2(8); and
- (c) the educator consents to participate.

(2) If an educator elects not to participate in an expedited hearing after UPPAC opens a case, the Executive Secretary shall initiate an investigation into the allegations of misconduct with no prejudice to the educator for not participating in the expedited hearing.

(3) At an expedited hearing under this section, an expedited hearing panel shall conduct the hearing and include the following invited individuals where possible:

- (a) the educator;
 - (b) the educator's attorney or representative;
 - (c) a UPPAC attorney; and
 - (d) an administrator from the educator's school or LEA.
- (4) At an expedited hearing under this section, the panel may consider:
- (a) an educator's oral or written explanation of the events;
 - (b) an LEA's investigative report or employment file, including witness statements; and
 - (c) additional information proffered by a participant in the expedited hearing if the Executive Secretary deems it probative of the issues at the expedited hearing.
- (5) After reviewing the evidence described in Subsection (4), the expedited hearing panel shall make written findings and a recommendation consistent with the evidence and Rule R277-215 to do one of the following:
- (a) close the case;
 - (b) close the case upon completion of recommended training or other educator requirements;
 - (c) issue a letter of education or letter of warning; or
 - (d) open a full investigation.
- (6) If an expedited hearing panel recommends a full investigation be opened, the Executive Secretary shall follow the requirements set forth in Subsection R277-211-3(2).
- (7) An expedited hearing under this section may be recorded.
- (8) Testimony offered at an expedited hearing may be considered in a subsequent report to UPPAC or hearing.
- (9) An expedited hearing panel may proceed under this section with only two voting panel members with the stipulation of the educator.

R277-211-6. Complaints.

- (1) If UPPAC determines that an allegation is sufficiently supported by evidence discovered in the investigation, the Executive Secretary may direct the UPPAC attorney to serve a complaint upon the educator being investigated.

(2) At a minimum, a complaint shall include:

(a) a statement of legal authority and jurisdiction under which the action is being taken;

(b) a statement of the facts and allegations upon which the complaint is based;

(c) other information necessary to enable the respondent to understand and address the allegations;

(d) a statement of the potential consequences if an allegation is found to be true or substantially true;

(e) a statement that the respondent shall answer the complaint and request a hearing, if desired, within 30 days of the date the complaint is mailed to the respondent;

(f) a statement that the respondent shall file a written answer described in Subsection (2)(e) with the Executive Secretary;

(g) a statement advising the respondent that if the respondent fails to respond within 30 days, the Executive Secretary may issue a default order in accordance with Section R277-211-8;

(h) a statement that, if a hearing is requested, the hearing will be scheduled no less than 45 days, nor more than 180 days, after receipt of the respondent's answer, unless a different date is agreed to by both parties in writing;

(i) a copy of the applicable hearing rules as required by Section 53E-6-607; and

(j) if the respondent is not represented by counsel, a written guide to help the respondent understand the UPPAC investigation and hearing process.

(3) On the Executive Secretary's own motion, the Executive Secretary, or the Executive Secretary's designee, with notice to the parties, may reschedule a hearing date.

(4)(a) A respondent may file an answer to a complaint by filing a written response signed by the respondent or the respondent's attorney with the Executive Secretary within 30 days after the complaint is mailed.

(b) The answer shall include:

(i) a request for a hearing;

(ii) the file number of the complaint;

(iii) the names of the parties; and

(iv) the relief that the respondent seeks at a hearing.

(c) As an alternative to filing an answer, the respondent may file a voluntary surrender pursuant to Rule R277-216.

(5)(a) The Executive Secretary shall schedule a hearing, if requested by the respondent, in accordance with Subsection (2)(h) and Rule R277-212.

(b) If the parties can reach an agreement before the hearing consistent with the terms of UPPAC's initial recommendation, the UPPAC attorney may negotiate a proposed consent to discipline with the respondent.

(c) A proposed consent to discipline described in Subsection (5)(b) shall be submitted to the Board for the Board's consideration in accordance with Section R277-211-7.

(6)(a) If a respondent does not respond to the complaint within 30 days, the Executive Secretary may initiate default proceedings in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section R277-211-8.

(b) If the Executive Secretary enters an order of default, the Executive Secretary shall make a recommendation to the Board for discipline consistent with the evidence and Rule R277-215.

R277-211-7. Proposed Consent to Discipline.

(1) At any time after UPPAC has made an initial recommendation, a respondent may accept UPPAC's initial recommendation, rather than request a hearing, by entering into a proposed consent to discipline.

(2) By entering into a proposed consent to discipline, a respondent waives the respondent's right to a hearing to contest the recommended disposition, contingent on final approval by the Board.

(3) At a minimum, a proposed consent to discipline shall include:

(a) a summary of the facts, the allegations, the presumption described in Rule R277-215, mitigating or aggravating factors described in Rule R277-215, and the evidence relied upon by UPPAC in its recommendation;

(b) a statement that the respondent admits or does not contest the facts recited in the proposed consent to discipline for purposes of the Board administrative action;

- (c) a statement that the respondent:
 - (i) waives the respondent's right to a hearing to contest the allegations that gave rise to the investigation; and
 - (ii) agrees to the proposed action rather than contest the allegations;
- (d) a statement that the respondent agrees to the terms of the proposed consent to discipline and other provisions applicable to the case, such as remediation, assessment and recommended counseling, restitution, rehabilitation, and other conditions, if any, under which the respondent may request a reinstatement hearing or a removal of the reprimand;
- (e) a statement that the action and the proposed consent to discipline shall be reported to other states through the NASDTEC Educator Information Clearinghouse;
- (f) a statement that respondent waives the respondent's right to contest the facts stated in the proposed consent to discipline at a subsequent reinstatement hearing, if any;
- (g) a statement that all records related to the proposed consent to discipline shall remain permanently in the UPPAC case file;
- (h) a statement reflecting the classification of the proposed consent to discipline under Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act;
- (i) a statement that information regarding the proposed reprimand, suspension, or revocation may be included in an online licensing database that is available for public access in accordance with Rule R277-312.
- (j) a statement that a violation of the terms of an approved consent to discipline may result in additional disciplinary action and may affect the reinstatement process; and
- (k) a statement that the educator understands that the Board is not bound by UPPAC's recommendation or the negotiated proposed consent to discipline unless the Board approves the proposed consent to discipline;
 - (l) if for a suspension of the educator's license:
 - (i) specific conditions that an educator must satisfy before requesting a reinstatement hearing; and

(ii) a minimum time period that must elapse before the educator may request a reinstatement hearing;

(m) if for suspension or revocation of a license, a statement that the respondent may not work or volunteer in a public school in accordance with Subsection 53E-6-603(3); and

(n) if for suspension or revocation of a license, a statement that any attempt to represent to any other state a valid Utah license shall result in further licensing action in Utah.

(4)(a) The Executive Secretary shall forward a proposed consent to discipline to the Board for approval.

(b) If the Board does not approve a proposed consent to discipline, the Board may:

(i)(A) remand the case to UPPAC and shall include issues or questions that need to be addressed;

(B) offer respondent the opportunity for a hearing; or

(C) provide alternative terms and disposition to the Executive Secretary, consistent with the available evidence and presumptions described in Rule R277-215, that would be satisfactory to the Board to be submitted to the educator for consideration;

(ii) direct the Executive Secretary to issue a letter of education, letter of warning, or dismiss the matter; or

(iii) take other appropriate action consistent with due process and Rule R277-215.

(5) If the respondent accepts a consent to discipline with alternative terms and disposition proposed by the Board, the consent to discipline, as modified, is a final Board administrative action without further Board consideration.

(6) If the terms approved by the Board are rejected by the respondent, the proceedings shall continue from the point under these procedures at which the agreement was negotiated, as if the consent to discipline had not been submitted.

(7) If the Board remands to UPPAC to provide respondent the opportunity for a hearing under Subsection (4)(b)(i)(B), the Executive Secretary shall:

- (a) notify the parties of the decision;
- (b) direct a UPPAC attorney to issue a complaint; and
- (c) direct the proceedings as if the proposed consent to discipline had not been submitted.

(8) If the Board approves a proposed consent to discipline, the approval is a final Board administrative action and the Executive Secretary shall:

- (a) notify the parties of the decision;
- (b) update CACTUS to reflect the action;
- (c) report the action to the NASDTEC Educator Information Clearinghouse if the agreement results in:
 - (i) a revocation;
 - (ii) a suspension; or
 - (iii) a reprimand;
- (d) direct the appropriate penalties to begin; and
- (e) notify the LEAs throughout the state.

R277-211-8. Default Procedures.

(1) If a respondent does not respond to a complaint within 30 days from the date the complaint is served, the Executive Secretary may issue an order of default against the respondent consistent with the following:

(a) the Executive Secretary shall prepare and serve on the respondent an order of default including:

- (i) a statement of the grounds for default; and
- (ii) a recommended disposition if the respondent fails to file a response to a complaint;

(b) ten days following service of the order of default, a UPPAC attorney shall attempt to contact respondent or respondent's attorney by telephone or electronically unless the respondent is incarcerated and unrepresented;

(c) UPPAC shall maintain documentation of attempts toward written, telephonic, or electronic contact;

(d) the respondent has 20 days following service of the order of default to respond to UPPAC; and

(e) if UPPAC receives a response from respondent to a default order before the end of the 20 day default period, UPPAC shall allow respondent a final ten day period to respond to a complaint.

(2) The Executive Secretary shall make a recommendation to the Board for discipline consistent with the evidence and Rule R277-215.

(3) If an educator's default results in a suspension, the order of default shall include conditions the educator must meet before requesting a reinstatement hearing.

R277-211-9. Disciplinary Letters and Dismissal.

(1) If UPPAC recommends issuance of a letter of warning, letter of education, or dismissal, the Executive Secretary shall forward the case to the Board for review on a consent calendar.

(2) If the Board does not approve a recommendation for a letter of warning, letter of education, or dismissal described in Subsection (1), the Board may:

- (a) remand the case to the Executive Secretary with:
 - (i) direction as to the issues UPPAC should address;
 - (ii) alternative terms and disposition that would be satisfactory to the Board to be submitted to the educator for consideration; and
 - (iii) the opportunity for the educator to participate in a hearing;
- (b) dismiss the matter; or
- (c) take other appropriate action consistent with due process and Rule R277-215.

(3) If the Board approves a letter of warning or letter of education, the Executive Secretary shall:

- (a) prepare the letter of warning or letter of education and mail it to the educator;
- (b) place a copy of the letter of warning or letter of education in the UPPAC case file; and
- (c) update CACTUS to reflect that the case is closed.

KEY: teacher licensing, conduct, hearings

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Authorizing, and Implemented or Interpreted Law: Art X Sec 3; 53E-6-506; 53E-3-401(4)