

VIMSIA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS/ASSISTANT TEACHERS AND STAFF

Goal: Resolving an issue of serious concern through constructive conversation between two immediate parties is the utmost desire of the VIMSIA. Should a satisfactory resolution not be reached at the basic level this Grievance Procedure has been developed to provide the affected party with a private, clear and timely recourse with accountability.

Step 1. The parent/guardian/student/teacher/staff member (now to be referred to as the party) will send a written grievance (within five (5) business days from the party receiving notice of the incident) to the Montessori Teacher or IA Homeroom Teacher (the Grievance Form can be used or a separate written grievance) and request a meeting with the Teacher to discuss the issue. The written grievance should identify the individuals involved, the date of the incident, names of any witnesses and a summary of what occurred. If the matter was reported orally to someone already then the grievance should identify the name of the person told, the date and approximate time the information was told to them.

Any written grievance pertaining to the treatment of a student regardless of when or where it occurred shall be directed first and foremost to the Teacher.

Any written grievance that a Teacher or VIMSIA Staff member has with a student, parent or other staff member, the party shall complete the grievance form and submit it to the individual's immediate supervisor and request a meeting. The initial meeting should serve to define the matter at hand and to gather any additional information.

- a. A mutual agreement geared toward solving said issue should be reached within five (5) days from the initial written grievance. This agreement will differ with each individual circumstance.
- b. A timetable for the solution is to be established and adhered to, if applicable.
- c. This agreement shall be put in writing and signed by the party, the individual against whom the grievance was brought and their immediate supervisor.

If the issue is not resolved to the party's satisfaction then within 10 days the party shall proceed to Step II. Failure to proceed to step II within 10 days shall be deemed to be an acknowledgment by the party that the matter is resolved:

Step II. The party shall send a copy of the Grievance Form and a written explanation of the steps already taken by the party; any resolutions reached; as well as the results of those remedies; and what issues remain outstanding, or a description of the lack of adequate resolution to the Grievance Committee.

- a. The Grievance Form shall be filed with the Grievance Committee within fifteen (15) days from the filing of the initial grievance set forth in Step I. To insure privacy the Form will be secured into an envelope so that identifiable information will be hidden.
- b. The Grievance Committee will assign a case number to the complaint and it will be noted on the document.
- c. A Categorization Code will be assigned to the complaint with the purpose of filing and tracking objections by or toward the VIMSIA establishment. The code will be noted on the document.
- d. The Grievance will be logged into a Master File, which will be located in a secure and private location at VIMSIA, the coded information will be entered into a private computer database.
- e. The Grievance Committee will immediately and personally notify the Supervisor of the individual against whom the complaint has been made as well as the Montessori School Head or International Academy Head, whichever is appropriate.
- f. The Head will separately interview the party, and the alleged perpetrator against whom the complaint has been registered.

Step III. The Head will meet with the party within five (5) days from the filing of the Grievance Form. The meeting will take the shape (including necessary persons, documents, etc. and if necessary a preliminary hearing with or without witnesses and testimony) as determined by the Head in an effort to outline the stance to be taken by VIMSIA to solve the problem.

- a. Copies of the grievance form will be given to the individual named in the grievance (against whom complaint has been registered), the individual's supervisor, and the Head.
- b. The named individual shall have ten (10) days to submit a written response to the grievance.
- c. If a mutual agreement geared toward solving said issue can be reached, within five (5) days from the meeting with the Head, the Head will draft the mutual agreement. This agreement will differ with each individual circumstance.
- d. A timetable for the solution is to be established and adhered to, if applicable.
- e. This agreement shall be put in writing and signed by the party, the individual against whom the grievance was brought and their immediate supervisor and the Head.

If the Head deems the complaint to have merit and cannot resolve the matter then it shall be referred to the Grievance Committee:

- f. If necessary, a formal grievance hearing will be held, all parties concerned shall be given written notice of the day, time and place of the hearing. The formal hearing shall be recorded. Any witnesses can be presented at the formal hearing

- however the Grievance Committee shall reserve the right to sequester witnesses and also ask questions of the witness.
- g. At the conclusion of the formal hearing or if no hearing is necessary, the Grievance Committee shall within thirty (30) days of the filing of the Grievance Form issue a written decision.
 - h. The written decision shall include, but is not limited to, the following: the stance of VIMSIA, what procedure (if any) will be adopted to achieve resolution, and a timetable. The decision will be attached to the original complaint form.
 - i. After the agreed upon time for resolution has passed, and it has been determined by the VIMSIA Grievance Committee that the complaint has been sufficiently addressed, the document will be signed and dated by the party, the named individual and his/her supervisor and the Head. The case will be marked CLOSED.
 - j. The closed file will be categorized as a Complaint with Merit.
 - k. Copies of the decision will be distributed to all original parties. A Master Copy will be filed in the Master File and the results will be entered into the database.

If the Head deems the complaint to be without merit:

- l. A meeting with party and the named individual (separately or together, as deemed necessary by Head) will be scheduled, and the VIMSIA position will be clearly explained.
- m. A written decision will be issued and will be documented on the original complaint form or attached thereto. The decision will be signed and dated by the party, the named individual against whom complaint has been registered, their supervisor and the Head. The case will be marked CLOSED.
- n. The closed file will be categorized as a Frivolous Complaint.
- o. Said file and copies of the decision shall be distributed to all original parties. A Master Copy will be filed in the Master File and the results will be entered into the database.

Step IV

- a. The Categorization Code will be used to generate a generalized Grievance Report. These categories could include, but are not limited to the following: teacher, grade level (La Casa, Upper Elementary, etc), curriculum, general staff, safety, and maintenance and any others as needed. These categories should be determined and revised in concert between the BOT and Grievance Committee.
- b. The report will be generated and delivered to the BOT by the Head every four (4) months. This report will contain only a general description of each grievance: case number, date filed, and the categorization code, status (open or closed, frivolous or having merit).
- c. It is the responsibility of the BOT to review this report on a timely basis, and, if they feel it is necessary, request more detailed files from the Head.
- d. The report will serve as a measure of effectiveness with which the Head manages complaints, as well as provide insight to the strengths and weaknesses, real or

perceived by the parent body, teachers, and faculty within VIMSIA. It will identify problems as well as indicate positive existing models.

GENERAL NOTES:

1. It should also be noted that the Grievance Procedure Complaints are considered privileged information, which shall be made available only to VIMSIA Administrative Staff who are outlined in the filed Grievance Document or the VIMSIA Grievance Procedure. The Master File will be off limits to all staff members unless written permission is obtained from the Head.
2. Any party who files a grievance shall keep that grievance strictly confidential.
3. Complaints against Assistant Teachers must be filed with that Assistant's Director/Directress/Teacher.
4. Complaints, which are considered to have a potentially severe impact on a child/parent such as abusive or criminal charges, can be made by skipping immediately to Step II.
5. VIMSIA encourages that all problems should be addressed at the lowest level of involvement as possible. This statement is not made to discourage a party from discussing matters at a higher level, but should be taken to heart with the understanding that as problems or perceived problems are taken up higher through the ranks of VIMSIA Administration, they become inherently more complicated, and therefore more difficult to solve.
6. Once adopted, the VIMSIA Grievance Procedure shall be distributed to all parents, teachers, staff and administrators and will be recorded into the Student Handbook.