

Columbus City Schools Office of Internal Audit



Employee Relations

Audit Report

Report Date: January 25, 2018

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Executive Summary

The Columbus City Schools (District) Office of Internal Audit (OIA) has recently completed an audit of the Employee Relations Department within the Office of Human Resources. Our audit focused on evaluating predetermined objectives selected by OIA.

Based on the results of our work during this audit, OIA found areas where improvements could be made to strengthen the internal control environment and enhancements could be made to current processes that pertains to Employee Relations.

During the course of our review, OIA made the Employee Relations personnel and management aware of our Issues and recommendations for improvement. The Department was receptive to the recommendations and have already begun to make efforts towards improvement. OIA appreciates the cooperation extended to us and the professionalism of all staff we came into contact with as we performed our audit.

OIA noted a number of issues with varying degrees of risk. The following table outlines the definition of each risk rating:

Risk Ratings, defined:

1 – High: Unacceptable risk requiring immediate corrective action;

2 – Moderate: Undesirable risk requiring future corrective action;

3 – Low: Minor risk that management should assess for potential corrective action.

The following are OIA issues noted during the review:

Issues	Risk Rating		
	1	2	3
Objective 1: To determine controls over the hearing processes are in place and operating effectively and efficiently.			
Issue No. 1 – Inconsistent hearing case data recorded between the MUNIS Employee Case Management system and the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations.	X		
Issue No. 2 – Lack of controls over the hearing case closure process.	X		

Issues	Risk Rating		
	1	2	3
Issue No. 3 – No reporting mechanism is in place within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system for the processed/investigated hearing cases.		X	
Issue No. 4 – Insufficient evidence exists to substantiate that Franklin County Children Services was contacted by the Building Principal about abuse allegations involving CCS students.		X	
Issue No. 5 – Lack of evidence in the physical case file that an official discipline letter was consistently sent to the CCS employee that was involved in an allegation of student abuse and/or misconduct.			X
Objective 2: To determine procedures are in place for the identification, documentation, investigation, and final resolution of employee grievances submitted by CCS employees and/or affiliated labor unions.			
Note: OIA did not identify any control deficiencies during the review related to Objective 2.			
General Issues			
Issue No. 6 – The Employee Relations Department does not have metrics in place to measure the performance of the Department.		X	

Audit Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to determine:

- Controls over the hearing process are in place and operating effectively and efficiently; and
- Procedures are in place for the identification, documentation, investigation, and final resolution of grievances submitted by CCS employees and/or affiliated labor unions.

Audit Scope

OIA established the scope of the audit to include a review of basic operational aspects of the processes, verification of compliance requirements, and evaluation of the internal control environment as they relate to the noted objectives. The period of time of the audit included all activity occurring between July 1, 2016, and April 30, 2017.

Methodologies

To accomplish our stated objectives, OIA performed the following tasks as they related to those objectives:

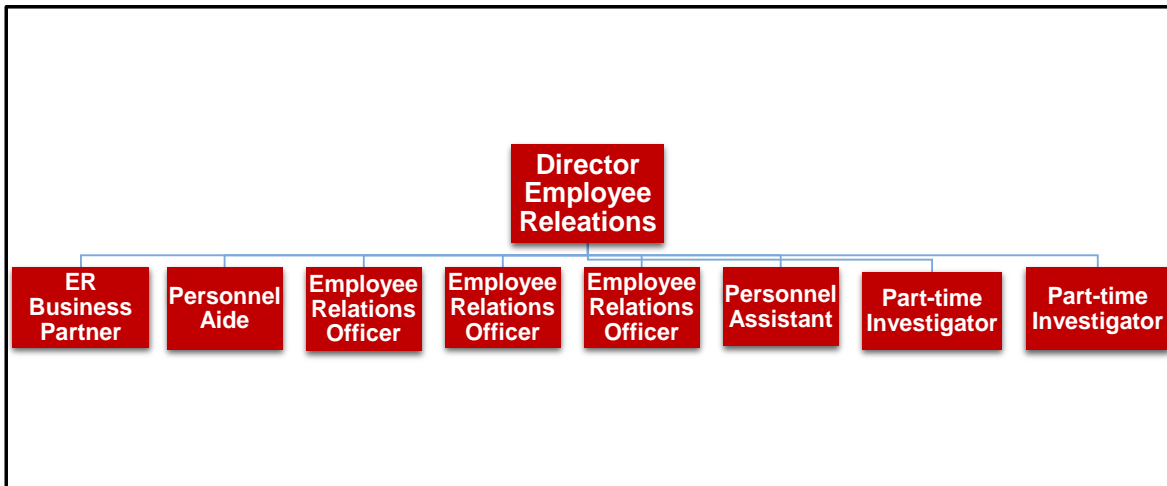
- Reviewed and evaluated Columbus City Schools' Board of Education policies and procedures;
- Interviewed the District's Employee Relations staff;
- Observation and documentation of key processes;
- Examined and analyzed applicable records and reports;
- Obtained access to the Excel tracking spreadsheet for hearing and grievance cases;
- Obtained access to the MUNIS Employee Case Management module; and
- Reviewed best practices used by other entities that have an employee/labor relations function.

Background

The Employee Relations Department is one of the areas under the Office of Human Resources. The Employee Relations Department is responsible for handling all employee misconduct related matters including employee discipline and discharge. The Department also provides advice and counsel to District administrators regarding employee performance and management. The Employee Relations Department investigates allegations of employee misconduct and holds pre-disciplinary hearings as necessary. The Department provides recommendations to the Superintendent on employee discipline as well.

Refer to **Exhibit 1** for the organizational structure of the Employee Relations Department.

Exhibit 1

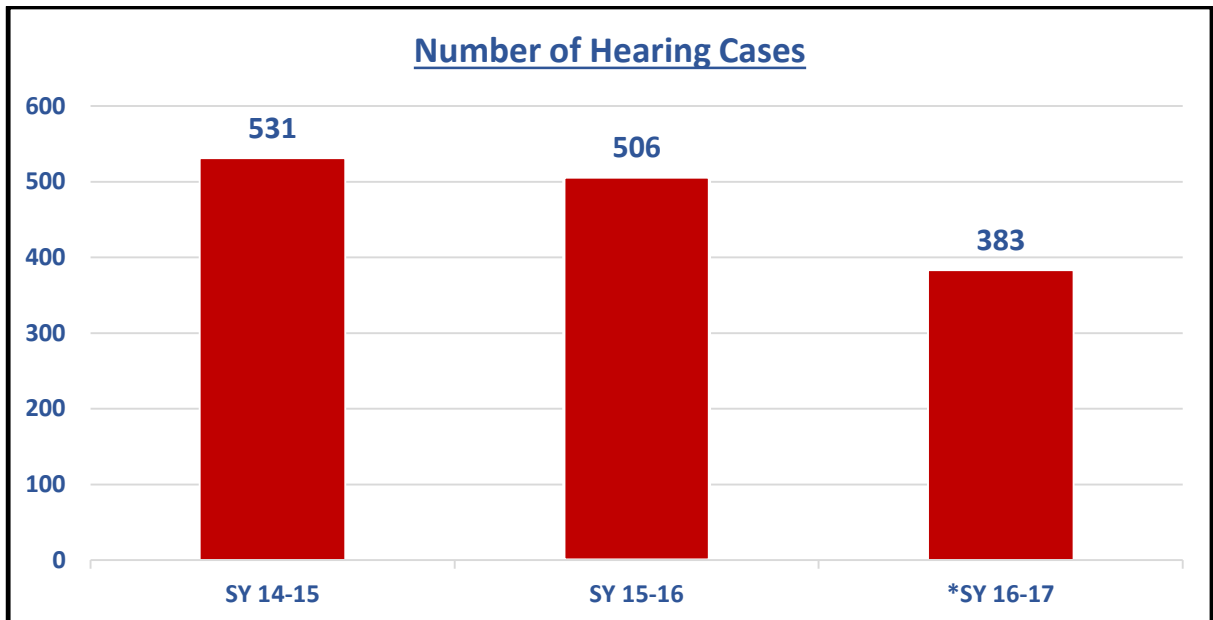


The Employee Relations Department administers the union grievance process and provides District administrators with advice and counsel on collective bargaining issues and contract interpretation support. The Department notifies the Ohio Department of Education of all certificated employee misconduct and responds to subpoenas and public records requests. The Department takes a pivotal role in contract negotiations. The Department administers the Substance Free Workplace Policy and coordinates the drug/alcohol testing program for the District. The Department also conducts formalized training on all matters as set forth above.

During our scope period (7/1/16 – 4/30/17), the Employee Relations Department processed and investigated 383 hearings and 24 grievances.

Refer to **Exhibit 2** (hearings) and **Exhibit 3** (grievances) for the number of cases that have been processed and investigated by Employee Relations for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

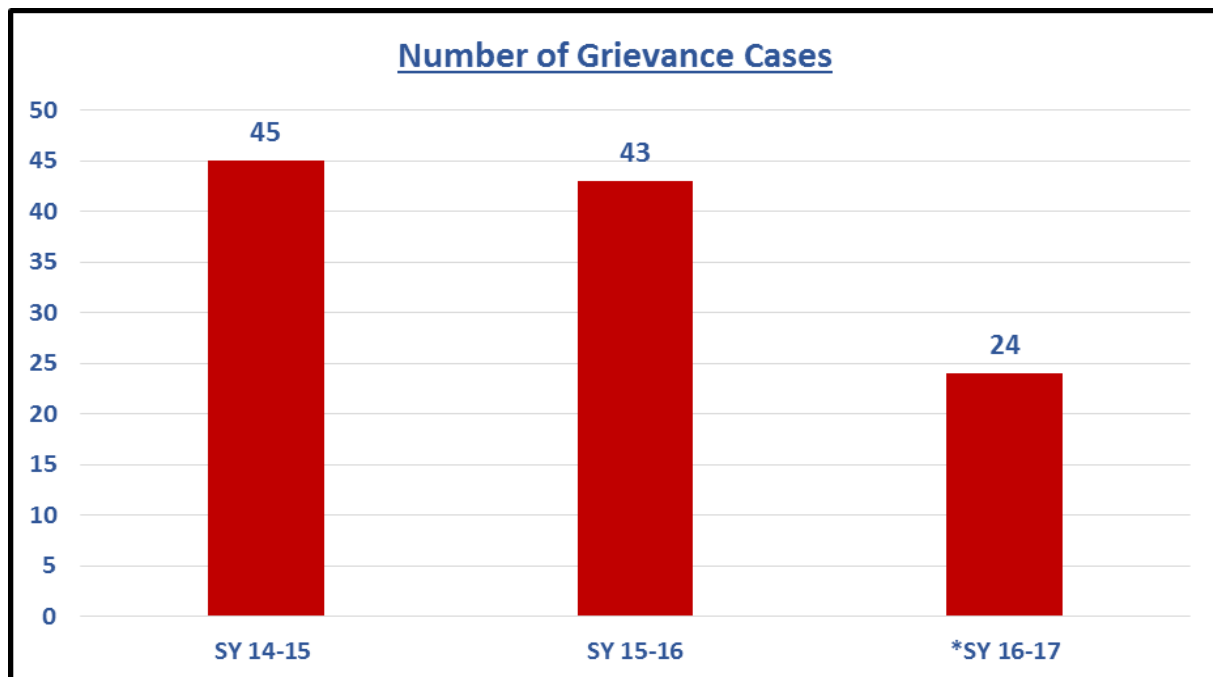
Exhibit 2



Source: MUNIS Employee Case Management Module

* - OIA reviewed cases during 7/1/16 – 4/30/17 for the 2016-17 schoolyear.

Exhibit 3



Source: Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations

* - OIA reviewed cases during 7/1/16 – 4/30/17 for the 2016-17 schoolyear.

Results of the Employee Relations Audit – Issues, Recommendations and Management’s Responses:

Issue No. 1 – Inconsistent hearing case data recorded between the MUNIS Employee Case Management system and the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations.

OIA performed a completeness test to determine whether the hearing case information (e.g. ID number, resolution) was consistent within both sets of data for the 2016–17 school year (7/1/16 – 4/30/17).

OIA noted that there were multiple inconsistencies with the hearing case information that was recorded between the MUNIS Employee Case Management system and in the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations. The following control deficiencies were noted:

- 354 of the 383 cases within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system there was not a resolution recorded for the related cases;
- 35 of the 382 cases within the Excel tracking file there was not a resolution recorded for the related cases;
- 7 of the 383 cases within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system the related cases were not included in the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations;
- 3 of the 382 cases within the Excel tracking file there was not an ID number included for the related cases;
- 3 of the 382 cases within the Excel tracking file the related case information was not included in the data extracted from the MUNIS Employee Case Management module;
- There were 3 instances (2 cases per instance) where the case had the same ID number in the Excel tracking file; and
- 1 of the 383 cases within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system the resolution was different than what was documented in the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations.

Recommendation

1. Periodic reviews of the hearing case information should be performed by Employee Relations staff to ensure that the information is complete and accurate and the information reconciles between the MUNIS Employee Case Management system and the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations. This will help to ensure data integrity and identify in a timely manner those cases where the information is inconsistent.

Management Response: Employee Relations will implement a quarterly monitoring process which will include reviewing data contained in the Excel tracking document and the MUNIS Employee Case Management System to ensure accuracy, completeness, and consistency.

Process Owner: Director of Employee Relations

Implementation Date: March 2018

Issue No. 2 – Lack of controls over the hearing case closure process.

OIA performed a completeness test of the case closure information that was included in the MUNIS Employee Case Management system and in the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations for the 2016 – 2017 school year (7/1/16 – 4/30/17) to determine whether the case closure information was consistent and accurate.

OIA noted that there was not any evidence that management had adequate controls over the closure process for hearing cases that were investigated by Employee Relations and noted that the closure information was inconsistent. Additionally, there was no information within the Excel tracking file that would indicate whether the hearing case was closed or opened.

The following control deficiencies were noted:

- 382 of the 382 (100%) cases within the Excel tracking file there was not a status (open or closed) recorded for the related cases; and
- 42 of the 383 (11%) cases within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system the status of the related cases appeared to be “open” in the module.

OIA also performed a lookback analysis of the case closure information for the 2014 – 2015 and 2015 – 2016 school years and the following was noted:

- 965 of the 965 (100%) cases within the hearing tracking file there was not a status (open or closed) recorded for the related cases; and
- 69 of the 1,037 (6%) cases within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system the status of the related cases appeared to be “open” in the module.

Recommendations

2. Controls should be implemented to periodically monitor the case closure information in order to ensure that the information is reflected accurately and consistently between the MUNIS Employee Case Management system and the Excel tracking file maintained by Employee Relations. This will help to identify and correct the cases without the appropriate status (e.g. open, closed) in a timely manner.

3. Enhancements should be made to the Excel tracking file to include a column that specifies the status (e.g. open, closed) of the hearing case. This will allow management to track the status of each hearing case included in the tracking file.

Management Response: The Excel tracking document includes a column whereby details of the resolution of the case should be provided, e.g. “handled at the building level”, which would reasonably indicate that the case has been closed. Nonetheless, Employee Relations will insert an additional column on the Excel tracking form where a checkmark will indicate that the case has been closed.

Process Owner: Director of Employee Relations

Implementation Date: December 30, 2017

Issue No. 3 – No reporting mechanism is in place within the MUNIS Employee Case Management system for the processed/investigated hearing cases.

During the course of the audit, OIA noted that Employee Relations does not have any reports that are generated from the MUNIS Employee Case Management system for the hearing cases that are processed and investigated by the Department.

Recommendation

4. Management should explore ways to have reports generated from the MUNIS Employee Case Management system for the hearing cases that are processed and investigated by the Employee Relations Department. The reports will allow the staff members to fully understand the Department’s performance and be able to communicate the results to the appropriate individuals within the District.

Management Response: Employee Relations has met with the District’s Information Technology employees who are responsible for the MUNIS system. Certain revisions will need to be made to the Employee Case Management system in order to make the reporting function viable. Employee Relations will work together with Information Technology employees to make these changes and implement the reporting function. The reporting function should include information such as alternative assignments, case outcomes and status of investigations.

Process Owner: Director of Employee Relations

Implementation Date: September 2018

Issue No. 4 – Insufficient evidence exists to substantiate that Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) was contacted by the Building Principal about abuse allegation involving CCS students.

In relation to reporting alleged student abuse, the Ohio Revised Code 2151.421 (Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect) requires the following:

“...the person making the report shall make it to the public children services agency or a municipal or county peace officer in the county in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred.”

Additionally, according to the Employee Relations Incident Reporting Procedures, it states in part:

“...regarding allegations of abuse on the part of staff members or any person toward students, all such incidents (serious or non-serious) must be reported to Franklin County Children Services and Employee Relations for all certificated, administrative, classified supervisory, classified staff and/or others.”

During the course of the audit, OIA noted that 6 of the 13 (46%) hearings tested, there was insufficient evidence (e.g. report number obtained from FCCS) documented on the Incident Report Form to substantiate that FCCS was contacted by the Building Principal about the abuse allegation involving a CCS student.

Recommendation

5. All signed Incident Report forms should include the report number that is provided by FCCS. The report number documentation will help provide sufficient evidence that FCCS was indeed contacted by the Principal. This detection control will help to ensure management is confirming FCCS contacts are being made when required.

Management Response: Employee Relations has revised the Incident Report Form to include a space for a case/intake number from the Franklin County Children's Services (FCCS). Employee Relations will review these forms and will contact the Executive Director if no FCCS number is included. Employee Relations will be conducting training with District principals and other administrators as needed to implement the revised Report Form.

Process Owner: Director of Employee Relations

Implementation Date: December 31, 2017

Issue No. 5 – Lack of evidence in the physical case file that an official discipline letter was consistently sent to the CCS employee that was involved in an allegation of student abuse and/or misconduct.

During the course of the audit, OIA noted that 11 of the 14 (79%) hearings tested, there was no evidence in the physical case files that the official discipline letter was sent to the CCS employee by the Employee Relations Department.

Recommendation

6. Management should implement a control that would ensure each discipline letter that is sent to a CCS employee is retained for record keeping purposes.

Management Response: Employee Relations will revise its process for delivering discipline documents to employees, which will include at a minimum removing the requirement the employees actually “sign” for the document. Instead, Employee Relations will draft a policy that includes other forms of adequate delivery such as certified mail, District owned email system and hand delivery. This policy will also include a process for the documentation/verification of delivery.

Process Owner: Director of Employee Relations

Implementation Date: March 31, 2018

Issue No. 6 – The Employee Relations Department does not have metrics in place to measure the performance of the Department.

Based upon inquiry with management, there were no metrics in place that would measure the performance of the activities that pertain to the Employee Relations department.

Recommendation

7. Metrics should be established to measure the work performed that relates to each business objective. These metrics should be compared to defined benchmarks on a periodic basis (i.e. monthly, quarterly, etc...) This comparison will enable Management to identify those business objectives that are meeting the benchmarks and those that need additional work.

Management Response: Employee Relations will develop a comprehensive mission statement and appropriate goals and objectives for its operation. Once that is completed, Employee Relations will identify and implement appropriate metrics that align with and appropriately measure the department's effectiveness. Employee Relations will have its mission statement and goals and objectives drafted and identified on or about June 1, 2018. Metrics will be identified and implemented on or about August 31, 2018.

Process Owner: Director of Employee Relations

Implementation Date: August 31, 2018