

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING NORMS FOR REMOTE HEARINGS

The purpose of this hearing is to allow the parties to present information, via testimony and the introduction of documents, which they believe support their position. Our goal in the Office of Administrative Hearings (“OAH”) is to provide a setting where all parties are treated with dignity and respect, have confidence that they are being heard, and that what they have to say will be fairly considered in reaching a decision. OAH is conducting remote hearings until further notice.

To ensure respectful treatment of all parties, the following will apply to remote hearings:

- **The parties invited to the hearing must be the only participants unless the hearing officer gives permission for specific observers in advance of the hearing. All parties are asked, to the extent possible, to participate in the hearing in a private place.**
- All participants, including the hearing officer and counsel for any party, must conduct themselves in a professional manner. Rude, disrespectful, or insensitive language is strictly prohibited. If any party engages in this behavior, the hearing officer may, at their discretion, end the meeting.
- The formal rules of evidence do not apply to proceedings with OAH. Documents and other evidence will be admitted to the record at the hearing officer’s discretion. Please review the scheduling email for any applicable guidance or deadlines regarding documentary evidence
- Hearings will be scheduled for a specific time using Google Meet, with the opportunity to join via the internet or by phone. **Video participation via video on Google Meet is required for disciplinary matters unless phone participation is approved in advance by the hearing officer.** Please either click "Join Google Meet" or call the number listed in the Google calendar invitation.
- Grievance conferences will not be recorded. Per CPS policy, discipline-related hearings will be recorded using the recording feature in Google Meet. The hearing officer will notify the parties before the recording of a hearing begins. At the start of the hearing, all participants will be asked to state and spell their names, state their title, and their role at the hearing. All participants are invited to share pronouns used. For more information on this topic, please visit cps.edu/oshw.
- In the event that there are technical difficulties during the hearing, participants must attempt to rejoin the hearing within 5 minutes. If this attempt to rejoin is unsuccessful, participants should contact the hearing officer and the Union representative using the email feature in the calendar invitation. The hearing officer will attempt to further troubleshoot the technical difficulties and decide how to proceed.
- Participants should be attentive to the information shared by the hearing officer at the start of the conference. The hearing officer will conduct the hearing as efficiently as possible. To this end, all parties are asked to devote their full attention to the hearing and to limit outside noise and distractions (*i.e.* silence all other electronic devices, avoid other sources of noise as much as possible, etc.).
- Please mute the microphone on your own device when you are not speaking. This is important to limit noise interference. The hearing officer also reserves the right to mute a participant’s microphone temporarily if there is excessive background noise. Please note, all parties will be given an opportunity to present their position and be heard, subject to these norms.
- In the case of discipline appeals, investigatory conferences, or discharge hearings, the employee and any witnesses will give an oath or affirmation to testify truthfully.
- If an objection is made, please pause and wait for the hearing officer to rule on the objection. The hearing officer may also ask the parties questions for clarification.

- Arguments should be directed to the hearing officer and not to participants representing the opposing point of view.
- In the event you need to take a break, please direct this request to the hearing officer. So as to limit interruptions while someone is speaking, participants are encouraged to use the chat feature in Google Meet. The hearing officer may grant or deny the request at their discretion.
- To protect student privacy and confidentiality, students' names and other identifying information should not be used during the course of the hearing. The hearing officer will provide direction regarding how students should be referred to, i.e. using student initials, etc.
- No decision will be issued at the conclusion of the hearing. OAH will issue a written decision, which will be provided to the hearing participants.

In the event you believe these hearing norms have been breached, you may report your concerns to any of the following individuals:

Jennifer Reger, Executive Director of the Office of Administrative Hearings at jreger1@cps.edu

Ruchi Verma, General Counsel at rverma@cps.edu

Udeme Itiat, Director, EOCO Investigations, Office of Student Protections and Title IX, at uvltiat@cps.edu

Vacant, Labor Relations Officer

Effective May 1, 2020 (revised August 1, 2023)