

## Community Relations

### Constituent Services

**Purpose:** The purpose of the policy is to outline a process for Board member service to constituents. Board members must provide service to constituents but should not involve themselves in problem management.

This policy sets forth standards and describes processes. It is the intention of the School Board to meet these standards and follow these processes.

### Compliance with State Law

The Hartford Board of Education and individual Board members will follow all state laws and regulations regarding the prohibitions of Board involvement in management.

### Defining Constituent Service

As elected and appointed Board members acting on behalf of the public, Hartford Board members have a responsibility to be accessible to the public and assist citizens with suggestions, questions, or complaints regarding the Hartford Public Schools. The following definitions apply:

- **Constituents** are members of the Hartford school community who are represented by elected and appointed Public School District Board members or who receive educational services from our public schools. Constituents are receivers of public services and/or provide public funds for those services.
- **Constituent Ombudsman** one who responds to and investigates complaints and concerns from parents, guardians, students, school staff members and any community members with a school-related problem. The Ombudsman is available to assist in the settlement and resolution of stated problem in a customer-friendly manner. The Ombudsman is considered a neutral party who seeks to resolve school related problems and issues as quickly, fairly and efficiently as possible.
- **Governance** is the primary role of the elected and appointed School District Board member. Governance involves ensuring the delivery of required educational and support services in the district by providing oversight and policy to the Superintendent regarding those services and desired results. Governance is strategically based governance and policy focused on effecting system improvement and sustainability.
- **Management** is the responsibility of the Superintendent who is an employee of the School Board and operates within district policy established by the School Board and all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Management includes directing staff, allocating resources, administering programs and providing support services to improve school system effectiveness and successfully achieve district academic objectives.

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- **Appropriate constituent service** ensures that management takes responsibility for helping citizens receive the services that the Hartford Public Schools intends to provide, using the systems and resources provided for those services.
- **Inappropriate constituent service** is defined as Board member involvement in management or delivery of specific services or desired result, even if the problem is serious and/or the Board member's involvement is minimal. This includes an obligation not to confer special advantage on employees, parents, students, vendors or any other person or entity outside regular management decision-making processes established by policy or management directive to guarantee fairness and equity.
- **Communication** The Hartford Board of Education will communicate with constituents in the appropriate manner, given the nature of the constituent issue. The Superintendent will ensure that all staff is aware of all Board policies and procedures, in order to carry out the Board's expectations and communicate them effectively. Board of Education news and announcements will be coordinated through management staff, and timely notice for optional participation will be given to all Board of Education members. Management staff will coordinate the gathering of feedback from the community, in order to gauge the effectiveness of Board of Education communications and present reports to the Board of Education. Board of Education members will communicate policies to the constituents at Board of Education meetings and will consider constituent comments at public forums. As Board members receive direct requests and concerns from members of the community, they will refer them to the Superintendent or appropriate management staff for resolution. In any case, when a Board member refers a matter, the Board member will be given appropriate feedback as to the resolution of the issue by the Superintendent or his senior management staff.

### System for Constituent Service

Recognizing the need to provide quality service to constituents, the Hartford Public School Board and Superintendent will together put into place a system for tracking and responding to constituent inquiries.

- The goal of the District is to respond promptly and professionally to any questions or concerns of the public. To this end, the public is encouraged to use published telephone numbers to contact the appropriate personnel at their school or department regarding issues or questions. Another valuable resource is the district website, [www.hartfordschools.org](http://www.hartfordschools.org), which contains policy, procedures, telephone numbers, and the status of various ongoing programs. The website also provides access to those who want to send questions and comments directly to the Superintendent using electronic mail.

If the above information sources do not provide answers, constituents may contact the District's Welcome Center. As appropriate, such inquiries will be tracked using a system with the following features:

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- A Multilanguage protocol for handling constituent requests for information or assistance;
- A primary contact person in the Board Office who will refer constituent service issue requests to the Board Ombudsman, as directed by the Board member, following initial contact with the principal;
- A feedback system so that Board members know the resolution of requests;
- An information management system for storing, tracking, categorizing, and analyzing requests;
- Annual reports to the Superintendent and Board on constituent requests, their resolution, and patterns in requests;
- Annual reports on District systems improvements made, in whole or part, as a result of constituent service requests; and,
- Oversight of the system by the Superintendent's designee.

The attached flowchart tracks the recommended process flow for constituent service requests.

### **Protocol for Managing Constituent Requests**

Protocol is based on a reliable information network between the Board Office and the Welcome Center for referring, tracking, and resolving constituent inquiries. Normally, electronic management of these requests will be done via e-mail or other electronic means, as the preferred method of communication and recordkeeping in the system. The Welcome Center will manage the tracking system and coordinate with appropriate district staff. Requests will be tracked in the Welcome Center by the category of request, the person assigned the lead for responding, the date of inquiry, and the date of response. This information will be maintained in a consolidated database until reviewed by the Superintendent or Board, but no less than four years.

The district's response will be forwarded to the Board Ombudsman for response to the constituent. The Board Ombudsman is responsible for ensuring that the respective Board member is advised of action on the constituent requests, as well as keeping the constituent advised of the status of the request.

As appropriate, and when requested by the Board Office, the Superintendent's Office or appropriate District staff member may respond directly to the constituent and copy the Board Office on the response. This shall be noted in the tracking system maintained by the Board Office.

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#### **Guidelines for Responding to Constituent Requests**

The Board considers all requests to be important and warranting an expedient response. Response to constituent requests will be managed on a priority basis. Board Ombudsman and District staff will set priorities considering all requests. The priority in which requests are answered is based on the urgency of the specific issue and not the importance of each request for both academic and non-academic issues. In cases where extensive staff work is required to collect data or research information to respond, an interim response will be provided to the constituent by the Board Office within 24 hours.

#### **Central Database Management**

Constituent request data will be managed by the Welcome Center. As described in the section of this policy titled, "Protocol for Managing Constituent Requests," statistics will be collected for further review by the Superintendent. Constituent responses shall be maintained in an electronic database for a one-year period from the date of the response or until a briefing to the Board is complete.

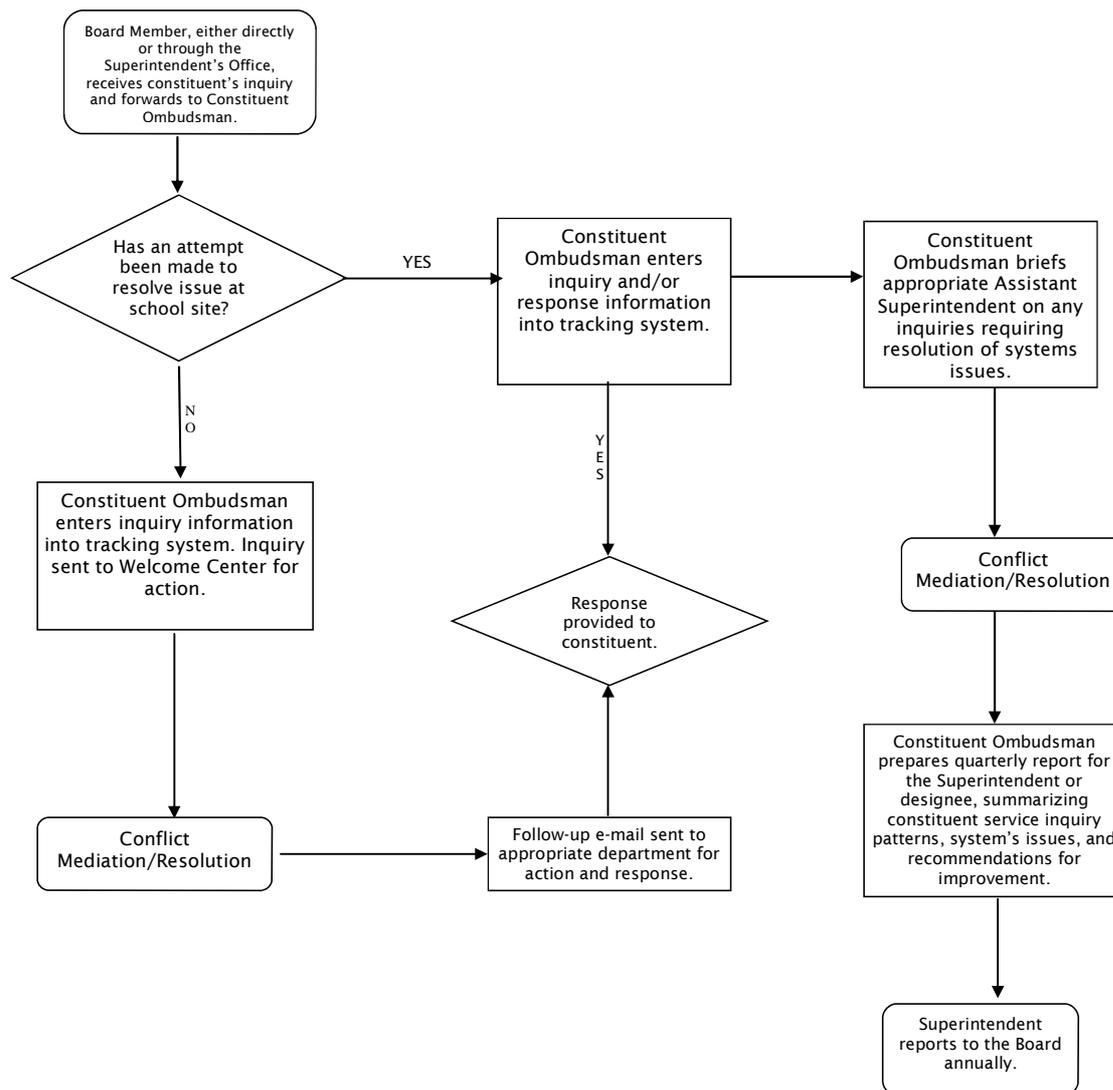
#### **Reporting and System Improvement**

Annually, or as directed by the Board Chair, the Superintendent will present a summary to the Board, which will include constituent request data, trends, conclusions and recommendations for improvement. The Superintendent's report to the Board will be in a suitable electronic document and will include data and graphs portraying the results and processes involved. This report will contain the most current information, and will also include comparative data and trend analyses.

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Hartford Public Schools Constituent Service Flow Chart



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HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Hartford, Connecticut