



# Illinois Heartland Library System

## Illinois Heartland Library System Membership Grievance Policy

### I. Purpose

The primary purpose of the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) Membership Grievance policy is to provide a formal framework for the member libraries to bring about satisfactory resolution of complaints. This grievance procedure may also be used to appeal System Board decisions regarding membership applications and suspension of members.

### II. Philosophy

System members who have complaints concerning system services should contact appropriate IHLS staff and the Executive Director. The Executive Director can resolve most service-related complaints. Members can consult the Strategic Plan and the Annual Plan for a description of the mission, goals, and objectives of the System.

### III. Grounds for Grievances

The Board of Directors of IHLS is authorized to develop and adopt written policies for the operation of the System. Advisory Councils are encouraged to suggest policies. All service policies will be reviewed by members and Advisory councils before adoption by the IHLS Board. Members seeking to change those policies or suggest new ones may address their concerns to the Advisory Councils.

Claims of violation, misapplication or misinterpretation of Board adopted policies are grounds for grievances. Any Board action, or the application or interpretation of that action, may be grieved pursuant to this procedure. Decisions regarding membership applications and suspensions are also covered by this procedure.

Claims of violation, misapplication or misinterpretation of IHLS Board adopted policies between individual libraries should first be addressed by the members in conflict. Should the issue not be resolved, the parties may ask for a grievance hearing by the System Board. In requesting the hearing, documentation and an explanation of steps that have already taken place must be attached to the request form.

### IV. Who can file an official complaint?

Formal complaints may be filed only by the Grievant's governing body or by an official specifically authorized to do so on behalf of the governing body.

## V. Grievance Procedure

1. The Grievant must submit the grievance in writing to the Executive Director via registered mail.
2. Within ten (10) working days of receipt of the grievance, the Executive Director must respond in writing to the Grievant using the Membership Grievance Policy Appeal Form. In this communication, the Executive Director will either agree to comply with the member's wishes, will explain why IHLS cannot comply with those wishes, or will suggest a compromise or alternative solution.
3. If the Grievant is not satisfied with the Executive Director's decision, the Grievant may, within ten (10) working days of the Executive Director's reply, file an appeal in writing with the IHLS Board. The appeal must be sent to the IHLS Board President via registered mail. The appeal must include the name of the authorized representative of the Grievant as provided in Section III.
4. The Hearing Committee will consist of three (3) members of the System's Board of Directors designated by the Board President. The committee will choose a Chairman within five (5) working days. If the committee cannot agree on a Chairman, the Board President will appoint a Chairman.
5. Within ten (10) working days of appointment of the Chair, the Chair will schedule a hearing to be held within twenty (20) days of the appointment. Notice of the time and place of the hearing will be provided in writing to the Grievant and to the Executive Director. Any supporting documentation must be submitted in triplicate to the Chair of the Hearing Committee at least five (5) working days before the hearing date. The committee is encouraged to hear any evidence or verbal statements provided by the grieving party. If the committee chooses not to listen to any evidence or statements, a detailed explanation must be included in the written summary that is submitted to the IHLS Board. The hearing will be recorded.
6. Within ten (10) working days after the hearing, the Hearing Committee will submit the written summary of the hearing, any supporting documentation, and its recommendation for action. The Board may adopt, reject or modify any recommendation at its discretion. All decisions of the Board on recommendations of the Hearing Committee and all actions taken regarding the grievance and appeal are final (see section VII below). Notice of the Board's final action will be provided to the Grievant and Executive Director within ten (10) working days of the Board Meeting.
7. After the hearing, a transcript of the hearing will be prepared.

## **VI. Time Limits**

Deadlines specified in this procedure may be extended by the agreement of the Grievant and the Executive Director. However, if no extension is obtained, the failure of a Grievant to proceed to the next step within the time limit set forth will be deemed a waiver of any further appeal concerning the particular grievance and decision. If the Executive Director does not issue a written decision within the proper time, the Grievant is authorized to proceed to the next step.

## **VII. Further Appeal Procedure**

Board actions that result in membership suspension or denial of a membership application may be appealed to the State Librarian after exhausting the remedies set forth above. For further appeal procedures, consult the Illinois Administrative Code or the Illinois State Library.