

Minnesota FFA CDE Contest Appeals Policy

Purpose

The Minnesota FFA Association is committed to conducting Career Development Events (CDEs) and Leadership Development Events (LDEs) in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner. This appeals procedure establishes a formal process to resolve disputes regarding the interpretation or application of Minnesota FFA contest rules, procedures, scoring, or administration.

Definition of an Appeal

An **appeal** shall mean a dispute or disagreement concerning the interpretation, application, or alleged misapplication of Minnesota FFA CDE rules, policies, procedures, scoring criteria, or contest administration.

Appeals may be filed by:

- An individual advisor on behalf of a contestant or team, or
- A small group of advisors directly affected by the contest decision, or
- The Minnesota FFA Association when contest integrity is in question.

Students may not independently file appeals.

General Provisions

- Appeals must be based on procedural or rule-based issues and not on subjective judgment decisions made by judges within their assigned authority.
- All timelines refer to **working days**, excluding weekends and state holidays.
- Failure to adhere to timelines may result in forfeiture of the appeal unless timelines are mutually extended in writing.
- All appeal proceedings shall be conducted in a manner that minimizes disruption to instruction and student participation.

- Contest Chairs at the region and state level may be included in the appeal process barring extenuating circumstances such as conflict of interest in which case a designee shall be appointed by the State CDE coordinator and approved by the Region CDE Chairs
 - Mutually agreed upon industry experts shall be included at beginning at step II of the appeal process.
 - Industry experts shall not include contest chairs, high school instructors, and those involved in the writing and creation of contest materials.
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Step I – Informal Resolution

Whenever an advisor or group of advisors believes an appeal exists, the advisor shall seek an informal resolution by meeting with the **State CDE Chair or Exclusive Designee** within **five (5) working days** after becoming aware of the incident giving rise to the appeal.

The purpose of Step I is to clarify rules, review procedures, and attempt to resolve the issue informally.

If the matter is not resolved at Step I:

- The appeal must be reduced to writing and submitted by the advisor to the **Minnesota FFA CDE Director or designee, and CDE committee** within **five (5) working days** following the Step I meeting.

If the appeal substantially affects multiple teams or chapters, the written appeal may be submitted directly without a Step I meeting, provided it is filed within **five (5) working days** of the incident.

Step II – Formal Written Appeal Review

Upon receipt of a written appeal, the Minnesota FFA CDE Coordinator or designee, shall meet with the appealing advisor(s) within **five (5) working days** to attempt resolution.

- Both parties shall meet and engage in good faith discussion.
- Any resolution shall be documented in writing, signed by both parties, and retained by Minnesota FFA.

If no resolution is reached:

- The CDE Coordinator or designee shall issue a written response within **five (5) working days** of the meeting.

- The appealing advisor(s) must submit the unresolved appeal in writing to Step III within **five (5) working days** of receiving the written response.
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Step III – State-Level Appeal Review

The Minnesota FFA CDE Coordinator, or a designated appeals committee appointed by the CDE Directors, and a majority of the Region CDE Chairs shall meet with the appealing advisor(s) within **ten (10) working days** of receipt of the appeal.

- Upon resolution, both parties shall sign a memorandum outlining the disposition of the appeal.
 - If no resolution is reached within **ten (10) working days** after the Step III meeting, either party may submit a written request to proceed to mediation.
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Step III-A – Optional Mediation (Final and Binding)

If the parties are unable to resolve the appeal, they may mutually agree to participate in mediation through the **Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services (BMS)**.

- A written request for mediation must be submitted and signed by the appealing party or Minnesota FFA.
 - The receiving party shall respond within **five (5) working days** to accept or decline mediation.
 - Participation in mediation does not waive the right to proceed to arbitration.
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Additional Provisions

- Appeals proceedings shall occur during regular business hours when feasible.
- Advisors shall not be penalized for participation in the appeals process.
- Minnesota FFA reserves the right to take immediate action if contest integrity, safety, or fairness is at risk.