



K-12 VLAC Staff Title IX Training

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Agenda

1. Overview of Title IX and when it is applicable;
 - a) Reporting responsibilities
 - b) The scope of the education program or activity;
 - c) The definition of sexual harassment provided within Title IX;
2. The Title IX grievance process;
3. Overarching Title IX grievance process requirements;
4. Responsibilities of Staff and Administrators that *are not* the Title IX Coordinator;
5. Breakout sessions



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YOUR WEBSITE**

Posting is REQUIRED



When is Title IX Applicable?

Title IX Statute

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”



Title IX Regulations

- Provide detailed grievance procedure for Title IX sexual harassment allegations and are adopted by district policy.
- Per district policy, allegations of all other forms of sex discrimination should be addressed under the district's applicable non-discrimination or anti-harassment policies.
- Focus today is on the Title IX sexual harassment regulations and grievance procedure.



Actual Knowledge Responsibilities

- **The district is deemed to have knowledge of sexual harassment allegations if ANY staff member has knowledge.**
- The district is REQUIRED to respond promptly when it has knowledge.
- ACTUAL KNOWLEDGE=Notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment **to:**
 - The Title IX Coordinator, OR
 - Any official of the recipient who has authority to institute corrective measures on behalf of the recipient, OR
 - **Any employee of an elementary and secondary school**
- **NOTICE IS NOT JUST A REPORT TO THE TITLE IX COORDINATOR**



Noncompliance regarding reporting will lead to discipline

Reports of Sexual Harassment

- Students may report to any staff member or directly to the Title IX Coordinator.
- **ALL STAFF MUST REPORT any notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator immediately (SAME DAY).**
- Staff to staff, staff to student, student to staff, and student to student sexual harassment all included.
- Be wary of indirect notice as well (e.g. social networking sites, media).
- Any person may report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment (whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sex discrimination or sexual harassment), in person, by mail, by telephone, or by electronic mail, using the contact information listed for the Title IX Coordinator, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's verbal or written report.



Title IX Sexual Harassment Team Members

Position	Scope of Responsibility	Requirements
Title IX Coordinator	Person designated to coordinate and conduct intake reports and complaints, initiate formal complaints if necessary, and implement supportive measures and remedies, as necessary.	N/A
Investigator	Person designated to investigate, gather evidence, and compile an investigation report. Dismisses if mandatory or permissive.	May be the Title IX Coordinator.
Decision-Maker	Person who conducts an objective evaluation of all relevant evidence, administers question and answer period and rules on relevancy, issues a written determination regarding responsibility, dismisses if required.	Must not be the same person as the Title IX Coordinator or the Investigator.
Appeal Designee	Person designated to handle appeal, if any.	Must not be the same person as the Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, or Decision-Maker.

Title IX Sexual Harassment Parties

Complainant	An individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment
Respondent	An individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.
Advisor	An individual that accompanies the complainant or respondent to any related meeting or proceeding in order to offer them support. The reporting party chooses their advisor, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney.
Witness	An individual that have or could potentially have information related and/or relevant to the alleged incident.



Scope of “Educational Program or Activity”

- “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination **under any education program or activity** receiving Federal financial assistance.”
- Jurisdictional trigger



- “locations, events, or circumstances over which the recipient [the school/district] exercised substantial control over both the respondent and the context in which the sexual harassment occurs . . .”
- Title IX obligations for sexual harassment in K-12 institutions include incidents that occur off campus if:
 - if the off-campus incident occurs as part of the district’s “operations” or
 - if the district exercised substantial control over the respondent and the context of alleged sexual harassment that occurred off campus.



- “the statutory and regulatory definitions of “program or activity” encompass “all of the operations of” [the district], and such “operations” may certainly include computer and internet networks, digital platforms, and computer hardware or software owned or operated by, or used in the operations of, the [district]”
- “the factual circumstances of online harassment must be analyzed to determine if it occurred in an education program or activity”



Definition of “Sexual Harassment”

- Conduct **on the basis of sex** that satisfies one or more of the following:
 - (1) An employee of the district conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the district on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo sexual harassment);
 - (2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, AND objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the district’s education program or activity; or
 - (3) “Sexual assault”, “dating violence”, “domestic violence”, or “stalking” (as defined under Clery Act)



- Sexual assault” means an offense classified as a forcible or nonforcible sex offense under the uniform crime reporting system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- “Dating violence” means violence committed by a person—
 - (A) who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and
 - (B) where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:
 - (i) The length of the relationship.
 - (ii) The type of relationship.
 - (iii) The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.



- “Domestic violence” includes felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person’s acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction.
- “Stalking” means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to—
 - (A) fear for his or her safety or the safety of others; or
 - (B) suffer substantial emotional distress.



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An employee of the district conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the district on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo sexual harassment)

- **Quid pro quo-#1**
 - Encompasses situations where the quid pro quo nature of the incident is implied from the circumstances.
 - Ex: if you do or don’t do x, I will or won’t do x
 - Applies to all of a school’s employees
 - May involve a power differential
 - “unwelcome” as used in the first and second prongs of the definition of sexual harassment is a subjective element



Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, AND objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the district's education program or activity

- “Catch-all”-#2

- Focus factually on the nature of the misconduct itself – not on the victim's response to the misconduct.
- Determinations of severity, pervasiveness, and objective offensiveness depends on a constellation of factors including the ages and numbers of parties involved, disability status, positions of authority of involved parties etc.
- Whether harassing conduct is “objectively offensive” must be evaluated under a reasonable person standard, as a reasonable person in the complainant's position.
- No intent aspect.
- Does not require that a complainant has already suffered loss of education before being able to report sexual harassment



- “If the conduct alleged in the formal complaint would not constitute sexual harassment as defined . . . then the recipient must dismiss the formal complaint with regard to that conduct for purposes of sexual harassment under title IX”
- BUT such a dismissal does not preclude action under another provision of the recipient's code of conduct.
- Districts may continue to address harassing conduct that does not meet the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX under other provisions of the district's own code of conduct.





Title IX Grievance Process

Grievance Procedure for Sexual Harassment Formal Complaints

1. Report
2. Supportive measures and information on formal complaint
3. Formal complaint
4. Written notice to parties
5. Investigation
6. Inspection and review of evidence
7. Investigative report with review and written response
8. Question and Answer period (and hearing if applicable)
9. Written determination
10. Appeal on certain bases
11. Notice of appeal and opportunity to respond
12. Final written decision on appeal



Report Received

Title IX Coordinator must promptly reach out to the individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment (aka the complainant) to:

1. discuss the availability of supportive measures,
2. consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures,
3. inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a formal complaint, and
4. explain to the complainant the process for filing a formal complaint.



Supportive Measures

- *Supportive measures* means non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge to the complainant or the respondent.
- Such measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to the district's education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party, including measures designed to protect the safety of all parties or the district's educational environment, or deter sexual harassment.
- Supportive measures may include counseling, extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments, modifications of work or class schedules, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties, changes in work locations, leaves of absence, increased security and monitoring, and other similar measures.
- The district must maintain as confidential any supportive measures provided to the complainant or respondent, to the extent that maintaining such confidentiality would not impair the ability of the district to provide the supportive measures.



Formal Complaint

- “*Formal complaint*” means a document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting that the district investigate the allegation of sexual harassment.
- At the time of filing a formal complaint, a complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in the education program or activity of the district with which the formal complaint is filed.



Written Notice to Parties

- Upon receipt of a formal complaint (or later as additional allegations become known), the district has to provide the following written notice to the parties who are known
 1. Notice of the district’s grievance process that complies with this section, including any informal resolution process.
 2. Notice of the allegations of sexual harassment potentially constituting sexual harassment, including sufficient details known at the time and with sufficient time to prepare a response before any initial interview.
 3. Notice that the respondent is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct and that a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process.
 4. Notice to the parties that they may have an advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, and may inspect and review evidence.
 5. Notice of any provision in the district’s code of conduct that prohibits knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.



Conducting the Investigation

- Requirement 1: Trained Investigator
- Requirement 2: Equitable Treatment of Parties
- Requirement 3: Impartial Assessment (no prejudgment, no bias, no conflict of interest)
- Requirement 4: Evidence Review
- Requirement 5: Detailed Written Investigative Report



Timeline and Notices

- “Reasonably prompt” (30 working days to gather the evidence).
- Temporary delays can be granted for good cause.
- Investigation should start immediately.
- Written notice of the details regarding investigative meetings, including attendees and the purpose.



The Duty to Investigate

- The thoroughness of the investigation is critical to the district's ability to determine whether or not misconduct or harassment occurred and which type of disciplinary action, if any, is required as a matter of law or organizational policy.



Burden of Proof 106.45(b)(5)(i)

- The district cannot restrict either party's ability to discuss the allegations or gather and present evidence, HOWEVER . . .
- Burden of proof sufficient to reach a determination regarding responsibility, rests on the district.
- Burden of proof is on the district to conduct investigation, interview witnesses, gather evidence.



Impartiality Regarding Burden of Proof

- The district and investigator must remain neutral and impartial during the investigative process.
- Objective is truth-seeking mission.



Evidence Review

- The Investigator is to create an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence.
- Prior to completion of their investigative report, the investigator must send to each party and the party's advisor, if any, the evidence subject to inspection and review in an electronic format or a hard copy.
- The parties must have at least ten (10) business days to submit a written response, which the investigator will consider prior to completion of the investigative report.



Decision-Maker's Role Starts After the Investigative Report is Finalized

- After finalization of the investigative report, the investigator sends the investigative report to each party, and affords them at least 10 days to review and respond *prior to the determination regarding responsibility*.



Question and Answer Period

- Before issuing a determination of responsibility, the decision-maker must:
 - afford each party the opportunity to submit written, relevant questions that a party wants asked of any party or witness,
 - provide each party with the answers, and
 - allow for additional, limited follow-up questions from each party.
- The decision-maker reviews the questions prior to submitting them to the party or witness.
- The decision-maker must explain to the party proposing the question any decision to exclude a question as not relevant.



Written Determination

- Provided simultaneously to the parties;
- Identification of the allegations potentially constituting sexual harassment;
- A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the formal complaint through the determination;
- Findings of fact supporting the determination;
- Conclusions regarding the application of the district's code of conduct to the facts;
- A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation
 - A determination regarding responsibility,
 - any disciplinary sanctions the district imposes on the respondent,
 - whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the district's education program or activity will be provided by the district to the complainant;
- Procedures and permissible bases for appeal.



Appeal Bases

Appeal is available after the Decision-Maker issues determination of responsibility OR after Complaint is dismissed.

Required appeal bases include:

(A) Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter;

(B) New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made, that could affect the outcome of the matter;

(C) The Title IX Coordinator, investigator(s), or decision-maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter; or

(D) Any other bases allowed equally to either party.



Appeal

- Different decision-maker
- Notice to the other party
- Opportunity for both parties to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, outcome
- Written decision describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result and provided simultaneously to the parties



Final Decision

- The written determination of responsibility is considered final when
 - The date to file an appeal has expired and no appeal was filed, or
 - The appeal process is complete if an appeal was filed
- Only when the written determination of responsibility is final may sanctions and/or remedies be applied.





Overarching Requirements

Overarching Requirements for Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure

1. Have Presumption that Respondent is Not Responsible
2. Follow Grievance Procedure Before Imposing Sanctions
3. No Bias or Conflict of Interest
4. Exclude Privileged Information
5. Consider All Relevant Evidence Under Proper Standard
6. Follow Reasonably Prompt Timelines
7. Removal/Administrative Leave Permitted in Certain Instances
8. Remember Grounds for Dismissal
9. Informal Resolution Process After Formal Complaint Is Optional
10. Keep Records
11. No Retaliation
12. Maintain Confidentiality



Privileged Evidence Excluded

- Precludes a recipient from using information or evidence protected by a legally recognized privilege unless the holder of the privilege has waived the privilege.
 - Medical records
 - Mental health treatment records
 - Attorney-client communications
 - Spousal privilege



Treatment Records-Need Consent

When investigating, the district “cannot access, consider, disclose, or otherwise use a party’s records that are made or maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other recognized professional or paraprofessional acting in the professional’s or paraprofessional’s capacity, or assisting in that capacity, and which are made and maintained in connection with the provision of treatment to the party, unless the recipient obtains that party’s voluntary, written consent to do so for a grievance process under this section.”



Evidence

- Objective evaluation of all relevant evidence – including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
- The standard of evidence to be used to determine responsibility is preponderance of the evidence standard.



Good Cause Delay—With Written Notice

- Good cause may include considerations such as:
 - The absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness;
 - Concurrent law enforcement activity; or
 - The need for language assistance or accommodation of disabilities.



Emergency Removal

- BEFORE removal
 - Undertake an individualized safety and risk analysis, and
 - Determine that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of sexual harassment justifies removal.
- Provide the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal.
- Follow the IDEA and Section 504 before any removals.



Grounds for Dismissal

- If the conduct alleged in the formal complaint
 1. would not constitute sexual harassment even if proved,
 2. did not occur in the School's education program or activity, or
 3. did not occur against a person in the United States,
 then the district must dismiss the formal complaint with regard to that conduct for purposes of sexual harassment under Title IX.
- However, such a dismissal does not preclude action under another provision of the district's code of conduct.



Permissive Grounds for Dismissal

The district may also dismiss the formal complaint or any allegations therein, if at any time during the investigation:

1. a complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the complainant would like to withdraw the formal complaint or any allegations therein;
2. the respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the district; or
3. specific circumstances prevent the district from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination as to the formal complaint or allegations therein.



Informal Resolution

- Cannot require that the student or employee waive their right to the grievance process
- **ONLY AFTER A FORMAL COMPLAINT IS FILED**--Cannot go forward with an informal process for sexual harassment allegations prior to there being a formal complaint
- Obtain voluntary written consent—cannot require participation
- Not permitted for allegations that an employee sexually harassed a student
- Written notice to the parties is required, disclosing:
 1. the allegations,
 2. the requirements of the informal resolution process including the circumstances under which it precludes the parties from resuming a formal complaint arising from the same allegations,
 3. that at any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process and resume the grievance process with respect to the formal complaint, and
 4. any consequences resulting from participating in the informal resolution process, including the records that will be maintained or could be shared



Recordkeeping

- Keep for 7 years
- Investigation Records
- Appeal Records
- Informal Resolution Records
- Training Materials
- Response to all reports and formal complaints



No Retaliation Provision Added For All Sex Discrimination Complaints

- No recipient or other person may intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by title IX or this part, or because the individual has made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this part.
- Intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination, including charges against an individual for code of conduct violations that do not involve sex discrimination or sexual harassment, but arise out of the same facts or circumstances as a report or complaint of sex discrimination, or a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment, for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by title IX or this part, constitutes retaliation.
- Complaints alleging retaliation may be filed according to the grievance procedures for sex discrimination complaints not alleging sexual harassment



Maintain Confidentiality

- The recipient must keep confidential the identity of any individual who has made a report or complaint of sex discrimination, including any individual who has made a report or filed a formal complaint of sexual harassment, any complainant, any individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of sex discrimination, any respondent, and any witness, except as may be permitted by [FERPA], or as required by law, or to carry out the purposes of [Title IX], including the conduct of any investigation, hearing, or judicial proceeding arising thereunder.



**Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators
that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator**

Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator

- CALL THE TITLE IX COORDINATOR IMMEDIATELY
- Report all knowledge of sexual harassment or alleged sexual harassment
- DO NOT start the investigation yourself
- DO NOT impose discipline for alleged sexual harassment, without ensuring that the Title IX process is followed or does not apply



Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator

- If a report is made to you and you are unable to involve the Title IX Coordinator before details are given by the reporter, immediately pass on all information received from the reporter to the Title IX Coordinator.
- Be familiar with the Title IX definition of sexual harassment
- Be familiar with the scope of the district's educational program or activity
- Discuss police involvement with legal and Title IX Coordinator



Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator *cont.*

- Assist with supportive measures as requested
- Assist with any resolutions from informal resolution agreements
- Assist with remedies as requested
- Assist with instituting discipline recommended by decision-maker



Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator *cont.*

- Keep parties and information confidential
- Keep documentation of incidents that occur
- Keep documentation of supportive measures/remedies that are instituted



Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator *cont.*

- Notify Title IX Coordinator if Respondent or Complainant withdraws or quits
- Direct students/parents to the Title IX policy and Title IX Coordinator when information is requested
- Recognize and report acts of retaliation



Responsibilities for Staff and Administrators that are NOT the Title IX Coordinator *cont.*

- Report knowledge of allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator EVEN IF the Complainant/reporter does not want you to
- Know that you may not be told what the final decision is after Title IX proceedings conclude—need to know basis



If you are the witness in a Title IX investigation...

- Be honest
- What you say is being notated and will be shared with the parties and the decision-maker.
- You cannot be retaliated against for participating in the process. Report any retaliation.
- Provide answers based on personal knowledge. Do not guess or give opinions.



Breakout Sessions

Discuss the following hypotheticals within break out rooms, then we'll reconvene



Does this conduct fall under the District's Title IX policy? And what are the next steps?

1. A student has been posting comments on TikTok about another student's body while at home after school hours. Some viewers were classmates, and they forward the TikTok to you.
2. A Co-Teacher forwards you a text from an Administrator where the Administrator is complimenting the teacher's body and asking them to meet up for drinks.
3. During a mentor meetup, a student tells you that a student from their home district slapped them on their buttocks during soccer practice.
4. You see that a student in tenth grade has called another student in the VLAC program a sexually offensive slur in a VLAC program virtual chat. What if this student was in fourth grade?



Discuss the following hypotheticals within break out rooms, then we'll reconvene



Does this conduct fall under the District's Title IX policy? And what are the next steps?

5. A student emails you that another student in the VLAC program has been texting them frequently on their personal phone during class. They say that in the texts, the student makes comments about the student's private body parts, and frequently asks the student to go on a date with them.
6. During a school field trip, a couple third-grade students repeatedly made fun of the way another third-grade student was dressed, saying that the student was dressed like a boy. Many of the comments were made in front of other students.
7. A group of students were meeting in a virtual breakout room, and as you join in to the conversation, you overhear two students who are dating discussing their sexual conduct. One of them mentions that the other made them to do something they didn't want to do.
8. A student was meeting with a mentor individually online to go over test answers, and the student alleges that during that meeting the mentor asked them whether they've had sex, and if so, with who.



Disclaimer

- These training materials are informational in nature and should not be construed as legal advice and are not provided to address specific grievance situations.
- Consult with your legal counsel as necessary to address specific Title IX report and grievance situations and investigations.

