

Students

Harassment of Students Prohibited¹

No person, including a School District employee, agent, or student, shall harass, intimidate, or bully a student on the basis of actual or perceived: race; color; national origin; military status; unfavorable discharge status from military service; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity²; gender-related identity or expression; ancestry; age; religion; physical or mental disability; order of protection status; status of being homeless; actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy; physical appearance; socioeconomic status; academic status; association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics; or any other distinguishing characteristic. The District will not tolerate harassing, intimidating conduct, or bullying whether verbal, physical, sexual, or visual, that affects the tangible benefits of education, that unreasonably interferes with a student's educational performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. Examples of prohibited conduct include name-calling, using derogatory slurs, stalking, sexual violence, causing psychological harm, threatening or causing physical harm, threatened

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¹ State or federal law requires this subject matter be covered by policy, controls this policy's content, and 105 ILCS 5/10-20.71 requires that every two years, each district within an Illinois county served by an accredited Children's Advocacy Center review all its existing sexual abuse investigation policies and procedures to ensure consistency with 105 ILCS 5/22-85. Each district must also have a policy on bullying. 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, amended by P.A. 103-47; see sample policy 7:180, *Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment*.

This policy's list of protected classifications aligns with the list in sample policy 7:180, *Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment*. The protected classifications are found in 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7(a), amended by P.A. 103-47; 775 ILCS 5/1-103; 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.240.

The list of protected classifications in sample policy 7:10, *Equal Educational Opportunities*, is different – it does not contain the classifications that are exclusively identified in the bullying statute. 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, amended by P.A. 103-47.

The Ill. Human Rights Act (IHRA) and an Ill. State Board of Education (ISBE) rule prohibit schools from discriminating against students on the basis of *sexual orientation* and *gender identity*. 775 ILCS 5/5-101(11); 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.240. *Sexual orientation* is defined as the "actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or gender related identity, whether or not traditionally associated with the person's designated sex at birth." 775 ILCS 5/1-103(O-1). *Gender identity* is included in the definition of sexual orientation in the Act. The Act permits schools to maintain single-sex facilities that are distinctly private in nature, e.g., restrooms and locker rooms. 775 ILCS 5/5-103. Additionally, *race* is defined to include traits associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles such as braids, locks, and twists. 775 ILCS 5/1-103(M-5). 775 ILCS 5/1-102(A), added *order of protection status* to its list of protected categories. IHRA's jurisdiction regarding schools as a public accommodation is specifically limited to: (1) failing to enroll an individual, (2) denying access to facilities, goods, or services, or (3) failing to take corrective action to stop severe or pervasive harassment of an individual. 775 ILCS 5/5-102.2. It is also a violation of IHRA if a district is aware of an employee or agent's harassment towards a student but fails to take appropriate action to stop the harassment. 775 ILCS 5/5A-101 and 102, amended by P.A. 103-472.

² See f/n 4 in sample policy 7:10, *Equal Educational Opportunities*, for a discussion about Executive Order (EO) 2019-11 establishing the Affirming and Inclusive Schools Task Force (Task Force) that made policy and administrative procedure recommendations to ISBE that are discussed in its publication *Sample District Policy and Administrative Procedures* at www.isbe.net/supportallstudents.

For boards that want to incorporate ISBE's sample policy recommendation, insert the following in place of "gender identity;": gender; gender identity (whether or not traditionally associated with the student's sex assigned at birth);

If the board inserts this option, it must also insert the options in f/ns 4 and 9 of policy 7:10, *Equal Educational Opportunities*, but note the protected statuses list in this policy is different and should not be copied from here into 7:10, *Equal Educational Opportunities*.

or actual destruction of property, or wearing or possessing items depicting or implying hatred or prejudice of one of the characteristics stated above.³

Sexual Harassment Prohibited

The District shall provide an educational environment free of verbal, physical, or other conduct or communications constituting harassment on the basis of sex as defined and otherwise prohibited by State and federal law.⁴ See Board policies 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, and 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*.

Making a Report or Complaint

Students are encouraged to promptly report claims or incidents of bullying, intimidation, harassment, sexual harassment, or any other prohibited conduct to the Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Building Principal, Assistant Building Principal, Dean of Students, a Complaint Manager, or any employee with whom the student is comfortable speaking.⁵

Reports under this policy will be considered a report under Board policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, and/or Board policy 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*. The Nondiscrimination

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³ This list of examples of prohibited conduct is optional. While hate speech is not specifically mentioned in this paragraph, any hate speech used to harass or intimidate is banned. Hate speech without accompanying misconduct may be prohibited in response to actual incidents when hate speech interfered with the educational environment. West v. Derby Unified Sch. Dist., 206 F.3d 1358 (10th Cir. 2000).

⁴ Two laws apply to sexual harassment of students in Illinois. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits sexual harassment in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. 20 U.S.C. §1681. Title IX defines sexual harassment as conduct on the basis of sex that meets one or more of the following: (1) a district employee conditions the provision of an aid, benefit, or service on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct; (2) unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it 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 in federal law. 34 C.F.R. §106.30. See sample policy 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, and sample exhibit 2:265-E, *Title IX Glossary of Terms*. Consult the board attorney to ensure the nondiscrimination coordinator and complaint managers are trained to appropriately respond to allegations of Title IX sexual harassment. See sample procedures 2:265-API, *Title IX Response*, and 2:265-AP2, *Formal Title IX Complaint Grievance Process*.

IHRA prohibits any district employee or agent from sexually harassing a student, and defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors made to a student, or any conduct of a sexual nature toward a student, when: (1) such conduct has the purpose of substantially interfering with the student's educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment; or (2) the district employee or agent either explicitly or implicitly makes the student's submission to or rejection of such conduct as a basis for making various enumerated education-related determinations. 775 ILCS 5/5A-101(E).

School districts are liable for damage awards for an employee's sexual harassment of a student in limited situations. Liability occurs only when a district official who, at a minimum, has authority to institute corrective action, has actual notice of and is deliberately indifferent to the employee's misconduct. Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent Sch. Dist., 524 U.S. 274 (1998). Schools are liable in student-to-student sexual harassment cases when school agents are deliberately indifferent to sexual harassment, of which they have actual knowledge that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school. Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Educ., 526 U.S. 629 (1999). The Ill. Dept. of Human Rights investigates charges of sexual harassment in violation of the IHRA, and it is a civil rights violation when a district fails to take remedial or disciplinary action against an employee the district knows engaged in sexual harassment. 775 ILCS 5/5A-102.

⁵ Using "or any employee with whom the student is comfortable speaking" ensures compliance with Title IX regulations providing that "any employee" of an elementary or secondary school who has notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment is deemed to have *actual knowledge* which triggers a district's duty to respond. 34 C.F.R. §106.30. By including "any employee" in this list, this policy contains an item on which collective bargaining may be required. Any policy that impacts upon wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment is subject to collective bargaining upon request by the employee representative, even if the policy involves an inherent managerial right.

Coordinator, Title IX Coordinator, and/or Complaint Manager or designee shall process and review the report according to the appropriate grievance procedure. The Superintendent shall insert into this policy the names, office addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of the District's current Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Title IX Coordinator, and Complaint Managers.^{6 7}

Nondiscrimination Coordinator:

Title IX Coordinator:

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

Complaint Managers:

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

The Superintendent shall use reasonable measures to inform staff members and students of this policy by including:

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⁶ While the names and contact information are required by law to be listed, they are not part of the adopted policy and do not require board action. This allows for additions and amendments to the names and contact information when necessary. It is important for updated names and contact information to be inserted into this policy and regularly monitored.

Each district must communicate its bullying policy to students and their parents/guardians. 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, amended by P.A. 103-47; see sample policy 7:180, *Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment*.

⁷ Title IX regulations require districts to identify the name, office address, email address, and telephone number of the person who is responsible for coordinating the district's compliance efforts. 34 C.F.R. §106.8(a). For further discussion of the Title IX Coordinator, see f/n 17 in sample policy 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*. A district's Nondiscrimination Coordinator often also serves as its Title IX Coordinator.

1. For students, age-appropriate information about the contents of this policy in the District's student handbook(s), on the District's website, and, if applicable, in any other areas where policies, rules, and standards of conduct are otherwise posted in each school.⁸
2. For staff members, this policy in the appropriate employee handbook(s), if applicable, and/or in any other areas where policies, rules, and standards of conduct are otherwise made available to staff.

Investigation Process

Any District employee who receives a report or complaint of harassment must promptly forward the report or complaint to the Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Title IX Coordinator, or a Complaint Manager. Any employee who fails to promptly comply may be disciplined, up to and including discharge.

Reports and complaints of harassment will be confidential to the greatest extent practicable, subject to the District's duty to investigate and maintain an educational environment that is productive, respectful, and free of unlawful discrimination, including harassment.

For any report or complaint alleging sexual harassment that, if true, would implicate Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*), the Title IX Coordinator or designee shall consider whether action under Board policy 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, should be initiated.

For any report or complaint alleging harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin, the Nondiscrimination Coordinator or a Complaint Manager or designee shall investigate under Board policy 2:270, *Discrimination and Harassment on the Basis of Race, Color, and National Origin Prohibited*.

For any other alleged student harassment that does not require action under Board policies 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, or 2:270, *Discrimination and Harassment on the Basis of Race, Color, and National Origin Prohibited*, the Nondiscrimination Coordinator or a Complaint Manager or designee shall consider whether an investigation under Board policies 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, and/or 7:190, *Student Behavior*, should be initiated, regardless of whether a written report or complaint is filed.

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⁸ In addition to notifying students of Board policies 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, and 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, a district must notify them of the name, office address, email address, and telephone number of district's Title IX Coordinator. 34 C.F.R. §106.8(a). 105 ILCS 5/10-20.69 requires districts to maintain and implement an *age-appropriate* policy on sexual harassment that is included in the school district's student handbook, as well as on a district's website and, if applicable, other areas where such information is posted in each school. The law does not expressly state that the age-appropriate policy is for students; however, that is the most logical interpretation. In practice, most districts maintain a student handbook for each building. Because the law only requires one policy, this policy manages the age-appropriate requirement by directing age-appropriate explanations of the policy be included in the building-level student handbook(s). Student handbooks can be developed by the building principals, but should be reviewed and approved by the superintendent and school board. The Ill. Principals Association maintains a handbook service that coordinates with **PRESS** material, *Online Model Student Handbook (MSH)*, at: www.ilprincipals.org/msh.

Reports That Involve Alleged Incidents of Sexual Abuse of a Child by School Personnel

An *alleged incident of sexual abuse* is an incident of sexual abuse of a child, as defined in⁹ 720 ILCS 5/11-9.1A(b), that is alleged to have been perpetrated by school personnel, including a school vendor or volunteer, that occurred: on school grounds during a school activity; or outside of school grounds or not during a school activity.

Any complaint alleging an incident of sexual abuse shall be processed and reviewed according to Board policy 5:90, *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting*. In addition to reporting the suspected abuse, the complaint shall also be processed under Board policy 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, or Board policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*.

Enforcement

Any District employee who is determined, after an investigation, to have engaged in conduct prohibited by this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Any third party who is determined, after an investigation, to have engaged in conduct prohibited by this policy will be addressed in accordance with the authority of the Board in the context of the relationship of the third party to the District, e.g., vendor, parent/guardian, invitee, etc. Any District student who is determined, after an investigation, to have engaged in conduct prohibited by this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension and expulsion consistent with the behavior policy. Any person making a knowingly false accusation regarding prohibited conduct will likewise be subject to disciplinary action.

Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation against any person for bringing complaints or providing information about harassment is prohibited (see Board policies 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, 2:265, *Title IX Grievance Procedure*, and 2:270, *Discrimination and Harassment on the Basis of Race, Color, and National Origin Prohibited*).

Students should report allegations of retaliation to the Building Principal, an administrator, the Nondiscrimination Coordinator, and/or a Complaint Manager.

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⁹ Required for districts located within a county served by an accredited Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). Delete this subhead if your school district is within a county not served by an accredited CAC. 105 ILCS 5/22-85 (governing the investigation of an *alleged incident of sexual abuse* of any child within any Illinois counties served by a CAC). For a map of accredited CACs, and to identify a CAC that may serve your district, see www.childrensadvocacycentersofillinois.org/about/map. For further discussion see f/ns 14-16 in sample policy 5:90, *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting*.

- LEGAL REF.: 20 U.S.C. §1681 et seq., Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; 34 C.F.R. Part 106.
29 U.S.C. §791 et seq., Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 34 C.F.R. Part 104.
42 U.S.C. §2000d, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; 34 C.F.R. Part 100.
105 ILCS 5/10-20.12, 5/10-22.5, 5/10-23.13, 5/26A, 5/27-1, and 5/27-23.7.
775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq., Illinois Human Rights Act.
23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.240 and Part 200.
Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Educ., 526 U.S. 629 (1999).
Franklin v. Gwinnett Co. Public Schs., 503 U.S. 60 (1992).
Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent Sch. Dist., 524 U.S. 274 (1998).
West v. Derby Unified Sch. Dist. No. 260, 206 F.3d 1358 (10th Cir. 2000).
- CROSS REF.: 2:260 (Uniform Grievance Procedure), 2:265 (Title IX Grievance Procedure), 2:270 (Discrimination and Harassment on the Basis of Race, Color, and National Origin Prohibited), 4:165 (Awareness and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Grooming Behaviors), 5:20 (Workplace Harassment Prohibited), 5:90 (Abused and Neglected Child Reporting), 5:120 (Employee Ethics; Code of Professional Conduct; and Conflict of Interest), 7:10 (Equal Educational Opportunities), 7:180 (Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment), 7:185 (Teen Dating Violence Prohibited), 7:190 (Student Behavior), 7:240 (Conduct Code for Participants in Extracurricular Activities), 7:255 (Students Who are Parents, Expectant Parents, or Victims of Domestic or Sexual Violence)