

School Board

Title IX Grievance Procedure¹

Sexual harassment affects a student's ability to learn and an employee's ability to work. Providing an educational and workplace environment free from sexual harassment is an important District goal. The District does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any of its education programs or activities, and it complies with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and its implementing regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106) concerning everyone in the District's education programs and activities, including applicants for employment, students, parents/guardians, employees, and third parties.

Title IX Sexual Harassment Prohibited

Sexual harassment as defined in Title IX (Title IX Sexual Harassment) is prohibited. Any person, including a District employee or agent, or student, engages in Title IX Sexual Harassment when that person engages in conduct on the basis of an individual's sex that satisfies one or more of the following:²

1. A District employee conditions the provision of an aid, benefit, or service on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;³ or

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¹ Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) (20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*) requires this subject matter be covered by policy and controls this policy's content. This policy contains items 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. Employee grievance procedures are a mandatory subject of bargaining and cannot be changed without the employee exclusive representative's consent. This policy and its companion policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, are in addition to, and not a substitute for, the employee grievance procedure contained in a collective bargaining agreement.

For the sake of consistency and ease of administration, this policy addresses only Title IX sexual harassment grievances, except those contained in collective bargaining agreements. See the cross references for the policies referring to this Title IX sexual harassment grievance procedure policy.

A district must have at least one policy explicitly stating it does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs or activities under Title IX and its implementation regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106). 34 C.F.R. §106.8(b)(1). Title IX jurisdiction is geographically limited to discrimination against a person in the United States. 34 C.F.R. §106.8(d). While all complaints of sexual harassment may not constitute sexual harassment under Title IX, Title IX's reach is broad because an alleged complainant or alleged respondent may be *anyone* in the District's educational program or activity in the United States – including applicants for employment, students, parents/guardians, any employee, and third parties.

² 34 C.F.R. §106.30. The definition of *sexual harassment* in the policy and in Title IX includes *unwelcome* conduct. *Id.* However, case law does not always distinguish between *welcome* and *unwelcome* conduct. See *Mary M. v. North Lawrence Community Sch. Corp.*, 131 F.3d 1220 (7th Cir. 1997) (8th grade student did not need to show that a school employee's sexual advances were *unwelcome* in order to prove sexual harassment).

³ 34 C.F.R. §106.30. This behavior is commonly called *quid pro quo* sexual harassment. See 85 Fed. Reg. 30036, f/n 94. By using the term *individual*, Title IX regulations do not limit *quid pro quo* sexual harassment to situations where the provision of an aid, benefit or service by an employee is conditioned on a current *student's* participation in unwelcome sexual conduct. By way of example, *quid pro quo* Title IX sexual harassment involving an employee and an individual other than a current student may be implicated when: an employee tells a former student she can only get a letter of recommendation if she participates in unwelcome sexual conduct; an employee selects a volunteer for a coveted field trip chaperone position if he participates in unwelcome sexual conduct; or a supervisory employee subjects a subordinate employee to unwelcome sexual conduct in exchange for a promotion.

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 educational program or activity; or
3. *Sexual assault* as defined in 20 U.S.C. §1092(f)(6)(A)(v), *dating violence* as defined in 34 U.S.C. §12291(a)(11), *domestic violence* as defined in 34 U.S.C. §12291(a)(12), or *stalking* as defined in 34 U.S.C. §12291(a)(36). ⁴

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, touching, rape, sexual battery, sexual abuse, sexual coercion, crude jokes or pictures, discussions of sexual experiences, teasing related to sexual characteristics, and spreading rumors related to a person's alleged sexual activities.

Definitions from 34 C.F.R. §106.30

Complainant means an individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment. ⁵

Education program or activity includes locations, events, or circumstances where the District has substantial control over both the *Respondent* and the context in which alleged sexual harassment occurs. ⁶

Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint means a document filed by a *Complainant* or signed by the Title IX Coordinator⁷ alleging sexual harassment against a *Respondent* and requesting that the District investigate the allegation. ⁸

Respondent means an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of the conduct that could constitute sexual harassment. ⁹

Supportive measures mean non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge to the *Complainant* or the *Respondent* before or after the filing of a Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint or where no Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint has been filed. ¹⁰

Title IX Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response

The Superintendent or designee will ensure that the District prevents and responds to allegations of Title IX Sexual Harassment as follows:

1. Ensures that the District's comprehensive health education program in Board policy 6:60, *Curriculum Content*, incorporates (a) age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and

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⁴ See sample exhibit 2:265-E, *Title IX Glossary of Terms*, for these definitions and other definitions of italicized terms in this policy. Title IX regulations at 34 C.F.R. §106.30 contain pinpoint citations to the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) (34 U.S.C. §12291 *et seq.*) for the definitions of *dating violence*, *domestic violence*, and *stalking*. VAWA was reauthorized in 2022 and the citations changed; however, 34 C.F.R. §106.30 has not been updated. This policy uses the updated VAWA citations.

⁵ 34 C.F.R. §106.30.

⁶ 34 C.F.R. §106.44(a).

⁷ See f/n 17 in sample policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*.

⁸ 34 C.F.R. §106.30.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* See sample administrative procedure 2:265-AP1, *Title IX Response*, for further discussion of supportive measures.

prevention programs in grades pre-K through 12,¹¹ and (b) age-appropriate education about the warning signs, recognition, dangers, and prevention of teen dating violence in grades 7-12.¹² This includes incorporating student social and emotional development into the District's educational program as required by State law and in alignment with Board policy 6:65, *Student Social and Emotional Development*.

2. Incorporates education and training for school staff as recommended by the Superintendent, Title IX Coordinator, Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Building Principal, Assistant Building Principal, Dean of Students, or a Complaint Manager. ¹³
3. Notifies applicants for employment,¹⁴ students, parents/guardians, employees, and collective bargaining units of this policy and contact information for the Title IX Coordinator by, at a minimum, prominently displaying them on the District's website, if any, and in each handbook made available to such persons. ¹⁵

Making a Report

A person who wishes to make a report under this Title IX grievance procedure may make a report to the Title IX Coordinator, Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Building Principal, Assistant Building Principal, Dean of Students, a Complaint Manager, or any employee with whom the person is comfortable speaking. ¹⁶

School employees shall respond to incidents of sexual harassment by promptly making or forwarding the report to the Title IX Coordinator. An employee who fails to promptly make or forward a report may be disciplined, up to and including discharge.

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¹¹ Required by 105 ILCS 110/3 and 105 ILCS 5/10-23.13 (*Erin's Law*).

¹² Required by *Id.* at 110/3.

¹³ 105 ILCS 110/3. Detailed training requirements exist for Title IX coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process. 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b)(1)(iii). Title IX rules "[leave districts] discretion to determine the kind of training to other employees that will best enable the [district], and its Title IX Coordinator, to meet Title IX obligations." 85 Fed. Reg. 30114. Many attorneys agree the best practice is to train all district staff about the definition of sexual harassment, the scope of the district's education program or activity, all relevant district policies and procedures, and the necessity to promptly forward all reports of sexual harassment to the Title IX coordinator. See sample administrative procedure 2:265-AP1, *Title IX Response*.

¹⁴ If your district is covered by Subpart C of Title IX, which "applies only to institutions of vocational education, professional education, graduate higher education, and public institutions of undergraduate higher education," amend this to state "applicants for admission or employment." 34 C.F.R. §106.15(d).

¹⁵ 34 C.F.R. §106.8. See sample exhibit 2:250-E2, *Immediately Available District Public Records and Web-Posted Reports and Records*.

¹⁶ Using "or any employee with whom the Complainant is comfortable speaking" ensures Title IX compliance because Title IX deems "any employee" of an elementary or secondary school who has notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment to have *actual knowledge*. Therefore, a report to any employee triggers a district's duty to respond. 34 C.F.R. §106.30. This policy contains an item upon which collective bargaining may be required. Any policy that impacts 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.

The Superintendent shall insert into this policy and keep current the name, office address, email address, and telephone number of the Title IX Coordinator. ¹⁷

Title IX Coordinator:

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

Processing and Reviewing a Report

Upon receipt of a report made under this Title IX grievance procedure, the Title IX Coordinator and/or designee will promptly contact 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 Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint, and (4) explain to the Complainant the process for filing a Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint. ¹⁸

Further, the Title IX Coordinator will analyze the report to identify and determine whether there is another or an additional appropriate method(s) for processing and reviewing it.¹⁹ For any report received, the Title IX Coordinator shall review Board policies 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*; 5:20, *Workplace Harassment Prohibited*; 5:90, *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting*; 5:120, *Employee Ethics; Code of Professional Conduct; and Conflict of Interest*;²⁰ 7:20, *Harassment of Students Prohibited*; 7:180, *Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment*; 7:185, *Teen Dating Violence Prohibited*; and 7:190, *Student Behavior*, to determine if the allegations in the report require further action.

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¹⁷ Title IX regulations require districts to designate and authorize an employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX and to refer to that employee as the *Title IX Coordinator*. 34 C.F.R. §106.8(a). Districts must identify the Title IX Coordinator by name, office address, email address, and telephone number. *Id.* If a district has more than one Title IX Coordinator, it should designate one of its Title IX Coordinators to retain ultimate oversight to ensure the district's consistent compliance with its responsibilities under Title IX and its implementing regulations. A district's Nondiscrimination Coordinator often also serves as its Title IX Coordinator. See sample policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*.

The Title IX Coordinator with ultimate oversight should be listed in this policy. While the name and contact information is 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 name and contact information when necessary. It is important for updated name and contact information to be inserted into this policy and regularly monitored.

¹⁸ Required by 34 C.F.R. §106.44(a) and (b) regardless of whether a formal Title IX sexual harassment complaint is filed.

¹⁹ See sample exhibit 2:265-E, *Title IX Glossary of Terms*, for a discussion of Title IX sexual harassment and non-Title IX sexual harassment. Consult the board attorney for further guidance.

²⁰ See sample administrative procedure 5:120-AP2, *Employee Conduct Standards*.

Reports of alleged sexual harassment will be confidential to the greatest extent practicable, subject to the District's duty to investigate and maintain an educational program or activity that is productive, respectful, and free of sexual harassment.

Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Grievance Process

When a Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint is filed, the Title IX Coordinator will investigate it or appoint a qualified person to undertake the investigation. ²¹

The Superintendent or designee shall implement procedures to ensure that all Formal Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaints are processed and reviewed according to a Title IX grievance process that fully complies with 34 C.F.R. §106.45.²² The District's grievance process shall, at a minimum: ²³

1. Treat *Complainants* and *Respondents* equitably by providing remedies to a *Complainant* where the *Respondent* is determined to be responsible for sexual harassment, and by following a grievance process that complies with 34 C.F.R. §106.45 before the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions or other actions against a *Respondent*.
2. Require an objective evaluation of all relevant evidence – including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence – and provide that credibility determinations may not be based on a person's status as a *Complainant*, *Respondent*, or witness.
3. Require that any individual designated by the District as a Title IX Coordinator, investigator, decision-maker, or any person designated by the District to facilitate an informal resolution process:
 - a. Not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual *Complainant* or *Respondent*.
 - b. Receive training on the definition of sexual harassment, the scope of the District's education program or activity, how to conduct an investigation and grievance process (including hearings, appeals, and informal resolution processes, as applicable), and how to serve impartially. ²⁴
4. Require that any individual designated by the District as an investigator receiving training on issues of relevance to create an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence.

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²¹ This policy gives Title IX coordinators the flexibility to appoint another qualified individual to conduct an investigation. This may be appropriate when the neutrality or efficacy of the Title IX coordinator is an issue, and/or where the district wishes to have the expertise that an in-house or outside attorney may afford to an investigation. Alternative appointments are often made in consultation with the superintendent or other district-level administrator (except in cases involving complaints about those individuals) and the board attorney. If a complaint involves the superintendent or other district-level administrator, alternative appointments are often made in consultation with the board and the board attorney.

²² 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b). See sample administrative procedures 2:265-AP1, *Title IX Response*, and 2:265-AP2, *Formal Title IX Complaint Grievance Process*.

²³ 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b)(1) lists the basic requirements for a grievance process.

²⁴ Aside from the general training requirements of 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b)(1)(iii), the DOE gives districts flexibility to determine certain training practices or techniques to best meet training requirements based upon their unique local conditions and resources within their educational community. 85 Fed. Reg. 30120. See also 85 Fed. Reg. 30084 (declining to specify that training of Title IX personnel must include implicit bias training, so long as training provides instruction on how to serve impartially and avoid prejudgment of the facts at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias, and that training materials avoid sex stereotypes).

5. Require that any individual designated by the District as a decision-maker receive training²⁵ on issues of relevance of questions and evidence, including when questions and evidence about the *Complainant's* sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant.
6. Include a presumption that the *Respondent* is not responsible for the alleged conduct until a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process.
7. Include reasonably prompt timeframes for conclusion of the grievance process.
8. Describe the range of possible disciplinary sanctions and remedies the District may implement following any determination of responsibility.
9. Base all decisions upon the *preponderance of evidence* standard.²⁶
10. Include the procedures and permissible bases for the *Complainant* and *Respondent* to appeal.
11. Describe the range of *supportive measures* available to *Complainants* and *Respondents*.
12. Not require, allow, rely upon, or otherwise use questions or evidence that constitute, or seek disclosure of, information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless the person holding such privilege has waived the privilege.²⁷

Enforcement

Any District employee who is determined, at the conclusion of the grievance process, to have engaged in sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Any third party who is determined, at the conclusion of the grievance process, to have engaged in sexual harassment 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, invitee, etc. Any District student who is determined, at the conclusion of the grievance process, to have engaged in sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, suspension and expulsion consistent with

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²⁵ While live hearings are only required for postsecondary institutions, elementary and secondary schools may choose to offer them as part of their grievance process. **Consult the board attorney if the board wants the district to use a live hearing in its grievance process.**

If using a live hearing during the grievance process, amend #5 by inserting the following underscored text: “Require that any individual designated by the District as a decision-maker receive training on any technology to be used at a live hearing and on issues of relevance of questions and evidence, including when questions and evidence about the *Complainant's* sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant.”

²⁶ 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b)(1)(vii) requires the Title IX sexual harassment grievance process to state the standard of proof it will use to determine responsibility of the respondent. The standard of proof selected must be applied “consistently to formal complaints alleging Title IX sexual harassment regardless of whether the respondent is a student or an employee.” 85 Fed. Reg. 30373. This sample policy uses the *preponderance of evidence* standard of proof, not the *clear and convincing evidence* standard of proof. *Preponderance of evidence* is a standard of proof used in civil cases. It means “the greater weight of the evidence, not necessarily established by the greater number of witnesses testifying to a fact but by evidence that has the most convincing force.” See *Black's Law Dictionary*, 11th ed. 2019. *Preponderance of evidence* is the standard of proof used in sample policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*. *Clear and convincing* is a higher standard of proof, requiring more than *preponderance of evidence* but less than proof beyond a reasonable doubt. It means “evidence indicating that the thing to be proved is highly probable or reasonably certain.” See *Black's Law Dictionary*, 11th ed. 2019. **Consult the board attorney regarding the appropriate standard of proof for the district, as well as implications if a different standard of proof is used in this policy than in 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*.** For boards that choose the *clear and convincing evidence* standard of proof, delete “*preponderance of*” and insert “*clear and convincing*.” Ensure the same standard of proof is used in 2:265-AP2, *Formal Title IX Complaint Grievance Process*.

²⁷ Examples of legally recognized privileges include attorney-client privilege, doctor-patient privilege, and spousal privilege. See 85 Fed. Reg. 30277.

student behavior policies.²⁸ Any person making a knowingly false accusation regarding sexual harassment will likewise be subject to disciplinary action.

This policy does not increase or diminish the ability of the District or the parties to exercise any other rights under existing law.²⁹

Retaliation Prohibited³⁰

The District prohibits any form of retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, has made a report or complaint, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in any manner in a proceeding under this policy. Any person should report claims of retaliation using Board policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*.³¹

Any person who retaliates against others for reporting or complaining of violations of this policy or for participating in any manner under this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, with regard to employees, or suspension and expulsion, with regard to students.

LEGAL REF.: 20 U.S.C. §1681 et seq., Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; 34 C.F.R. Part 106.

Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Educ., 526 U.S. 629 (1999).

Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent Sch. Dist., 524 U.S. 274 (1998).

CROSS REF.: 2:260 (Uniform Grievance Procedure), 5:10 (Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Recruitment), 5:20 (Workplace Harassment Prohibited), 5:90 (Abused and Neglected Child Reporting), 5:100 (Staff Development Program), 5:120 (Employee Ethics; Code of Professional Conduct; and Conflict of Interest), 6:60 (Curriculum Content), 6:65 (Student Social and Emotional Development), 7:10 (Equal Educational Opportunities), 7:20 (Harassment of Students Prohibited), 7:180 (Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment), 7:185 (Teen Dating Violence Prohibited), 7:190 (Student Behavior), 7:255 (Students Who are Parents, Expectant Parents, or Victims of Domestic or Sexual Violence)

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²⁸ See sample policies 7:190, *Student Behavior*, and 7:230, *Misconduct by Students with Disabilities*. See also sample policies 7:200, *Suspension Procedures*, and 7:210, *Expulsion Procedures*, for due process requirements when student suspension or expulsion is recommended following a determination of responsibility for Title IX sexual harassment.

²⁹ Examples of rights the district or parties may exercise ancillary to this Title IX grievance procedure include, but are not limited to: disciplinary processes for suspensions and expulsions of students under 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6; tenured teacher dismissal proceedings under 105 ILCS 5/24-12; any other pre-termination process required by an applicable collective bargaining agreement, employment policy or procedure, or employment contract; and student appeal of a sex equity grievance decision under 23 Ill. Admin. Code §200.40 (see sample policy 7:10, *Equal Educational Opportunities*).

³⁰ 34 C.F.R. §106.71.

³¹ Retaliation complaints must be processed under sample policy 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*, because they are covered under the district's grievance procedure for resolving non-sexual harassment Title IX complaints. See 34 C.F.R. §106.8(c). Title IX sexual harassment regulations state that "[c]omplaints alleging retaliation may be filed according to the grievance procedures for sex discrimination required to be adopted under §106.8(c)." 34 C.F.R. §106.71.