

8.20—CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL SEX DISCRIMINATION AND SEX-BASED HARASSMENT

The District is committed to providing an academic and work environment that treats all students and employees with respect and dignity. Student achievement and amicable working relationships are best attained in an atmosphere of equal educational and employment opportunity that is free of discrimination. Sex-based harassment is a form of sex discrimination that undermines the integrity of the educational and work environment and will not be tolerated.

The District believes the best policy to create an educational and work environment free from sex discrimination and sex-based harassment is prevention; therefore, the District shall provide informational materials and training to students, parents/legal guardians/other responsible adults, and employees on sex-based harassment. The informational materials and training on sex-based harassment shall be age appropriate and, when necessary, provided in a language other than English or in an accessible format. The informational materials and training shall include, but are not limited to:

- The nature of sex-based harassment;
- The District’s written procedures governing the complaint grievance process;
- The process for submitting a complaint of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment;
- That the district does not tolerate sex-based harassment;
- That students and employees can report inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature without fear of adverse consequences;
- The supports that are available to individuals suffering sex-based harassment; and
- The potential discipline for perpetrating sex-based harassment.

Definitions

“Complainant” means an individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sex discrimination or sex-based harassment.

“Complaint” means an oral or written request to the District that objectively can be understood as a request for the District to investigate and make a determination about alleged sex discrimination or sex-based harassment.

“Education program or activity” includes locations, events, or circumstances where the District exercised substantial control over both the respondent and the context in which the sex discrimination or sex-based harassment occurs.

“Respondent” means an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sex discrimination or sex-based harassment.

“Sex-based harassment” means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. A District employee:
 - a. Conditions the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the District on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct; or

- b. Uses the rejection of unwelcome sexual conduct as the basis for academic decisions affecting that individual;
2. The conduct is:
 - a. Unwelcome; and
 - b. Is subjectively and objectively offensive and so severe, or pervasive, that it limits or denies a person the ability to participate in or benefit from the District's education program or activity based on the totality of the circumstances; or
3. Constitutes:
 - a. Sexual assault;
 - b. Dating violence;
 - c. Domestic violence; or
 - d. Stalking.

“Supportive measures” means individualized services that are offered to the complainant or made available to the respondent designed to restore or preserve equal access to the District’s education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party. The supportive measures must be non-disciplinary and non-punitive in nature; offered before or after the filing of a complaint or where no complaint has been filed; and offered to either party as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge. Examples of supportive measures include, but are not limited to: measures designed to protect the safety of all parties or the District’s educational environment, or deter sex-based harassment; counseling; extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments; modifications of work or class schedules; campus escort services; restrictions on contact between one or more parties; changes in work or class locations; leaves of absence; and increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus.

Within the educational environment, sex-based harassment is prohibited between any of the following: students; employees and students; non-employees and students; employees; and employees and non-employees.

Actionable sex-based harassment is generally established when an individual is exposed to a pattern of objectionable behaviors or when a single, serious act is committed. What is, or is not, sex-based harassment will depend upon all of the surrounding circumstances and may occur regardless of the sex(es) of the individuals involved. Depending upon such circumstances, examples of sex-based harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Making sexual propositions or pressuring for sexual activities;
- Unwelcome touching;
- Writing graffiti of a sexual nature;
- Displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures, or written materials;
- Performing sexual gestures or touching oneself sexually in front of others;
- Telling sexual or crude jokes;
- Spreading rumors related to a person’s alleged sexual activities;
- Discussions of sexual experiences;
- Rating other students or employees as to sexual activity or performance;
- Circulating or showing e-mails or Web sites of a sexual nature;
- Treatment based on an individual’s pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions;

- Intimidation by words, actions, insults, or name calling; and
- Teasing or name-calling related to sexual characteristics or the belief or perception that an individual is not conforming to expected gender roles or conduct or is homosexual, regardless of whether or not the individual self-identifies as homosexual or transgender.

Employees who believe they have been subjected to sex-based harassment are encouraged to submit a report to their immediate supervisor, an administrator, or the Title IX coordinator. Under no circumstances shall an employee be required to first report allegations of sex-based harassment to a school contact person if that person is the individual who is accused of the sex-based harassment. If the District staff member who received a report of alleged sex-based harassment is not the Title IX Coordinator, then the District staff person shall inform the Title IX Coordinator of the alleged sex-based harassment. As soon as reasonably possible after receiving a report of alleged sex-based harassment from another District staff member or after receiving a report directly through any means, the Title IX Coordinator shall contact the complainant to:

- Discuss the availability of supportive measures;
- Consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures;
- Inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a complaint;
- Explain to the complainant the process for filing a complaint; and
- Provide the complainant information on the District's grievance procedures.

Title IX Coordinator Initiated Complaint

In the absence of a complaint or the withdrawal of any or all of the allegations in a complaint, the Title IX Coordinator shall determine whether to initiate a complaint. When determining whether or not to initiate a complaint, the Title IX Coordinator shall consider the following factors, at a minimum:

1. The complainant's request not to proceed with initiation of a complaint;
2. The complainant's reasonable safety concerns regarding initiation of a complaint;
3. The risk that additional acts of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment would occur if a complaint is not initiated;
4. The severity of the alleged sex discrimination or sex-based harassment, including whether it would require the removal of a respondent from campus or imposition of another disciplinary sanction to end the discrimination and prevent its recurrence;
5. The age and relationship of the parties, including whether the respondent is a District employee;
6. The scope of the alleged sex discrimination or sex-based harassment, including information suggesting a pattern, whether the sex discrimination or sex-based harassment is ongoing, or the sex discrimination or sex-based harassment is alleged to have impacted multiple individuals;
7. The availability of evidence to assist a decisionmaker in determining whether sex discrimination or sex-based harassment occurred; and
8. Whether the District could end the alleged sex discrimination and prevent its recurrence without initiating its grievance procedures.

After considering these and other relevant factors, the Title IX Coordinator may initiate a complaint if the Title IX Coordinator determines that the conduct as alleged:

- A. Presents an imminent and serious threat to the health or safety of the complainant or other person; or
- B. Prevents the District from ensuring equal access on the basis of sex to its education program or activity.

If the Title IX Coordinator initiates a complaint, the Title IX Coordinator shall notify the complainant prior to doing so and appropriately address reasonable concerns about the safety of the complainant or others, which may include providing supportive measures.

Supportive Measures

The District shall offer supportive measures to the complainant and make supportive measures available to the respondent that are designed to restore or preserve equal access to the District's education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party before or after the filing of a complaint or where no complaint has been filed. The District shall provide the individualized supportive measures to the complainant unless declined in writing by the complainant and shall make available individualized supportive measures that are non-disciplinary and non-punitive to the respondent. A complainant who initially declined the District's offer of supportive measures may request supportive measures at a later time and the District shall provide individualized supportive measures based on the circumstances when the subsequent request is received.

The Title IX Coordinator shall designate an individual to whom the District's providing, denying, modifying, or terminating of supportive measures may be appealed. The designated individual shall have authority to modify or reverse the District's decision if it is determined that the decision to provide, deny, modify, or terminate the supportive measure(s) was inconsistent with the definition of supportive measures. A party shall have the opportunity to seek additional modification or termination of a supportive measure applicable to them if there is a material change in circumstances.

Students With Disabilities

If a complainant or respondent is a student with a disability, the Title IX Coordinator shall consult with one (1) or more members, as appropriate, of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or the student's 504 team to insure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 throughout the grievance process.

Complaint

A complaint may be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by phone, by mail, or by email. Upon receipt of a complaint, a District shall simultaneously provide the following written notice to the parties who are known:

- Notice of the District's grievance process and a copy of the procedures governing the grievance process;
- Notice of the allegations of sex-based harassment including sufficient details known at the time to allow the parties to respond to the allegations. Sufficient details include:
 - The identities of the parties involved in the incident, if known;

- The conduct allegedly constituting sex-based harassment; and
- The date and location of the alleged incident, if known;
- A statement 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;
- A statement that retaliation is prohibited;
- That the parties may have an advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney;
- That the parties may inspect and review evidence relevant, and not otherwise impermissible, to the complaint of sex-based harassment; and
- That the District's personnel policies and code of conduct prohibits knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.

If, in the course of an investigation, the District decides to investigate allegations about the complainant or respondent that are not included in the previous notice, the District shall simultaneously provide notice of the additional allegations to the parties whose identities are known.

The District may consolidate complaints of allegations of sex-based harassment where the allegations of sex-based harassment arise out of the same facts or circumstances and the complaints are against more than one respondent; or by more than one complainant against one or more respondents; or by one party against the other party. When the District has consolidated complaints so that the grievance process involves more than one complainant or more than one respondent, references to the singular "party", "complainant", or "respondent" include the plural, as applicable.

When investigating a complaint and throughout the grievance process, a District shall:

- Ensure that the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination regarding responsibility rest on the District and not on the parties;
- Not require, allow, rely upon, or otherwise use questions or evidence that constitute, or seek disclosure of, information protected under a legally recognized privilege or 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 District obtains the parent, legal guardian, or other responsible adult of that party's voluntary, written consent or that party's voluntary, written consent if the party is over the age of eighteen (18) to do so for the grievance process;
- Provide an equal opportunity for the parties to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses, and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence;
- Not restrict the ability of either party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather and present relevant evidence;
- Provide the parties with the same opportunities to have others present during any grievance proceeding, including the opportunity to be accompanied to any related meeting or proceeding by the advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, and not limit the choice or presence of advisor for either the complainant or respondent in any meeting or grievance proceeding;

- Provide, to a party whose participation is invited or expected, written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of all hearings, investigative interviews, or other meetings, with sufficient time for the party to prepare to participate;
- Provide both parties an equal opportunity to inspect and review any evidence obtained as part of the investigation that is directly related to the allegations raised in the complaint so that each party can meaningfully respond to the evidence prior to the conclusion of the investigation; this includes evidence:
 - Whether obtained from a party or other source;
 - The District does not intend to rely upon in reaching a determination regarding responsibility; and
 - That is either Inculpatory or exculpatory; and
- Create an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence.

At least five (5) days prior to completion of the investigative report, the District shall 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 shall have at least five (5) days to submit a written response to the evidence. The investigator will consider the written responses prior to completion of the investigative report. All evidence subject to inspection and review shall be available for the parties' inspection and review at any meeting to give each party equal opportunity to refer to such evidence during the meeting.

After the investigative report is sent to the parties, the decision-maker shall:

- Provide 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;
- Allow for additional, limited follow-up questions from each party; and
- To the party proposing the questions, provide an explanation regarding any decision to exclude a question as not relevant. Specifically, questions and evidence about the complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, unless such questions and evidence about the complainant's prior sexual behavior are offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct alleged by the complainant, or if the questions and evidence concern specific incidents of the complainant's prior sexual behavior with respect to the respondent and are offered to prove consent.

No earlier than five (5) days following the completion of the investigation period, the decision-maker shall issue a written determination regarding responsibility. The written determination shall include:

1. Identification of the allegations potentially constituting sex discrimination or sex-based harassment;
2. A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the complaint through the determination, including:
 - a. Any notifications to the parties;
 - b. Interviews with parties and witnesses;
 - c. Site visits;
 - d. Methods used to gather other evidence; and
 - e. Hearings held;

3. Findings of fact supporting the determination;
4. Conclusions regarding the application of the District's personnel policies or code of conduct to the facts;
5. A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation, including:
 - a. A determination regarding responsibility;
 - b. Any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent; and
 - c. 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; and
6. The procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal.

The written determination shall be provided to the parties simultaneously. The determination regarding responsibility shall become final on the earlier of:

- If an appeal is not filed, the day after the period for an appeal to be filed expires; or
- If an appeal is filed, the date the written determination of the result of the appeal is provided to the parties.

The District shall investigate the allegations in a complaint. If the conduct alleged in the complaint would not constitute sex-based harassment as defined in this policy even if proved; did not occur in the District's education program or activity; or did not occur against a person in the United States, then the District shall dismiss the complaint as not meeting the definition of sex-based harassment under this policy. A dismissal for these reasons does not preclude action under another provision of the District's personnel policies or code of conduct.

The District may dismiss a complaint or any allegations therein, if at any time during the grievance process:

- The complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the complainant would like to withdraw the complaint or any allegations therein;
- The District was unable to identify the respondent after taking reasonable steps to do so;
- The respondent is no longer employed or enrolled at the District;
- Specific circumstances prevent the District from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination as to the complaint or allegations therein; or
- The District determines the conduct alleged in the complaint, even if proven, would not constitute sex discrimination or sex-based harassment.

Upon the dismissal of a complaint for any reason, the District shall promptly send written notice of the dismissal and reason(s) for the dismissal simultaneously to the parties.

The Title IX Coordinator may delegate the investigation or the determination as necessary to prevent a conflict from arising or the appearance of bias, including hiring an individual or individuals to conduct the investigation or to act as the decision-maker when necessary.

Appeals

Either party may appeal a determination regarding responsibility or from a dismissal of a complaint or any allegations therein, on the following bases:

- a. The existence of a procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter;
- b. Discovery of 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, or decision-maker 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. An appeal of the disciplinary sanctions from the initial determination.

For all appeals, the District shall:

1. Notify the other party in writing when an appeal is filed;
2. Simultaneously Provide all parties a written copy of the District's procedures governing the appeal process;
3. Implement appeal procedures equally for both parties;
4. Ensure that the decision-maker for the appeal is not the same person as the decision-maker that reached the original determination regarding responsibility or dismissal, the investigator, or the Title IX Coordinator;
5. Provide all parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome;
6. Issue a written decision describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result; and
7. Provide the written decision simultaneously to both parties.

Confidentiality

Reports of sex discrimination and sex-based harassment, both informal reports and complaints, will be treated in a confidential manner to the extent possible. Limited disclosure may be provided to:

- Individuals who are responsible for handling the District's investigation and determination of responsibility to the extent necessary to complete the District's grievance process;
- Submit a report to the child maltreatment hotline;
- Submit a report to the Professional Licensure Standards Board for reports alleging sex-based harassment by an employee towards a student; or
- The extent necessary to provide either party due process during the grievance process.

Except as listed above, the District shall keep confidential the identity of:

- Any individual who has made a report or complaint of sex discrimination;
- Any individual who has made a report or filed a complaint of sex-based harassment;
- Any complainant;
- Any individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of sex discrimination;
- Any respondent; and
- Any witness.

Any supportive measures provided to the complainant or respondent shall be kept confidential to the extent that maintaining such confidentiality does not impair the ability of the District to provide the supportive measures.

Administrative Leave

The District may place a non-student employee respondent on administrative leave during the pendency of the District's grievance process.

Retaliation Prohibited

Employees who submit a report or file a complaint of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment; testified; assisted; or participate or refused to participate in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing on sex discrimination or sex-based harassment shall not be subjected to retaliation or reprisal in any form, including threats; intimidation; coercion; discrimination; or charges for personnel policy violations that do not involve sex discrimination or sex-based harassment, arise out of the same facts or circumstances as a report or complaint of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment, and are made for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege under this policy. The District shall take steps to prevent retaliation and shall take immediate action if any form of retaliation occurs regardless of whether the retaliatory acts are by District officials, students, or third parties.

Disciplinary Sanctions

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student or employee to be subjected to, or to subject another person to, sex discrimination or sex-based harassment. Following the completion of the District's grievance process, any employee who is found by the evidence to more likely than not have engaged in sex discrimination or sex-based harassment will be subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, termination. No disciplinary sanction or other action that is not a supportive measure may be taken against a respondent until the conclusion of the grievance process.

Employees who knowingly fabricate allegations of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment or purposely provide inaccurate facts shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. A determination that the allegations do not rise to the level of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment alone is not sufficient to conclude that any party made a false allegation or materially false statement in bad faith.

Barriers to reporting

The Title IX Coordinator shall monitor for barriers to reporting information about conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sex-based harassment and shall take steps reasonably calculated to address such barriers.

Records

The District shall maintain the following records for a minimum of seven (7) years:

- Each sex discrimination or sex-based harassment investigation including:
 - Any determination regarding responsibility;
 - Any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent;
 - Any remedies provided to the complainant designed to restore or preserve equal access to the District's education program or activity;

- Any appeal and the result therefrom;
- All materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, and decision-makers;
- Any actions, including any supportive measures, taken in response to a report or complaint of sex discrimination or sex-based harassment, which must include:
 - The basis for the District's conclusion that its response was not deliberately indifferent; and
 - Document:
 - If supportive measures were provided to the complainant, the supportive measures taken designed to restore or preserve equal access to the District's education program or activity; or
 - If no supportive measures were provided to a complainant, document the reasons why such a response was not clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances.
 - Records documenting the actions the District has taken to meet its obligations to eliminate sex discrimination, including reviewing barriers to reporting potential sex discrimination and the employee notification requirements, regarding each notification the Title IX Coordinator received of information about conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination.

Legal References: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.
 34 C.F.R. part 106
 A.C.A. § 6-15-1005
 A.C.A. § 6-18-502
 A.C.A. § 12-18-102

Additional Reference: ASBA Model Policies

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