

INTAKE PROCESS FOR REPORTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Meeting with Complainant

The Title IX Coordinator:

- Promptly schedules a meeting with Complainant and listens to allegations and concerns
- If Complainant describes sexual harassment allegations, the Title IX Coordinator explains the Title IX grievance process
- Informs Complainant of the right to file or **not** to file a formal complaint and the right to supportive measures even if a formal complaint is not filed
- If **no** formal complaint is filed, the Title IX Coordinator informs Complainant of right to file a formal complaint at a later time. The Title IX Coordinator also assesses, despite Complainant's decision, whether to independently initiate a complaint if the failure to initiate an investigation would be clearly unreasonable considering the circumstances (e.g., based on a safety threat)

Meeting with Complainant

The Title IX Coordinator:

- If a formal complaint is filed, Title IX Coordinator gathers the signature of Complainant, parent/guardian and/or Title IX Coordinator
- Informs Complainant of right to request an informal resolution process after submission of a formal complaint and the right to exit informal resolution process at any time
- If a formal complaint is filed, Title IX Coordinator determines if the complaint falls within the scope of mandatory dismissal and simultaneously informs Complainant and Respondent in writing
- Best practice to provide a written summary of the intake meeting to the Complainant

Supportive Measures

1. Requirement to Offer Supportive Measures per §106.30 & §106.44

- Must be offered to Complainant as soon as District has notice of possible Title IX issue and to Respondent after complaint filed

2. Avoid Burden on Parties

- Supportive Measures must be non-punitive, non-disciplinary, and not unreasonably burdensome to the other party

3. Individualized

- Supportive Measures must ensure equal educational access, protect safety, and/or deter sexual harassment

4. Examples of Supportive Measures

- Counseling, course-related adjustments, modify schedule, extend deadlines, campus escort, increased security and monitoring, and/or mutual restrictions on contact between the parties

Discuss Advisor of Choice

- The Title IX regulations provide the Complainant and Respondent with the same opportunities to have “others present” during any grievance proceeding
 - An advisor may be a parent, family member, attorney, or other person
 - The advisor may be present with the person they are advising for any meeting, interview, or hearing, and for the inspection and review of the evidence obtained as part of the investigation
 - The advisor may assist with a written cross-examination process and **shall** ask the cross-examination questions if recipient opts for a live hearing process
 - If a party does not have an advisor to conduct cross-examination at a live hearing, the institution must provide one to the party
 - The institution may establish restrictions on the extent of an advisor’s participation, if restrictions apply equally to both parties

Emergency Removal Option for Students

1. Institution may remove Respondent per § 106.44(c) by undertaking an individualized safety & risk analysis of Respondent:
 - The analysis determines if there is an *immediate threat to the physical health or safety* of any student or other individual arising from the allegations to justify removal
2. Notice to Respondent of Emergency Removal and opportunity to challenge decision immediately following the removal
3. Process **cannot** modify Respondent rights under IDEA, Section 504, or ADA
4. Emergency removal under Title IX is a safety measure; suspension under Ed. Code § 48900 et seq. is a disciplinary measure
5. Provide education to Respondent while removed

Administrative Leave Option

1. Institution may place a non-student employee Respondent on administrative leave, per §106.44(d) during the pendency of a grievance process that complies with §106.45
2. This administrative leave option cannot be construed to modify any rights under Section 504 or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

TITLE IX GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Grievance Process

1. Basic Requirements
2. Notice of Allegations
3. Dismissal of Formal Complaint
4. Consolidation
5. Investigation
6. Written Questions Between Parties
7. Determination of Responsibility
8. Appeals
9. Informal Resolution
10. Recordkeeping

See 34 CFR § 106.45(b)

Basic Requirements

1. Per §106.45(b)(1)(i), treat Complainant and Respondent equitably in the grievance process and related to remedies and sanctions, if any
2. Require objective evaluation of all relevant evidence, including inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
3. Cannot make credibility decisions based on a person's status as Complainant, Respondent, or witness
4. Presume that Respondent is not responsible until a determination is made
5. Follow prompt time frames (estimate 45-90 days)
6. State a standard of evidence (preponderance or clear and convincing). Most K-12 use preponderance of evidence

Notice of Allegations

- **Provide Notice of Allegations to Each Party**
 - **Notice of the institution’s grievance process and informal resolution process**
 - Identification of relevant Board Policies & Administrative Regulations which contain the grievance process and informal resolution process
 - Identification of standard of evidence
 - Right to inspect and review evidence
 - **Notice of allegations with sufficient details, including:**
 - Identification of the parties
 - Description of alleged conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment and the date and location of alleged incident
 - **Review Sample Notice of Allegations**

Notice of Allegations

- **Provide Notice of Allegations to Each Party, continued**

- **Additional Items in Notice of Allegations:**

- Identification of potential policy violations (not just Title IX)
 - Identification of the range of possible disciplinary sanctions and remedies
 - Statement that Respondent is presumed not responsible
 - Notification that a determination of responsibility will be made at the conclusion of the grievance process
 - Notification that each party may have an advisor of choice, who may be an attorney
 - Prohibition against parties knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information

Notice of Allegations

- **If additional allegations are discovered, provide written Notice of *Additional Allegations***
- **Provide written notice of any changes in the process, including:**
 - Delays
 - Meetings
 - Interviews
 - Hearings
 - Appeals
 - Decisions
 - Other

Dismissal of Formal Complaint

- **Required Dismissal per §106.45(b)(3)**
 - Recipient **must** dismiss the formal complaint *if* the conduct alleged :
 - Would not constitute sexual harassment as defined in §106.30 even if proved
 - Did not occur in the recipient's education program or activity
 - Did not occur against a person in the United States
 - Such dismissal does **not** preclude action under another provision of recipient's Code of Conduct, Board Policy/Administrative Regulation or California law

Dismissal of Formal Complaint

- **Permissive Dismissal per §106.45(b)(3)**
 - Recipient **may** dismiss the formal complaint or allegations any time during the investigation or hearing *if* :
 - The Complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing to withdraw the complaint
 - The Respondent is no longer enrolled or employed
 - Special circumstances prevent the recipient from gathering evidence in order to reach a determination
- **All dismissals require written notice & reasons delivered to the parties at the same time**

Consolidation of Formal Complaints

- **A recipient may consolidate formal complaints as to allegations of sexual harassment where the allegations arise out of the same facts or circumstances**
 - Against more than one Respondent;
 - By more than one complainant against one or more respondents; or
 - By one party against the other party (cross-claims)

Investigation

1. Presumption

- The institution must presume Respondent is *not responsible* for the alleged conduct

2. Evidence Gathering

- Investigator for the educational institution has the burden to gather sufficient evidence; the burden to gather evidence is **not** on the Complainant or Respondent
- Investigator cannot gather privileged information without voluntary, written consent (e.g., physician or psychiatrist records, etc.)

3. Written Notice with Time to Prepare

- Provide written notice to the parties for all interviews with sufficient time for the party to prepare to participate

Investigation, continued

4. Equal Opportunity for Parties

- To present witnesses, including fact & expert witnesses and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
- To have an advisor present for any meeting, interview or hearing

5. No “Gag” Orders or Directives

- Cannot restrict the ability of the Complainant or Respondent to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather and present relevant evidence
- Likely can direct parties and witnesses not to tamper with evidence

Investigation, continued

6. Equal Opportunity to Inspect and Review Evidence

- Provide parties with opportunity to meaningfully respond to the evidence *before* the conclusion of the investigation
- Parties may review evidence that is relevant and directly related to the allegations, including evidence which the investigator does *not* intend to rely upon as well as inculpatory and exculpatory evidence regardless of where it was obtained

Investigation, continued

7. Prepare and Share Draft Report of Evidence

- Before completing the Investigative Report, provide a ***Draft Report of Evidence and Attachments*** to both parties and their advisors, if any, via electronic format or a hard copy.
- Provide the parties and advisors, if any, with at least 10 days to review the Draft Report of Evidence and Attachments & submit written responses
- Share any new evidence with the parties and continue the investigation related to new information, if needed
- Consider and incorporate new information and responses in the ***Final Investigative Report***

Investigation, continued

8. Investigator Prepares Final Investigative Report

- Fairly summarize relevant evidence
- Relevant evidence may include credibility assessments

9. Provide Investigative Report to Parties

- At least 10 days prior to a hearing or other time of determination regarding responsibility, send the investigative report to each party and the party's advisor, if any, in an electronic format or a hard copy, for their review and written response
- Review parties' written response(s), revise investigation report if needed, and attach written response(s) to the Investigative Report

Written Questions Between Parties

Before making a decision, the Decision-Maker will facilitate:

1. Written Questions (e.g., Written Cross Examination)

- ***With or without a hearing***, after the investigator has sent the investigative report to the parties and before the decision-maker(s) has reached a determination regarding responsibility, the decision-maker(s) 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(s) must explain any decision to exclude questions as not relevant

2. Rape Shield Protections

- ***With or without a hearing***, evidence about Complainant's prior sexual behavior is ***irrelevant*** unless offered to prove someone else committed the conduct or if offered to prove consent

Determination of Responsibility

1. Decision-Maker Determines Responsibility per §106.45(b)(7):

- Decision-maker must be trained to rule on relevance of questions and repetitive questions
- Must understand the “preponderance of the evidence” or “clear and convincing evidence” standard
- Reminder: The Title IX Coordinator or investigator cannot determine responsibility

2. Written Decision

- The written decision must include the findings of fact, conclusion, and the rationale
- If the Decision-Maker finds responsibility, the written decision should include recommendations for disciplinary sanctions for Respondent, remedies to the Complainant, and how to file an appeal

Informal Resolution Process

1. Optional Process per §106.45(b)(9)

- May use informal resolution process on a case-by-case basis after formal complaint is filed

2. Informed, Mutual Consent

- Both parties must give voluntary, informed, and written consent but cannot be required as a condition of enrollment/employment

3. Right to Withdraw from Informal Process

- Either party can withdraw from informal process at any time and resume formal process

4. Not Suitable for Student vs. Employee Matters

- No informal process for allegations that an **employee** harassed a student

Recordkeeping

1. A recipient must maintain records for 7 years, including records of:

– Each sexual harassment investigation, including:

- Determination regarding responsibility
- Audio or audiovisual recording or transcript, if any, for K-12
- Any disciplinary sanctions imposed on Respondent, if applicable
- Any remedies provided to Complainant, if applicable

Recordkeeping

2. A recipient must maintain records for 7 years, including records of:

- Any appeal and the result of the appeal
- Any informal resolution and the result of the informal process
- All materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, appeal officers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process
 - These training materials must be publicly available on the institution's website
 - If no website, training materials must be available upon request for inspection by the public

Recordkeeping

- 3. For each response required under §106.44, a recipient must create and maintain records for 7 years, including records of:**
- Any actions, including supportive measures, taken in response to a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment.
 - If the recipient did not provide supportive measures, it must document why that decision was not clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances
 - In each instance, recipient must document:
 - Why its response was not deliberately indifferent
 - The measures taken which were designed to restore or preserve equal access to the education program or activity

RETALIATION

Retaliation

1. Section 106.71(a) – Retaliation Prohibited

- 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 because the individual has made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing.

2. Avoiding the Title IX Process May Be Retaliation

- If the alleged behavior falls under Section 106.30 definitions, a recipient cannot use the student conduct process as a way to avoid the rigorous Title IX grievance procedures; such a decision may constitute retaliation.

3. Retaliation Complaints Filed Under Same Process

- Retaliation complaints may be filed under the Section 106.8(c) grievance process.

Retaliation, Continued

4. Confidentiality Required by Recipient

- Recipient must keep identity of Complainant, Respondent, and witness(es) confidential unless required by law “or as necessary to carry out Title IX proceeding”
- Regulations imply that the improper release of this confidential information could be retaliation

5. First Amendment Rights

- Parties exercising their 1st Amendment rights does not constitute retaliation under Section 106.71(a)

6. False Statement Charge

- Recipient charging an individual with making a false statement in bad faith during Title IX process is *not* retaliation
- A responsibility determination (or no responsibility determination) is not sufficient evidence to conclude there was a bad faith false statement

PROPOSED CHANGES

- On June 23, 2022, the U.S. Department of Education released proposed changes to the Title IX Regulations
- If adopted, proposed changes would:
 - Broaden the scope of conduct “on the basis of sex”
 - Broaden definition of “education program or activity”
 - Modify the legal standard for sexual harassment
 - Modify definition of “complaint”
 - Modify intake and investigation process

**THESE CHANGES HAVE NOT BEEN ADOPTED AND
CURRENT REGULATIONS ARE STILL IN PLACE**

Thank You

For questions or comments, please contact:

{ Brooke E. Jimenez
(951) 683-1122
BJimenez@aalrr.com }

aalrr

Atkinson, Andelson
Loya, Ruud & Romo
A Professional Law Corporation