



# Prevention and Response to Sexual Assault and Harassment: A Best Practice Guide for K-12 Schools

Federal law requires all K-12 schools who receive any type of Federal funding to respond to incidents of alleged sexual discrimination pursuant to Title IX guidance from the Department of Education.

## What is Title IX?

Title IX is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities. Sexual discrimination includes all forms of gender-based violence and harassment, sexual assault and abuse, and need not rise to the level of criminal conduct to violate Title IX.

### What are examples of prohibited conduct under Title IX?

- Unwelcome sexual advances;
- Requests for sexual favors;
- Sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct (even electronically or online);
- Harassment based on gender, expression of characteristics perceived as stereotypical for the student's gender, or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity

### Who does Title IX protect?

Title IX protects everyone who interacts with a school from all forms of sexual discrimination, including parents and guardians, students, employees, school visitors and applicants.

### Where do Title IX protections apply?

Title IX applies in all educational programs and activities. This includes school-sponsored activities, school-recognized activities, and travel that occurs away from school.

### What can I do to help prevent sexual discrimination at my school?

- Model a culture of respect;
- Create a positive school (and classroom) climate;
- Have a clear “no tolerance” policy for harassment, discrimination, and violence; and
- Immediately report alleged prohibited conduct to the Title IX Coordinator.

### What can my school do to help protect students from sexual discrimination?

- Provide regular, proper, in-depth trainings for faculty and staff;
- Conduct immediate and appropriate investigations of reports and complaints; and
- Provide appropriate protection, support, and discipline when discrimination occurs.

## How can schools comply with Title IX guidance?

- Appoint a Title IX Coordinator to coordinate the investigation of allegations and any resulting disciplinary process (the Title IX Coordinator must have no other job responsibilities that create a conflict of interest with their duties under Title IX);
- Have an accessible process for complaints, prompt investigation, and hearing/resolution;
- Provide accommodations to students who have been harmed (such as changes in class schedules and preferential use of common spaces) and no-contact directives to alleged perpetrators (these directives should not be mandated on the person who has been harmed);
- Avoid retaliation against anyone who reports sexual discrimination; this includes instances where a school district, students and/or school personnel take an adverse action, such as suspension, schedule changes, or school transfer, against a student because they report or complain about harassment, assault, or discrimination or limit a student's freedom of speech after a report or complaint has been made.