

Title IX Investigators: Running an Investigation

Queen Creek Unified School District

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Disclaimer

The information provided in this document is for informative purposes only and should not be used in place of legal advice.

Title IX

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

U.S. Congress, 1972

Tips

- Title IX Packet Resources
 - Templates
- District Governing Board Policies for Sexual Harassment, Title IX, Bullying

Title IX Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence

- 3 Types in the definition in the regs
- All three require:

**Unwelcome sexual conduct
(no consent)**

+

**Conduct effectively denies (or limits) a
person's equal access to educational
activity**

Review Type 1: Quid Pro Quo

An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.

Review Type 2: Severe, Pervasive and Objectively Offensive

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 school's education program or activity

Type 3: Sexual Assault or Violence

- 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)(10)
- Domestic violence as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8)
- Stalking as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30)

Reminders

- Respondent is presumed not responsible for conduct
- Disciplining Respondent for TIX conduct or conduct directly connected to the TIX conduct = Retaliation
- Both parties must have equal opportunity to present witnesses and evidence

Advisors

- Parties may have an advisor of their choice
- Advisor may be an attorney, but doesn't have to be
- Parents of minor students are not advisors, but do have the right to be there for their child
 - i.e. a minor student may have *both* a parent and another adult advisor present/notified

Parties' Right to Review Evidence

- Have the opportunity to inspect and review evidence collected during the investigation
- Should sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), which does not restrict either party's ability to discuss the allegations or gather and present evidence

Expanding the Investigation

If, during the course of the investigation, additional allegations are brought forward that were not included in the initial notice, alert the Title IX coordinator, who will:

- provide written notice of the additional allegations to the parties
- determine the course of action for the investigation of the addition allegations

Timelines

- You must meet the timelines set out in your district's policy
- The investigation must be reasonably prompt (specific number of days for completion of the process must be established)
- Coordinator can determine if temporary good cause delay (school administrative needs ARE NOT good cause for delay)

Investigator: Requirements

- Must be trained on Title IX regulations
- May be the Title IX Coordinator
- May not be the decisionmaker
- Can be a third party hired for this purpose
- Must not have a conflict of interest

Pre-planning

- Review Title IX sex discrimination and what elements must be established
 - Quid Pro Quo
 - Severe, Pervasive, Objectively Offensive
 - Sexual Violence
- Review the allegations made in the particular matter

Planning

- Interviews?
- Documents?
 - Student/staff records?
 - Server search?
 - Recordings from surveillance cameras?
 - Police report?
- Understand disabilities of persons involved?
- Need an interpreter?

Physical Evidence to Consider

- Attendance records and class schedules
- Discipline records
- Medical or counseling information
- Social media
- Screenshots
- Videos
- Compromising evidence (nude photos/videos) should be redacted and summarized

Note re: Sexual History

The Complainant's sexual predisposition and prior sexual behavior are not relevant, unless:

- It is needed to prove that someone other than the Respondent committed the conduct alleged
- Specific incidents of the Complainant's prior sexual behavior with the Respondent are needed to prove consent

Collecting Evidence

- Do not require or rely on the parties to anticipate and provide you with the evidence you need
- You may not require a party to provide evidence (documentary or verbal) that would be legally protected under attorney-client privilege, doctor-patient privilege, or spousal privilege

Collecting Evidence

- If the parties want to provide otherwise privileged information, you must obtain written, voluntary consent (of parent or adult student) allowing the district to include that evidence (see forms for a template)
- **Even if the school/district has the medical evidence, it may not be used in the investigation without consent**

Interview Notice

- For all interviews, provide written notice of interview: date; time; location; participants; and purpose of any investigation activity that requires a **party's presence**—provide notice with enough time for the party to prepare to participate
- See forms for template

Preparing Questions

- Plan your interview outlines (checklists in forms may be helpful)
 - Go with the flow
 - To the extent reasonable, ask both parties the same questions and then allow the interview to take you down different roads
 - Ask witnesses the same or similar questions

Style

- Avoid putting words in mouth of witness
 - ASK: “How did _____’s behavior make you feel?”
 - DON’T ASK: “Did _____’s behavior upset you?”
- Avoid “why” questions
- Avoid conclusion questions
- Avoid compound questions

Setting the Stage for the Interview

- Summarize Title IX
- Explain process
- Share purpose
- Give the organization's need
- Establish credibility
- Explain investigator role

Interview

- Plan location—private, safe, comfort (tissues)
- Sense of formality
- Reassure no retaliation for participating
- Caution confidentially to both parties and the District
- Put interviewee at ease/develop rapport
- Remember you are wearing your investigator hat

Explain Expectations

- Recording by parties
 - you can decide whether you will allow or not
 - realistically can't control
 - maybe helpful?
- Tell the truth
- Rules for advisors
- Virtual interview—confirm who is present

More Expectations

- Explain that they do not have to provide evidence protected by privilege (and if you use confidential information, you will need consent to disclose)
- Explain that no one may threaten, intimidate, or harass anyone who participates in the process

Questioning Pitfalls

- Arguing or becoming angry
- Showing personal prejudice
- Lying
- Hurrying (plan your schedule carefully)
- Interrupting
- Making assumptions
- Being dismissive
- Making promises

Questioning Pitfalls, cont.

- Losing track of elements of definition
- Leading questions: “When you touched her arm, did you . . .”
- Putting too much value on inconsistencies or irrelevant information
- Accepting one-word responses
- Phrasing things negatively

Questioning Techniques

- Monitor witness's (and parent's) body language
- Take notes
 - Slows process
 - Provides reflection and reference
 - Make sure that you get an answer
- One question at a time
- Wait for a response—do not feel need to fill the silence.

Considerations When Questioning a Child

- “I heard that some students do not feel safe during P.E. class. Have you heard that?” (Follow up: who, what, when, etc.)
 - “Have you ever felt unsafe during P.E. class?” (Follow up)
- *DO NOT use names of parties or witnesses or other potential victims UNLESS and UNTIL the child does

Open-Ended Questions

- “Explain what happened third hour”
- “What are some experiences you have had with...”
- Paraphrase/summarize back
- Start broad and narrow down
 - “Tell me more about...”
 - “What are some other details?”

Nearing end...

- Ensure the pertinence and accuracy of information
- Ask if there is anything else
- Every time more information is given, ask again if there is any else
- Ask if there are others with whom you should speak
- Share relevant evidence or documents

Closing Interview

- Reassure if any concerns raised
- Ask to contact later if something comes to mind
- Inform you may be in touch if you need more information
- Thank and express empathy for their time and cooperation
- Provide your contact information

Closing Interview of Parties

- When you expect concluding interviews and will send evidence
- Give non-disclosure agreement
 - May sign now or return later, before evidence disclosure
- If you do not receive signed NDA, only provide access to review of documents
 - Notify them that access will be facilitated by the Title IX Coordinator and provide contact info

Investigation Tips

- Keep written documentation of all communications
- Update the complainant and respondent periodically as to progress/status (not insight or details of the investigation)—your Title IX Coordinator may do this
- When possible, copy both parties **separately** on responses or when informing the other party

Investigation Tips

- The need to delay: Notify the Title IX coordinator who will notify both parties of Good Cause Delay
- Report any child abuse information not previously reported directly to DCS
- Remember your mandatory reporting obligations
- Report possible crimes to Title IX Coordinator and law enforcement (e.g. threats or photos)

Good Cause Delay Reasons

- Concurrent law enforcement activity
- Witness unavailability
- Illness
- School breaks
- Absence of a party or party's advisor
- Need for language assistance or ADA accommodations
- Overburdened school administrators (true!) is not good cause

Let Title IX Coordinator Know

- Additional Supportive Measures are needed or need to be modified
- Additional allegations that were not included in the initial notice
- New mandatory or permissive dismissal comes to light
- Informal Resolution—if wanted by either party
- Expansion of investigation

Sharing Evidence with Parties

- Form for notice
- Not your personally created reference materials to complete the report (e.g. personal notes)
- Information that will go into the report for the decision-maker
 - Statements
 - Summaries of interviews
 - Documents
 - Records

Redactions

- Check with Title IX Coordinator regarding redaction of witness names
- Must redact information protected by privilege unless there is written consent
- May redact information in the evidence that is not directly related to the allegations
- May not redact confidential information that is directly related and relevant
- Redact disability information related to a 504 Accommodation Plan or an Individualized Education Plan, but give summary of relevant facts

Evidence Sharing with NDA

- Send the signed NDA with evidence
- Provide parties an equal opportunity to inspect and review (with necessary redactions) evidence gathered as part of the investigation that is ***directly related*** to the allegations raised in the complaint; include evidence on which you do not intend to rely in drafting your report

Evidence Sharing with NDA

- Send the evidence to the parties in an electronic and/or hard copy format and allow the parties 10 days to submit a written response
- Send to both parties at the same time
- May begin **drafting** report

Evidence Sharing - No NDA

- Inform Title IX coordinator
- Provide opportunity for physical review of evidence
 - Notify them of their right to access the evidence to review
 - Notify them how they can do this – contacting the Title IX Coordinator w/i the 10 day timeframe to schedule
- No copies or photographs of evidence permitted

Additional Evidence

- The district's Title IX Coordinator will decide whether parties must provide all evidence PRIOR to the disclosure of evidence for review has been provided by the investigator OR whether to allow parties to provide additional evidence after disclosure evidence has been shared

Review Written Responses

- Consider the written responses to be evidence provided by the parties and address in the report
- Consider additional evidence shared after initial disclosure (if allowed)
- Questions submitted for other party should be given to the decision-maker to manage, but noted in your report
- See form for Notice of Party's Written Response to the Evidence

Investigation Report

Use the template from the Title IX forms packet to ensure that you include all of the required elements

Investigation Report

- Be thorough
 - In interview summaries, include observations of witnesses—report on credibility
 - Details and witness observations
 - If you were the decision-maker, what would you NEED to know?
- Decision-maker should not need to contact investigator for clarification

Report Submission

- Email to Title IX coordinator
- Email separately (read receipt) to both parties and copy Title IX coordinator on each and/or mail hard copies
- Send at same time
 - Scheduled/delayed sends are very helpful for this in Outlook, Gmail, etc.

After Submitting the Report

- The Investigator should be done
- However, the Parties have a right to submit questions during the decision-making process so you may be utilized to assist in this.

After Report is Submitted

- Each party has at least 10 days to review the investigation report and provide a written response; District can decide whether to allow additional time or limit it to 10 days
- Decision-maker will consider the written response in addition to the investigation report

Parties' Written Questions to Decision Maker

- Each party may submit relevant questions to the decision-maker to be asked of the other party or a witness.
- If a question is excluded by the decision-maker, he/she must explain why the question is not relevant.
- Each party will be provided answers to its questions and then have a limited opportunity to ask limited follow-up questions

Decision Maker and Decision

- Preponderance—50% + a feather
- More probable that it happened than not
- Plausibility
- Consistency
- Validity

Decision and Remedies

- If there is a finding that the Respondent committed violations of Title IX, discipline will be determined
- If there is a finding that there was no violation of Title IX, no discipline should be discussed—the matter will return to the administration to consider under District's discipline policy
- Supportive Measures may continue

Questions?



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