



# 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 individuals who are participating in or attempting to participate in the school's educational programs or activities. This can include students, employees, parents, guardians, 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 any sex-based conduct, even if it seems minor or you have addressed it initially at the building level, to the Title IX Coordinator.

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

- Provide regular, proper, in-depth trainings for administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents on the prohibitions against sexual harassment and the school's grievance process;
- With authorization from the Title IX Coordinator, immediately and appropriately investigate reports and complaints; and
- With authorization from the Title IX Coordinator, 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 non-disciplinary, non-punitive supportive measures to all parties to complaints of sexual harassment. Examples include voluntary changes in class schedules, schedules for use of common spaces, and mutual no-contact or stay away orders;
- 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.

**If you receive any information suggesting that a student may have experienced or may be experiencing sexual harassment, violence, or abuse, immediately notify the Deputy Title IX Coordinator on your campus or email [titleix@austinisd.org](mailto:titleix@austinisd.org).**

## PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT: A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR K-12 SCHOOLS

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