

Community RelationsTitle IX – Procedure for Complaints of Sexual Harassment**A. Complaint Procedure - Generally**

1. Reporting Procedures: All employees are responsible for helping to prevent sexual harassment. Employees or students who believe they have been subjected to, or believe they have witnessed sexual harassment should follow these procedures:

1. Directly inform the person engaging in the discrimination or harassment that such conduct is offensive and must stop.
2. For employee reporters, contact your principal or supervisor, the principal or supervisor of the offending person, or the Title IX Coordinator if you do not wish to communicate directly with the person whose conduct is offensive or if direct communication with the offending person has been ineffective.
3. Report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator if the offending conduct continues or has not been resolved to your satisfaction after you have reported the matter to a principal or supervisor.
4. For student reporters, contact any teacher, counselor, or administrator, or the Title IX Coordinator.
5. Report to the Title IX Coordinator if you are the adult to whom the student has made a report so that the matter can be properly resolved. The Title IX Coordinator is:

TITLE IX COORDINATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Todd Hilyard, Superintendent
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(308) 995-8663
todd.hilyard@dusters.org

2. District Actions upon Report of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Misconduct: Upon receipt of a report of sexual harassment, the Title IX Coordinator, or designee, including but not limited to a building principal or assistant principal, will conduct an initial inquiry. The first step of the inquiry will typically include a preliminary meeting between the individual whom the reporting party alleges has been subjected to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct and the Title IX Coordinator, or designee. The initial inquiry may also include a meeting between the Title IX Coordinator, or designee, and the individual whom the reporting party alleges has committed sexual harassment or sexual misconduct. The purpose of these meetings is to gain a basic understanding of the nature and circumstances of the report, it is not intended to be a full investigative interview. During the initial assessment, the reporting party may also receive

information about resources, rights, procedural options, and supportive measures. The Title IX Coordinator, or designee, may inquire into whether the person who has is alleged to have been subject to sexual harassment or misconduct requests resources, no further action, supportive measures, and/or initiation of the “Formal Complaint” process. The Title IX Coordinator will make a reasonable effort to respect the wishes of the person who experienced sexual harassment or sexual misconduct; however, if the reported incident constitutes an imminent or ongoing threat to school safety, based on the assessment of the Title IX Coordinator, then the Title IX Coordinator may file a Formal Complaint, on behalf of the District, with or without the consent or permission of the person who has experienced sexual harassment or sexual misconduct.

With or without a Formal Complaint, allegations of sexual harassment or discrimination shall be investigated and if substantiated, corrective or disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including dismissal from employment, if the offender is an employee, or suspension and/or expulsion, if the offender is a student. Retaliatory action will not be taken against any person for reporting discrimination or harassment. This policy does not limit or prohibit the District from instituting disciplinary measures pursuant to other Board Policy, rules, or other expectations if the District determines that a person violated District rules or expectations.

B. Formal Complaint Process

The following procedures apply only in the event that a Formal Complaint is filed. All other reports of sexual harassment shall be resolved using the general complaint procedure. Any timelines set forth in the following procedures may be extended by the Title IX Coordinator with notice to the parties.

1. Misconduct Which May Be Investigated Under a Formal Complaint: The Formal Complaint process is only available if the Formal Complaint alleges: (i) conduct which occurs on District grounds or property owned or controlled by the District; (ii) conduct which occurs in the context of District employment or an education program or District-sponsored activity within the United States, and (iii) conduct which occurs when the District has substantial control over both the Respondent and the context in which the sexual harassment or sexual misconduct occurs. The conduct must also fall within one of the following categories: (a) an employee of the District conditioning an aid, service, or benefit of the District on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual contact; (b) unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a student equal access to the District’s education program or activity; (c) sexual assault; (d) domestic violence; (e) dating violence; or (f) stalking.

2. Parties to a Formal Complaint: The only parties to a Formal Complaint are the Complainant, who is the person alleged to have been subject to misconduct, and the Respondent, the person who is alleged to have committed the misconduct.

3. Filing a Formal Complaint: A Formal Complaint may only be filed by a Complainant or the Title IX Coordinator. An employee or student Complainant may file a Formal Complaint in writing with the Title IX Coordinator in person or by mail, or by electronic mail. The Formal Complaint must be signed by the Complainant or by the Title IX Coordinator.

4. Immediate Actions Upon Receipt of Formal Complaint: Upon receipt of a Formal Complaint, the Title IX Coordinator will conduct an initial assessment of the allegations contained within the Formal Complaint to determine if the allegations in the Formal Complaint, if true, allege misconduct which may be investigated under the Formal Complaint process. If the allegations in the Formal Complaint do not allege misconduct which may be investigated under the Formal Complaint process, the Title IX Coordinator must dismiss the Formal Complaint and may proceed under other District policies or procedures. The Complainant will be provided notice in writing if the Formal Complaint is dismissed.

If the allegations in the Formal Complaint allege misconduct which may be investigated under the Formal Complaint process, the Title IX Coordinator shall provide the following to all known parties: (1) The complaint procedure as outlined in this policy; and (2) Notice of the allegations of sexual harassment, known by the District at the time of filing the Notice, including (i) the identities of the parties involved, if known, (ii) the conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment, and (iii) the date and location of the alleged incident.

The Title IX Coordinator shall then provide the Formal Complaint and the Notice of the Formal Complaint to the District's Title IX Investigator.

5. Investigation of Formal Complaint: Upon receipt of a Formal Complaint, the Investigator will promptly investigate the allegations contained within, even if an outside entity or law enforcement agency is investigating a complaint involving the same facts and allegations. The Investigator will not wait for the conclusion or outcome of a criminal investigation or proceeding to begin an investigation required by this complaint procedure. If the allegation(s) involve possible criminal conduct, the District will notify the Complainant of his or her right to file a criminal complaint, and District employees will not dissuade the Complainant from filing a criminal complaint either during or after the District's investigation.

The Investigator will contact the Complainant, Respondent, and relevant witnesses to schedule interviews. All parties may bring up to two people to this meeting: (1) Support Person and/or (2) Advisor of Choice. The Advisor of Choice may or may not be an attorney. Neither the Support Person nor the Advisor of Choice can direct questions or comments to the Investigator, nor may the Support Person or Advisor of Choice advise a student or employee how to answer the Investigator's questions.

The Investigator will also aim to collect all tangible evidence relevant to the investigation.

The Investigator will complete the investigation within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the Title IX Coordinator. The factors to determine a reasonable time frame include, but are not limited to, the allegations of the Formal Complaint and the number of witnesses that may need to be interviewed. The time frame originally set by the Title IX Coordinator may be extended by the Title IX Coordinator, upon notice to the parties, as deemed necessary to complete the investigation. Periodic status updates will be given to the parties, when appropriate.

(A) *Neutrality*: The Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, Decision-Maker, or any person designated by the District to facilitate this Formal Complaint process, shall not have any conflict of interest or bias for or against Complainants or Respondents generally or an individual Complainant or Respondent. The District shall ensure that Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, Decision-Maker, and any person who facilitates this Formal Complaint process shall receive training on the definition of sexual harassment, the scope of the District's education program or activity, how to conduct an investigation and complaint process including hearings, appeals, and informal resolution processes, as applicable, and how to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the fact at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias.

(B) *Burden of Production*: It shall be the Investigator's burden to gather evidence sufficient to reach a determination regarding the outcome of the Formal Complaint. To reach a determination, the investigation will include, but is not limited to:

- i. Providing the parties with the opportunity to present witnesses and provide evidence.
- ii. An evaluation of all relevant information and documentation relating to the alleged discriminatory conduct.
- iii. A consideration of various factors, including: (1) the nature of the conduct and whether the conduct was unwelcome, (2) the surrounding circumstances, expectations, and relationships, (3) the degree to which the conduct affected one or more students' education, (4) the type, frequency, and duration of the conduct, (5) the identity of and relationship between the alleged harasser and the suspect or suspects of the harassment, (6) the number of individuals involved, (7) the age and sex, if applicable, of the alleged harasser and the alleged victim(s) of the harassment, (8) the location of the incidents and the context in which they occurred, (9) the totality of the circumstances, and (10) other relevant evidence.
- iv. A review of the evidence using a "preponderance of the evidence" standard. To meet the "preponderance of the evidence" standard, the evidence must show that the discrimination, harassment, or retaliation more likely occurred than did not occur.

(C) *Rights of the Parties*: The Respondent is entitled to a presumption that the Respondent is not responsible for the alleged conduct until a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the complaint process. The Investigator must provide an equal opportunity for the parties to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses, and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence. The Investigator shall not restrict the ability of either party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather and present relevant evidence.

The District retains the right to place any person on administrative leave during the pendency of the investigation. The District also retains the right to remove a Respondent from the District's educational program prior to the conclusion of the investigation. In the event of a removal, the Respondent shall have the opportunity to challenge the decision for removal by meeting with the Title IX Coordinator to discuss the removal.

(D) *Conclusion of Investigation*: Prior to the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator shall send each party the evidence that is subject to inspection and review in an

electronic format or a hard copy. This information shall be known as the “Draft Investigative Report.” The Draft Investigative Report shall include all evidence obtained as part of the investigation that is directly related to the allegations raised in the Formal Complaint, including the evidence upon which the Investigator does not intend to relay to the Decision-Maker. The parties shall then have ten (10) calendar days to submit a written response, which the Investigator will consider. Responses may not be submitted by the parties’ Advisor of Choice or Support Person, unless such person is the parent or guardian of the Complainant or Respondent. Responses may include corrections to the Investigator’s summary of the parties’ interviews, suggestions for additional investigation, or additional information not known at the time of the interviews. Any new information provided by the parties during the response period will not result in an additional time period for response by the other party unless determined necessary by the Title IX Coordinator. The Investigator is not obliged to respond to any question or requests for information in the parties’ responses. The Investigator will consider the information provided by the parties and will incorporate relevant information into the Final Investigative Report. The Final Investigative Report will fairly summarize the relevant evidence. The Investigator shall then submit the Final Investigation Report to the Decision-Maker. The parties shall each receive a copy of the Final Investigative Report at the same time as the Decision-Maker.

6. Actions Taken By Decision-Maker Upon Receipt of Final Investigative Report: Upon receipt of the Final Investigative Report, the Decision-Maker shall provide 10 days for each party to submit written, relevant questions that a party wants asked of any party or witness. Questions shall be submitted to the Title IX Coordinator who shall determine whether questions are relevant. The Title IX Coordinator shall contact parties or witnesses to request answers to the parties’ relevant questions. The Title IX Coordinator will provide each party, and the Decision-Maker with the answers provided by the opposing party or witness and allow for additional, limited follow-up questions from each party.

7. Notice of Determination: Once the Decision-Maker has received the answers to relevant questions submitted by the parties, the Decision-Maker shall consider the answers and the Decision-Maker shall issue a written determination regarding responsibility by a preponderance of the evidence within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the Title IX Coordinator. The Decision-Maker shall consider all relevant evidence, including inculpatory and exculpatory evidence, and will not consider the credibility of the evidence to be based on a person’s status, such as the Complainant, Respondent, or witness. The Decision-Maker shall provide the written determination to both parties simultaneously. The written determination shall include:

- (a) Identification of the allegations potentially constituting sexual harassment;
- (b) A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the Formal Complaint through the determination, including any notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, and methods used to gather evidence;
- (c) Findings of fact supporting the determination;
- (d) Conclusions regarding the application of each recipient’s code of conduct to the facts;
- (e) A statement of, and rationale for, the results as to each allegation, including a determination regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions the recipient imposes on the Respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the recipient’s education program or activity will be provided by the recipient to the

- Complainant; and
- (f) The recipient's procedures and permissible bases for the Complainant and Respondent to appeal.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits the District to disclose relevant information to a student who was discriminated against or harassed.

8. Sanctions: At the conclusion of the investigation, the Decision-Maker may institute disciplinary measures against the Respondent if the Decision-Maker determines that the Respondent engaged in sexual abuse or harassment. Disciplinary measures may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, and, in the case of an employee disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination from employment.

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the implementation of supportive measures for the victim(s).

C. Appeals

If either party is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and the decision of the Decision-Maker, they may appeal on the following bases:

1. Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter;
2. 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; and
3. The Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, or Decision-Maker had a conflict of interest or bias for or against the Complainant or Respondent generally or the individual Complainant or Respondent that affected the outcome of the matter.

The request for an appeal shall be in writing and submitted on the appropriate document. The appeal document shall be submitted to the Superintendent.

Upon notice of an appeal by either party, the Superintendent of Schools shall notify the other party in writing when the appeal is filed and of the appeal procedures, which apply equally to both parties.

The Superintendent shall give both parties a reasonable and equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of or challenging the outcome.

The Superintendent shall review the investigative report, Decision-Maker's determination, and written statements of the parties and then issue a written decision describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result. The Superintendent shall provide the written decision simultaneously to both parties.

D. Informal Resolution

If a Formal Complaint is filed, the District may offer the Complainant and Respondent the opportunity to participate in an informal resolution process. The informal resolution process may take place at any time prior to reaching a determination regarding responsibility. The informal resolution process shall only take place upon:

1. Written notice to both parties disclosing: the allegations, the requirements of the informal resolution process including the circumstances under which it precludes the parties from resuming a Formal Complaint arising from the same allegations, provided, however, that at any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the resolution process and resume the complaint process with respect to the Formal Complaint, and any consequences resulting from participating in the informal resolution process, including the records that will be maintained or could be shared;
2. The parties' voluntary, written consent to the informal resolution process; and
3. That the allegations of the Formal Complaint do not involve any allegations that an employee sexually harassed a student.

E. Record Keeping

The District will maintain relevant documentation obtained during the investigation and documentation supportive of the findings and any subsequent determinations, including the investigative report, witness statements, interview summaries, and any transcripts or audio recordings, pertaining to the investigative and appeal proceedings for a period of seven (7) years.

Legal Reference: Title IX

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