



**HUSCH BLACKWELL**

# **Title IX & Sexual Harassment Response**

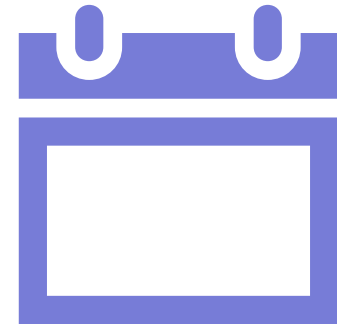
Participants in Sexual Harassment policy process  
Fall 2020



# Agenda

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- Title IX Scope & Jurisdiction
- Title IX & Other Policies
- Institutional Response to Sexual Harassment
- Investigations
- Trauma & Bias
- Hearings
- Appeals
- Informal Resolution
- Confidentiality



# Goals

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- Understand
  - Title IX
  - New regulations
  - Illinois requirements
  - Mapping relevant policies
  - Identify issues for consideration



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# Title IX Scope & Jurisdiction

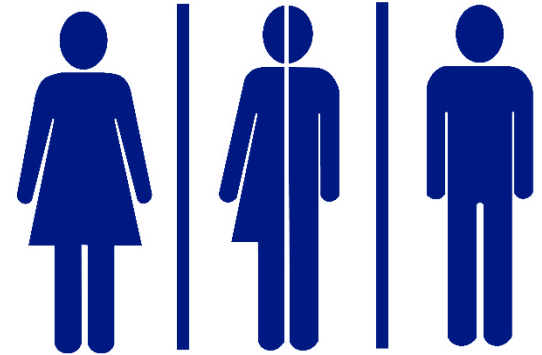


# What is Title IX?

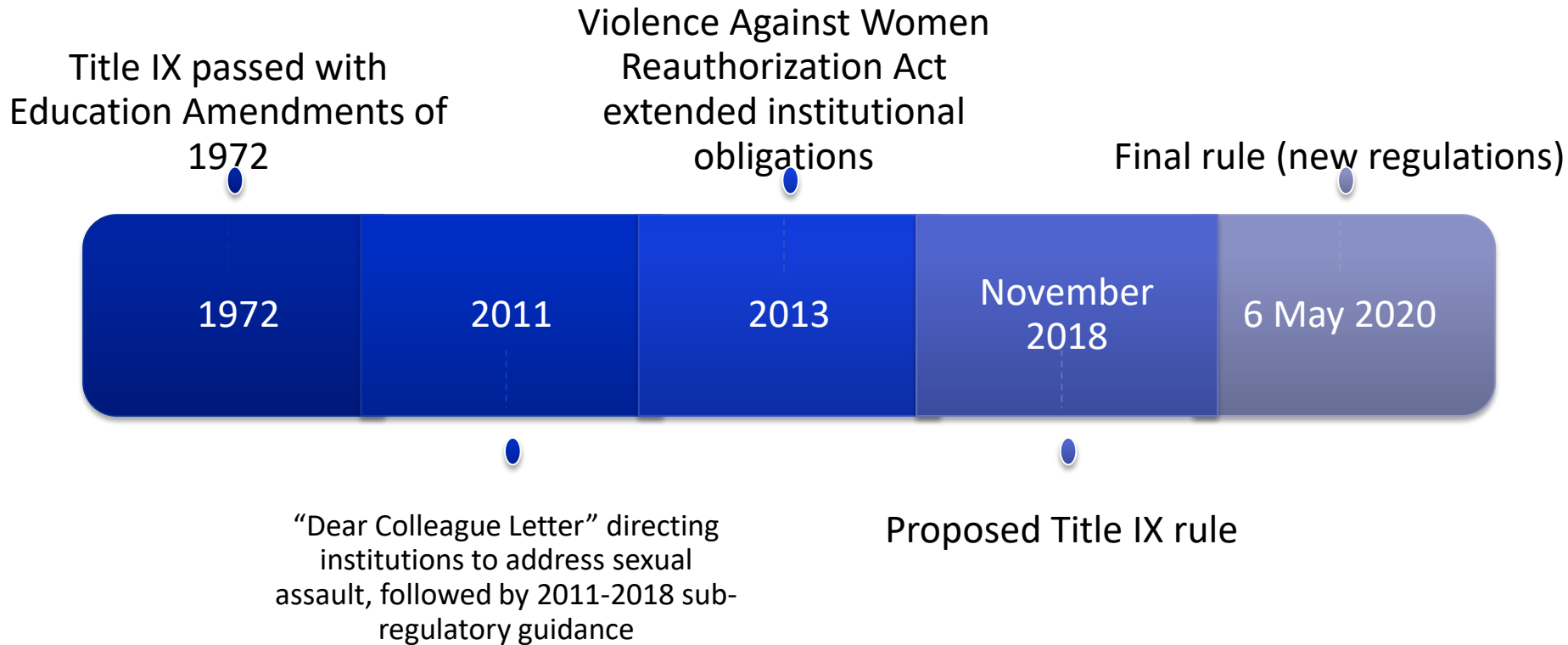
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“[N]o person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

32 C.F.R. § 106.31



# Why are we talking about this now?



# When are the new regs effective?

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- August 14, 2020
- Do not apply to Sexual Harassment that allegedly occurred prior to effective date
  - Assessed according to guidance and regulations in place at time alleged conduct occurred

# Examples of notable provisions

Revised definition of the types of sexual misconduct covered by ED's Title IX rules

Added emphasis on equal rights of parties

Presumption respondent did not violate policy unless and until a determination is made after hearing

Revised procedural parameters including

- Triggers for institutional responsibility
- Notice requirements
- Proceeding with investigations
- Appeals
- Informal resolution

Live hearing including

- Cross-examination by party advisors
- Relevance rulings by decision maker
- Allowable expert witnesses



# Who does Title IX apply to?

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- Entities that receive federal financial assistance, including colleges and universities that participate in Title IV funding
  - Not individual persons
    - But institutions are required to adopt policies and procedures to implement Title IX that *do* apply to individual persons



# What sexual harassment does Title IX apply to?

- Title IX applies to sexual harassment in the “education program or activity” of a federal funding recipient
  - Title IX defines “education program or activity” to include the “operations” of educational institutions
- Title IX does not apply to private conduct occurring in private location that is not part of education program/activity



# What are examples of education programs and activities?

Admissions

Hiring

Workplace

Academic instruction

Residence life

Amenities on campus

Sports teams

Work-study

Games, concerts, and speeches on-campus

U.S. off-campus trips or experiences organized by the institution

Sponsored organization activities

Anything else that happens on-campus

# Does Title IX apply to off-campus sexual harassment?



Yes, if the conduct at issue occurs in the context of a U.S. education program or activity

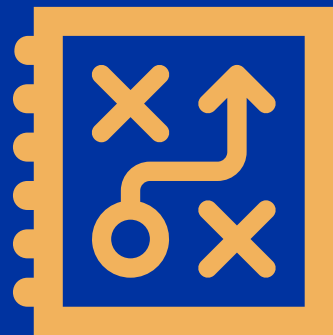


Yes, if the conduct at issue occurs in a location controlled by institution or an officially-recognized organization



No, if it occurs outside U.S. or in a private location and is not part of an institution's education program or activity

# Example (included in EP&A)



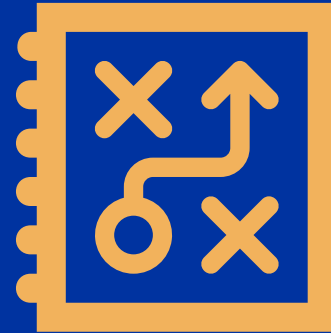
Student is sexually assaulted in a residence hall on-campus. The sexual assault occurs on a Saturday evening. The identity of the perpetrator is not immediately known.



# Example (included in EP&A)

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The tennis team travels to a different school for a tournament and stays overnight at a hotel. At the hotel where the team is staying, Coach sexually harasses the team's Student Manager.



# Example (excluded from EP&A)



During spring break, two students travel to another state and stay at an all-inclusive resort. They booked the trip on their own for leisure purposes. While staying at the resort, one student sexually assaults the other student.



# Does Title IX apply to sexual harassment in other countries?

- No – the Department of Education interprets Title IX to apply only within the geographic boundaries of the United States
- Other countries may have laws that govern sexual harassment







# Does our institution have other policies that might apply?

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- Institutions are free to use
  - Student code of conduct
  - Faculty/employee handbooks
  - Other policies

to address sexual harassment that does not occur in an education program or activity

# What is sexual harassment?

Conduct on the basis of sex that is:

Quid pro quo harassment

Hostile environment harassment

Sexual assault

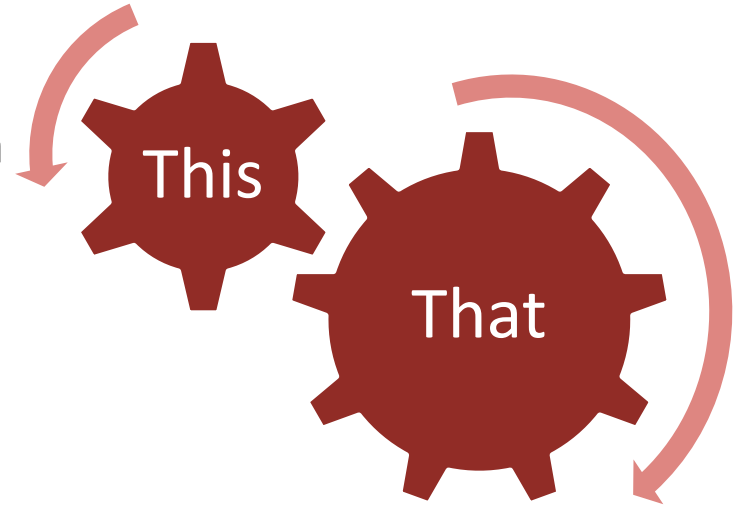
Dating violence

Domestic violence

Stalking

# What is quid pro quo?

- An employee of the institution conditions the provision of some aid, benefit, or service on another person's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct
  - Often arises in the employment context or where an employee holds a position of authority over a student

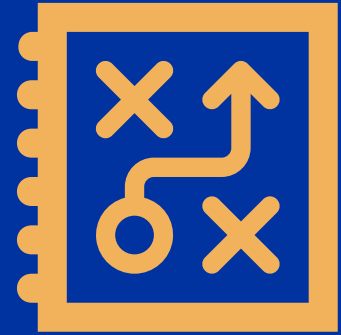




# Example of quid pro quo

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Manager tells Subordinate Employee that Subordinate will not get a raise this year unless Subordinate performs sexual favors for manager.

Subordinate is in a relationship with another individual and has no interest in performing sexual favors for Manager.



# Another example of quid pro quo

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Faculty Member tells Student that Student can increase Student's grade if Student wears revealing clothing that is "more pleasing" to Faculty Member's eye.

# What is hostile environment?

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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 recipient's education program or activity.





# How do we determine if a hostile environment exists?

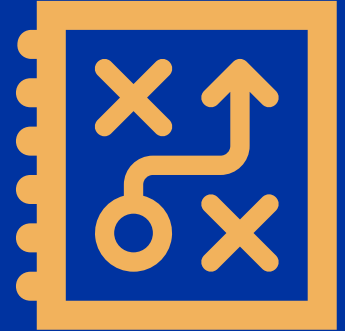
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- Consider all the facts and circumstances, such as:
  - The type of misconduct
  - The frequency of the misconduct
  - Where the misconduct occurs
  - Whether a power differential exists, etc.
- From the perspective of a reasonable person



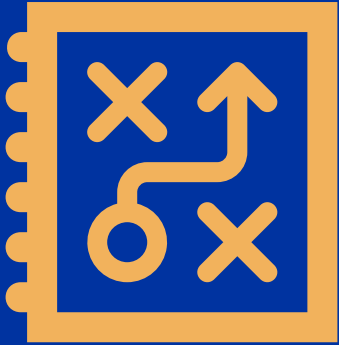
# Example of hostile environment

—  
Bookworm Student repeatedly gropes Social Butterfly Student's buttocks when the two are in the elevator of their shared dormitory. Butterfly has no romantic interest in Bookworm and has told Bookworm to stop. But Bookworm persists, causing Butterfly to use the stairs instead of the elevator and to avoid Bookworm in other areas of the dormitory.





# Another example of hostile environment



Resident Assistant asks Student to go on a date, and Student says “no.” RA then repeatedly sends Student text messages using various vulgar terms that suggest Student is promiscuous. When RA and Student attend a shared biology class, RA mutters these vulgar terms toward Student, loud enough for others to hear. Student blocks RA’s phone number and drops the biology class to avoid RA.



# Another example of hostile environment

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Senior obtains a nude picture of Soccer Player from Player's former romantic partner. Senior threatens to post the nude picture on social media unless Player poses nude for Senior in Senior's residence hall. Player poses for Senior to avoid the nude picture being circulated. Senior is not an employee.





# Does freedom of speech matter?



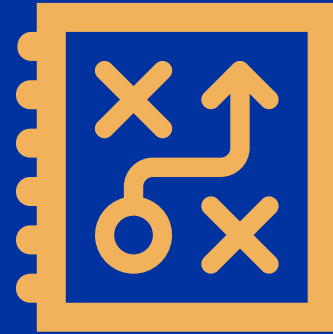
- While sexual harassment can be verbal or written in nature, sexual harassment under Title IX does not include conduct that is protected by speech/expression/academic freedom policies
- The subjective offensiveness of speech, alone, is not sufficient to create a hostile environment



## Example (not-hostile environment)

—

Vocal Student actively supports a prominent political candidate who has been accused of sexually harassing campaign staffers. Offended Student files a complaint that Vocal's political support of the candidate has caused a sexually hostile environment on campus.



# What is sexual assault?

Title IX regulations define “sexual assault” as incorporating the following classes of conduct:

Rape

Sodomy

Sexual assault  
with an object

Fondling

Incest



# What is rape?

“The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or instrument, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim or where the victim is incapable of giving consent, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their age or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity. Attempted rape is included. An ‘object’ or ‘instrument’ is anything used by the offender other than the offender’s genitalia.”



# What is consent?

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- Policy definition: “Consent is present when clearly understandable words or actions manifest a knowing, active, voluntary, and present and ongoing agreement to engage in specific sexual or intimate contact.”
- A person who is incapacitated is not capable of giving consent
- Consent cannot be procured by coercion
- Be aware of minimum age of consent

# What is incapacity?

“‘Incapacitated’ refers to the state where a person does not understand the nature or fact of sexual activity due to the effect of drugs or alcohol consumption, medical condition or disability, or due to a state of unconsciousness or sleep. When alcohol is involved, incapacitation is a state beyond drunkenness or intoxication. When drug use is involved, incapacitation is a state beyond being under the influence or impaired by use of the drug. Alcohol and other drugs impact each individual differently, and determining whether an individual is incapacitated requires an individualized determination.”







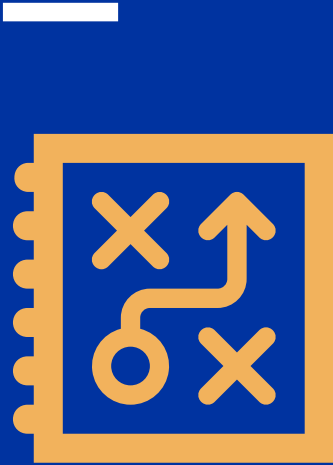
# Example (incapacitated)

Short Student has had ten cocktails over the course of two hours. Sober Student takes Short to Sober's apartment. Short cannot walk without support, forgets Sober's name, and passes into a stupor when Sober places Short on Sober's bed. Sober then engages in sexual activity with Short.





# Example (not-incapacitated)



Tall Student has had four beers over the course of two hours with dinner. Tall calls Friend to see if Friend is home. Tall then drives from campus to Friend's off-campus apartment. Upon arriving, Tall initiates sexual contact with Friend, and then insists that Friend uses contraception before the two have intercourse. Tall is an active participant in the intercourse.



# What is fondling?

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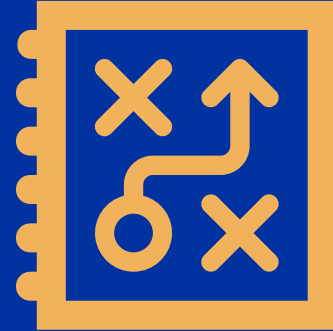
Touching of the private body parts of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of age or because of temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.



# Example of fondling

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Clumsy Student and Dance Student attend a dance held in the student union. While on the dance floor, Clumsy gropes Dancer's groin without permission. Dancer does not welcome the groping and views it as unwelcome.





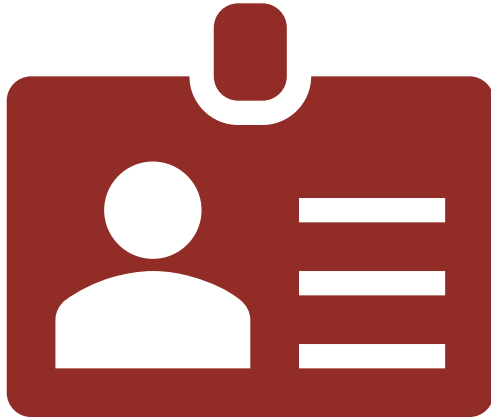
# What is incest?

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Sexual intercourse between persons who are related to each other within the degrees wherein marriage is prohibited by law.

# What is statutory rape?

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Sexual intercourse with a person who is under the statutory age of consent as defined by law.



# What is domestic violence?

Felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the state, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the state.



# What is dating violence?

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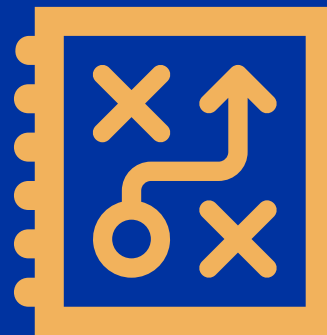
“Dating Violence” is violence committed by a person:

- Who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and
- Where the existence of such a relationship will be determined based on consideration of the following factors:
  - The length of the relationship;
  - The type of relationship; and
  - The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.



# Example of dating violence

President's Chief of Staff and Statistics Department Chair are engaged to be married but live separately and have no children in common. Chief of Staff and Department Chair get into an argument over sex in Chief of Staff's car in the institution's parking lot. During the argument, Chief of Staff slaps Department Chair's face and tells chair to "shut your mouth."

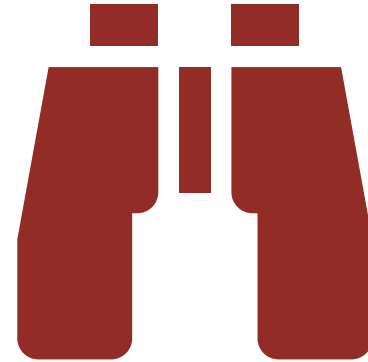


# What is stalking?

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Engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to:

- Fear for their safety or the safety of others; or
- Suffer substantial emotional distress.



# Example of stalking



Freshman is infatuated with Sophomore who has rebuffed Freshman's romantic advances. Thereafter, Freshman dresses in black and sneaks up to the window of Sophomore's house (owned by sponsored Student Organization) at night, attempting to see Sophomore. Freshman does this twice before being caught in the act during Freshman's third attempt.



# Does Title IX also prohibit retaliation?

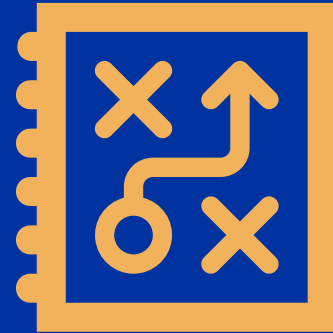
Yes – “No recipient or other person may intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any *individual* for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by title IX or this part, or because the individual has made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing” under the institution’s policy (34 C.F.R. § 106.71)



# Example of retaliation

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Groundskeeper (witness) testifies at hearing in support of Office Worker's complaint of sexual harassment against Manager. After institution finds that Manager sexually harassed Office Worker, Manager demotes Groundskeeper to punish Groundskeeper for testifying against Manager.

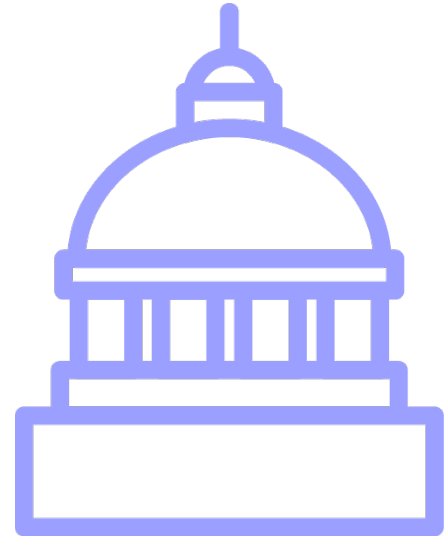




# What about state law governing sexual harassment on campus?

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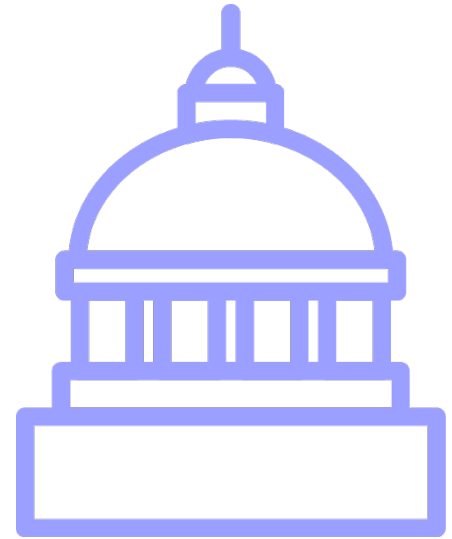
- Institutions must still comply with state laws unless
- They conflict with some element of the new Title IX regulation in which case
- State law is preempted



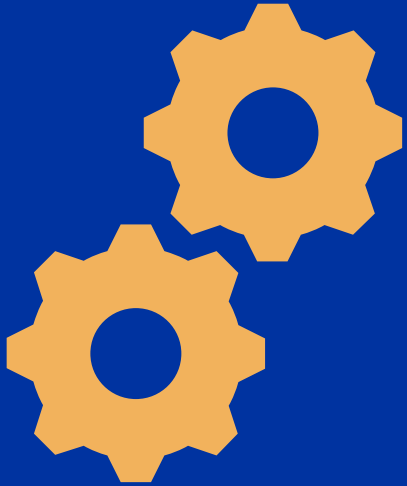


# IL Preventing Sexual Violence in Higher Education Act

- Key aspects of Illinois statute:
  - Students
  - Options for electronic & anonymous reporting
  - Rights & options document
  - Confidential advisors
  - “Preponderance” required
  - Appeal – sanction disproportionate
  - Trauma Issues



## Group Scenario



Math Student reports that Nursing Student sexually harassed Mathematician on two occasions. The first incident consisted of Nurse groping Mathematician's genitals without permission while the two were dancing during a formal hosted by a Greek organization at a local party venue the Greek organization rented. The second incident consisted of Nurse attempting to have sexual intercourse with Mathematician a week later, when Mathematician was heavily intoxicated at a tailgate party held in the parking lot of a rival institution's football stadium.



# Questions





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# Title IX & Other Policies



# Examples of Policies with Related Concepts

## Discrimination

- Sexual Harassment
- Other non-discrimination statement & policies

## Relationships

- Workplace
- Employee - student

## Conduct

- Student
- Faculty/Employee

## Discipline

- Student
- Faculty
- Employee



# Understand Title IX and Title VII Procedures

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- New Title IX Regulations -- Employees
  - Impose additional procedural requirements
  - Only for allegations meeting new sexual harassment definition
  - Expressly contemplate “dual” compliance approach with Title IX and Title VII

# How do Title IX and Title VII standards compare?

“Neither Federal non-sex discrimination civil rights law represents a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy banning all sexual harassment.” Preamble to 2020 Title IX Regulations

## Title VII Sexual Harassment

Quid pro quo

Sufficiently severe or pervasive

## Title IX Sexual Harassment

Any quid pro quo by employee

Unwelcome and Sufficiently severe and pervasive and objectively offensive

Any sexual assault/DV /stalking



## How should we treat alleged conduct that may violate Title IX and Title VII policies?

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“The Department recognizes that employers must fulfill their obligations under Title VII and also under Title IX. There is no inherent conflict between Title VII and Title IX, and the Department will construe Title IX and its implementing regulations in a manner to avoid an actual conflict between an employer’s obligations under Title VII and Title IX.”

— Preamble to 2020 Title IX Regulations (also 34 C.F.R. § 106.6(f))



# More From Preamble

- “These regulations do not preclude a recipient from enforcing a code of conduct that is separate and apart from what Title IX requires, such as a code of conduct that may address what Title VII requires. Accordingly, recipients may proactively address conduct prohibited under Title VII, when the conduct does not meet the definition of sexual harassment in § 106.30, under the recipient’s own code of conduct, as these final regulations apply only to sexual harassment as defined in § 106.30.”
- “These final regulations do not preclude a recipients’ obligation to honor additional rights negotiated by faculty in any collective bargaining agreement or employment contract, and such contracts must comply with these final regulations.”

- Preamble to 2020 Title IX Regulations (also 34 C.F.R. § 106.6(f))

# Comparison

## Common Title VII Response

Resolution by internal investigation

Formal or informal complaint

Advisor silent supporter

Resolution does not require active complainant

May or may not result in formal report

## Title IX Regs Requirements

Discipline requires regimented investigation & hearing process

Formal complaint only

Advisor entitled to participate

Need participating complainant

Requires formal report & other documentation





# What triggers an employer's liability for sexual harassment under Title VII?

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- ✓ An employer, its agent, or its supervisor
- ✓ Knew or should have known
- ✓ About severe **OR** pervasive sexual harassment
- ✓ That a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive
- ✓ By an employee or non-employee over which it has control and
- ✓ Failed to take appropriate corrective action

- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Harassment* (<https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment>)

# What Triggers Obligations for VII vs. IX?





## VII but no IX

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- Should have known of discrimination but no formal complaint
- Discrimination does not meet IX definition of Sexual Harassment, outside U.S., complainant not attempting to participate in educational programs/activities, no formal complaint, (“must dismiss” under Title IX)
- Withdrawn complaint, respondent no longer employed/student, insufficient evidence to reach determination (“may dismiss” under Title IX)

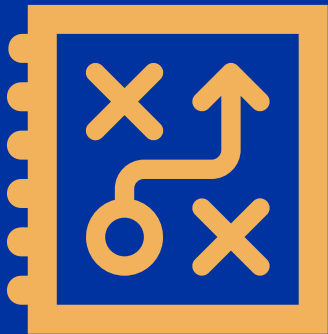


## Example (overlapping policies)

- Employee reports that Dean repeatedly sexually touched Employee and that this sexual touching was witnessed by Dean's Administrative Assistant.
- HR interviews Assistant who confirms that Dean has repeatedly touched Employee in a sexual and unwelcomed way. Assistant does not want to get involved and will not participate in any sort of hearing. Employee also refuses to participate in any hearing.



# Example (overlapping policies)



- Finance Office Employee claims Supervisor is subjecting Employee to pervasive and severe racial and sex harassment.
- Finance Administrator corroborates the claim.
- How should institution respond in satisfying obligations under VII and IX?



## Issues to consider

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- Clarify nature of sexual harassment allegations as much as possible at the outset of a case to determine which procedures apply
- In absence of “formal complaint,” usually apply Title VII procedures (unless Title IX Coordinator files one)
- “Me Too” complaints – often historic issues
- Understand potential “transition points” between procedures

# Potential transition points

Allegation that appeared to be “AND,” when explained more completely, is only “severe OR pervasive” as to hostile environment

Dismissal of Title IX complaint (for any reason)

Formal Complaint withdrawn

Respondent leaves institution

Investigation reveals only “off campus” conduct

Key witness/party does not testify at hearing

“No responsibility” finding

# Questions







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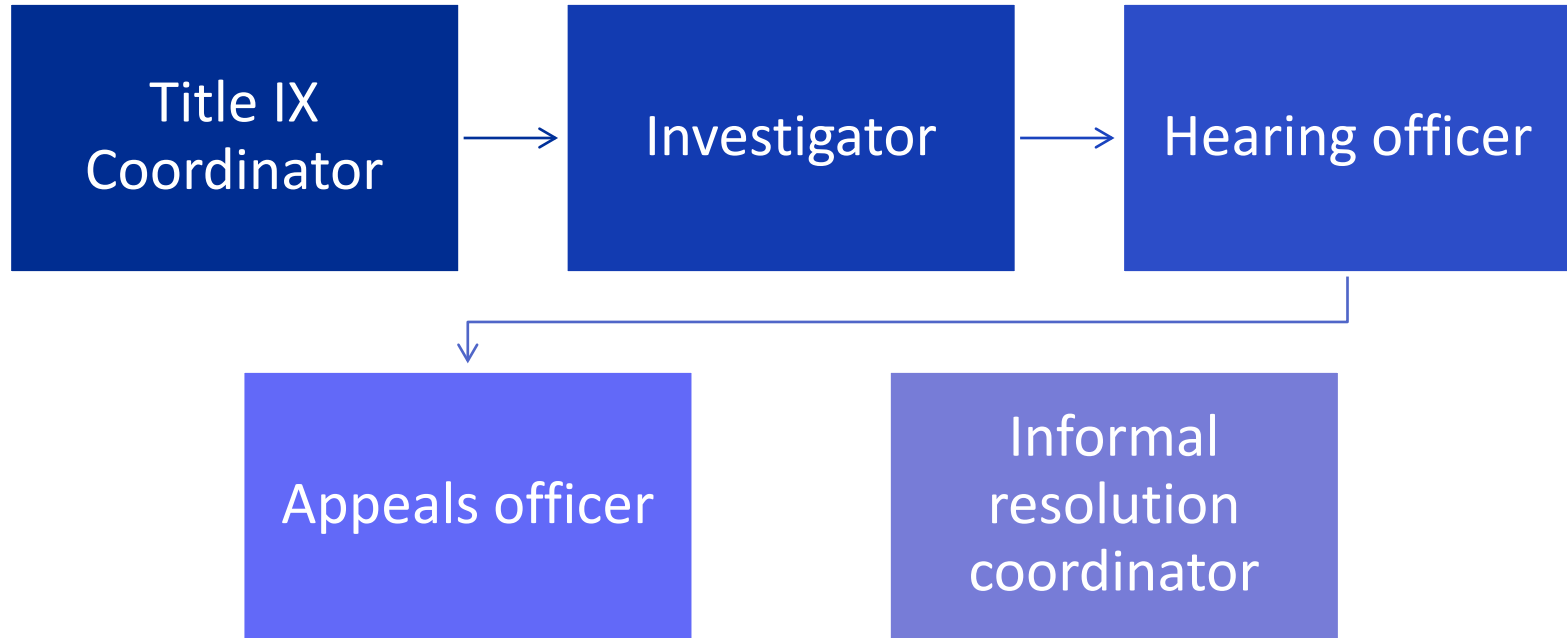
**Institutional  
Response to  
Sexual Harassment**



# What are the institution's overall duties?



# Who are the key institutional actors in the grievance process?

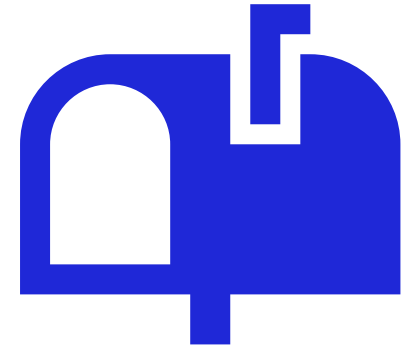




# How does an institution get notice of sexual harassment?

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Sexual harassment response is triggered when institution has “actual knowledge” of potential sexual harassment.





# What is “actual knowledge”?

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- “Actual knowledge” occurs when
  - An institutional official, with authority to take corrective action
  - Observes or receives a report
  - Of sexual harassment occurring in the institution’s education programs and activities

# Is an “institutional official” the same as a “responsible employee”?

NEW: “Institutional official”

With authority to take corrective action

With authority to take action to redress the harassment or

Who has the duty to report to appropriate school officials sexual harassment or any other misconduct or

Individual who a student could reasonably believe has this authority

OLD: “Responsible employee”



# When do we reach out to the alleged victim?

- After institution has actual knowledge of alleged sexual harassment, Title IX Coordinator must contact alleged victim
- Provide information about supportive measures, explain the grievance process and how to file a formal complaint, and discuss the alleged victim's wishes



# What if we can't identify the alleged victim from a report?

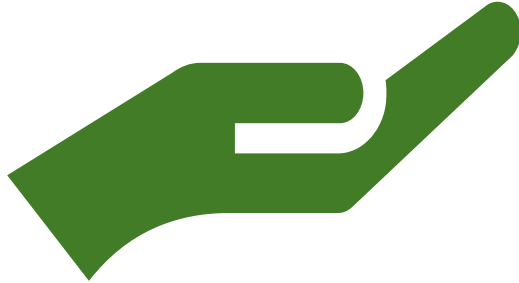
- Title IX Coordinator should oversee preliminary investigation to determine identity of alleged victim
- If identity of alleged victim cannot be discerned after reasonable inquiry, matter should be documented and consideration given as to whether other policies (such as student code of conduct) are utilized






# What are supportive measures?


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- Non-disciplinary, non-punitive supports and accommodations designed to preserve access to education programs and activities
- Reasonably available without fee or charge
- Without unreasonably burdening the other party


# Examples of supportive measures

 Counseling


 Academic accommodations

 Housing accommodations

 Security escorts

 Leave of absence

 Increased security or monitoring

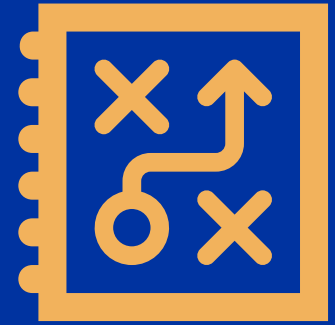
 Modified work schedules

 Mutual no-contact order where implicated by facts

# Example of reasonable supportive measure

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Education Major and Film Student used to be in a romantic relationship. Since the relationship ended, Film Student has gossiped about Educator's sexual proclivities with Educator's friend group. Educator does not wish to file a formal complaint, but wants access to counseling and to be allowed to change sections of a course that Educator currently shares with Film Student.

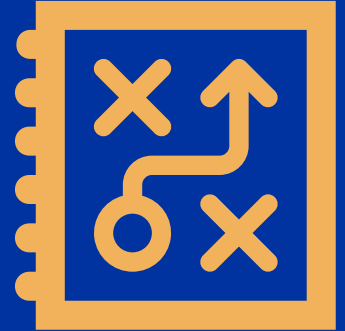




# Example of unreasonable supportive measure

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Adjunct Faculty Member alleges Department Head engaged in sexual harassment by pervasively telling unwelcome sexual jokes in the workplace. Adjunct asks the institution to retain the services of a specific psychologist in a different state to provide Adjunct counseling at a cost of \$1,000 per hour and to pay for Adjunct's travel expenses. The institution has access to local counselors of suitable qualification who are under a fixed contract to provide counseling to employees, including adjunct faculty members.





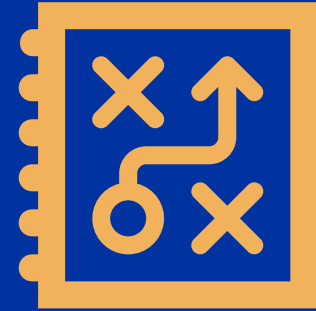
# Can we utilize interim removals or suspensions for students?

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- Students may be removed on a temporary basis only if:
  - Individualized safety and risk analysis
  - Determines that an immediate threat to physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the alleged sexual harassment justifies removal
  - Student is given immediate notice and opportunity to contest the removal

# Example of immediate threat to physical health or safety

History Student is reported to have raped Sociology Student at gunpoint. Police engage in hot pursuit and apprehend Historian attempting to flee campus. When apprehended, Historian is found in possession of a loaded and unregistered firearm.



# Example of no immediate threat to physical health or safety



Dorm Resident reports that Dorm Resident's Neighbor committed sexual harassment by repeatedly posting pornographic images on Resident's door. When notified of formal complaint, Neighbor agrees to voluntarily remove images and cooperate with investigation.



# Can we place employees on administrative leave?

- Yes – employee respondents may be placed on administrative leave without requisite showing of threat to physical health or safety
- Whether an opportunity to challenge administrative leave must be given depends on employee status and other policies (i.e., Faculty Handbook)



# What is a formal complaint?

## What

- Document
- Alleging sexual harassment
- Requesting an investigation / resolution under grievance procedures

## Who

- Signed by
  - Alleged victim or
  - The Title IX Coordinator
- If filed by alleged victim, alleged victim must be current or attempted participant in education programs and activities
- Third-parties may not file formal complaints on behalf of an alleged victim

## How

- Either physical or electronic submission



# When may the Title IX Coordinator file a formal complaint?

- Typically when there is an important institutional interest in adjudicating a report irrespective of the alleged victim's wishes
- Typically involves serious misconduct, repeated misconduct, or misconduct by employees
- If alleged victim does not wish to file a formal complaint, Title IX Coordinator's decision to do so must not be clearly unreasonable
- Title IX Coordinator does not become "Complainant" or party

# Example of T9 Coordinator formal complaint

Two student members of separate Greek organizations (GGG and PPP) each separately report they were sexually assaulted by a member of another Greek organization TTT. The two GGG and PPP members each suspect they were drugged by the TTT member. Neither the GGG nor the PPP wishes to file a formal complaint, but each has indicated they will cooperate with an investigation if the Title IX Coordinator files a formal complaint.





# When must we dismiss a formal complaint?

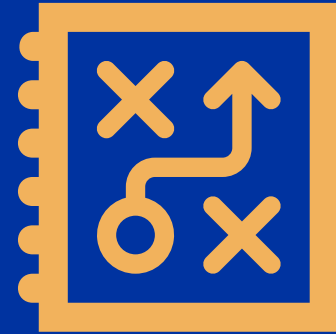
- If filed by the alleged victim, and the alleged victim is not a current or attempted participant in education programs and activities
- Complaint does not allege sexual harassment in the institution's education programs or activities
- Complaint alleges sexual harassment abroad
- Conduct alleged would not amount to sexual harassment even if it occurred as reported



# Example of dismissal

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Music Student reports that Neuroscience Student sexually assaulted Musician in their hometown during summer break. The alleged assault occurred in Neuroscientist's house after the two attended a co-ed softball game hosted by a local recreation league. Musician and Neuroscientist have had no contact since the alleged sexual assault.



# Example of dismissal



Literature Student makes a sexual harassment complaint against Faculty Member because Faculty Member requires students to analyze a “Confederacy of Dunces” which contains sexual content that Literature Student finds immoral and obscene. Literature Student has no other basis for the complaint but the required reading of the book.



# When may we dismiss a formal complaint?

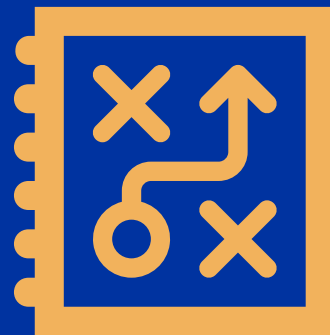
- Alleged victim indicates in writing a desire to withdraw the complaint (or particular allegations)
- Respondent is no longer enrolled in or employed by the institution
- Specific circumstances prevent the institution from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination



# Example of permissive dismissal

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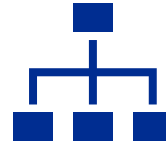
Prior to investigation being completed, Respondent graduates institution and Complainant indicates Complainant will not testify at a hearing because any discipline would be meaningless in light of Respondent's graduation. There are no witnesses to the alleged sexual harassment and no non-testimonial evidence, such as video footage.





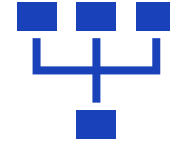
# Can we consolidate the complaints?

Yes – complaints can be consolidated if they arise out of the same facts and circumstances.

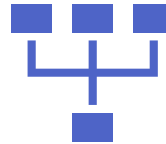


Multiple respondents

Multiple complainants



Multiple allegations against a single respondent



Multiple allegations from a single complainant

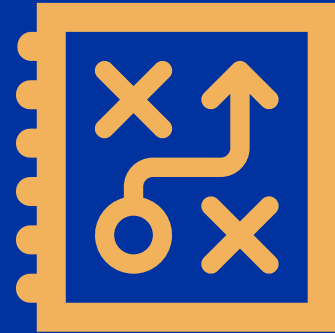




# Example of permissible consolidation

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Two Roommates allege that Intoxicated Student barged into their dormitory room propositioned them for sex. Roommates each file their own formal complaint of sexual harassment from the same incident.



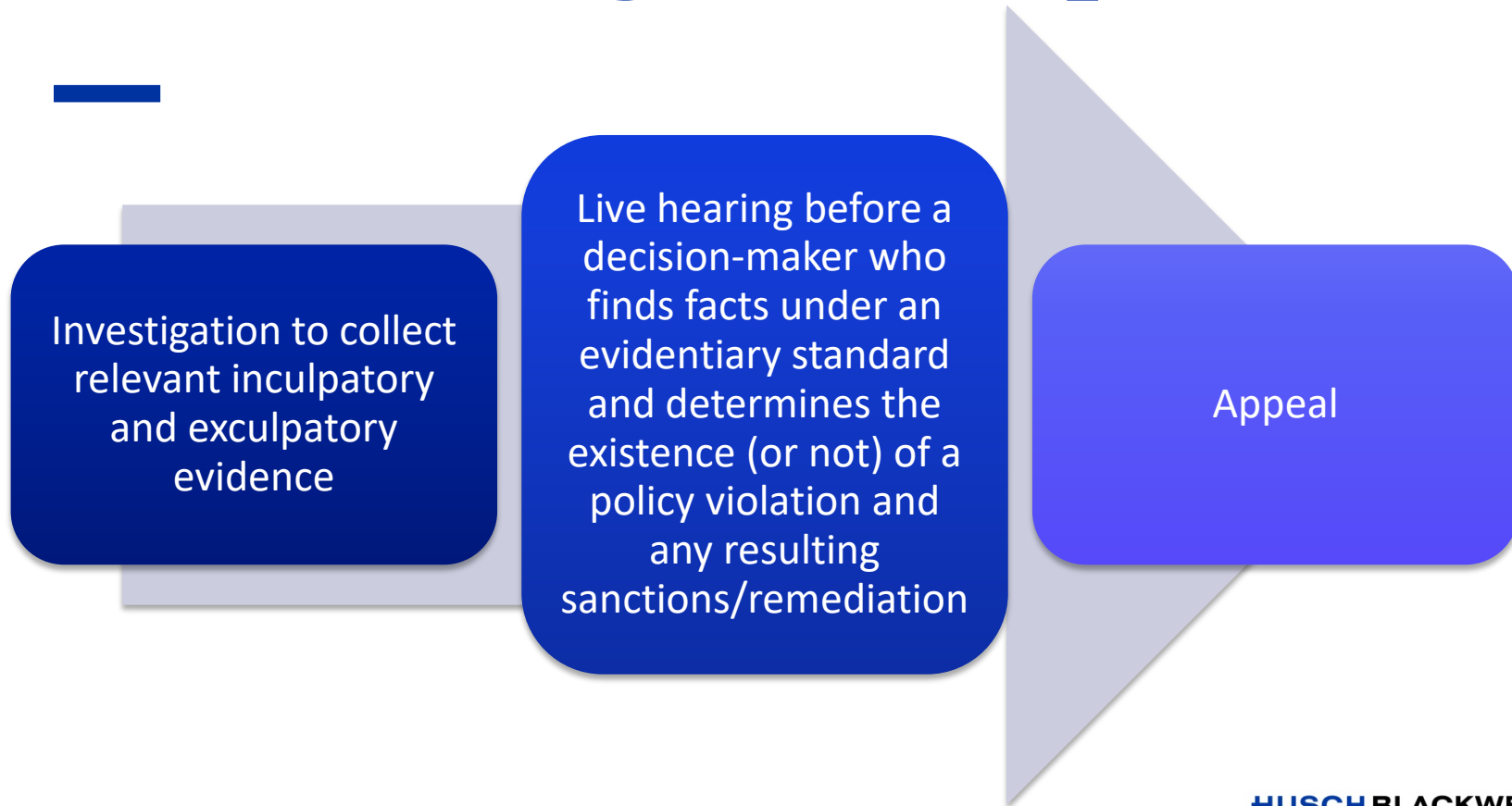
# Example of impermissible consolidation



Medical Resident files a formal complaint that Research Fellow sexually assaulted Resident two years ago when Resident was incapacitated by drugs taken to treat a back injury.

Undergraduate, Fellow's present romantic partner, files a formal complaint that Fellow committed dating violence by slapping Undergraduate during an argument a month ago.

# What is the grievance process?





# What general principles govern the grievance process?

- Equitable treatment of complainants and respondents
- No stereotypes based on a party's status as complainant or respondent
- Presumption respondent did not violate policy unless and until a determination is made after hearing
- Conflict and bias-free institutional participants

## Examples of impermissible stereotypes

“Anyone who would go into another’s bedroom drunk must have wanted to have sex.”

“Students can’t be trusted because they will just lie for each other.”

“People who are dating can’t commit sexual assault against each other.”

“There are no false reports of rape. Therefore, every complainant must be believed.”



# What is a conflict of interest?

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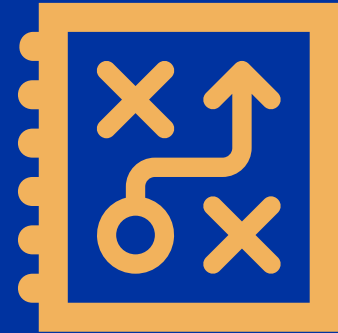
- When an individual has a material connection to a dispute, or the parties involved, such that a reasonable person would question the individual's ability to be impartial
- May be based on prior or existing relationships, professional interest, financial interest, prior involvement, and/or nature of position



# Example of conflict of interest

—

Student Soccer Goalie files a formal complaint of sexual harassment against a student Lacrosse Midfielder. One of the hearing panel members selected is Midfielder's faculty advisor who has previously written letters of recommendation for Midfielder's application to law school in which the faculty advisor wrote that Midfielder is "honest to a fault."





# Example of conflict of interest



Administrator accuses Office Supply Vendor Employee of sexual harassment. Institution assigns an investigator whose spouse is employed as a manager for the office supply vendor and who directly supervises the accused Office Supply Vendor Employee.



# Example of bias

—  
Employee in the Gender Studies Department who is chosen to serve on a hearing panel also chairs the board of a local non-profit dedicated to sexual assault advocacy. During a speech at the non-profit's annual gala, Employee states: "The presumption of innocence is wrong in cases of sexual assault. I firmly believe a person accused of sexual assault must prove their innocence."



# Example of bias



Investigator assigned to investigate a formal complaint of sexual assault has repeatedly told colleagues that Investigator believes most complainants just “regret that they got drunk.” Investigator tells a co-investigator: “I just don’t think it’s ever fair to hold anyone responsible when both parties are drinking.”



# Who is responsible for identifying conflicts of interest and bias?

---

- Title IX Coordinator oversees grievance process and must address known or reported conflicts of interest/bias
- Institution must also permit parties to raise concerns of conflicts of interest and bias
- Individual institutional actors should self-police conflicts of interest and self-identify bias



# How long does a grievance process take?

- There is no firm deadline, and the length of the grievance process varies depending on a variety of factors
- Institution must be reasonably prompt, advise parties of timelines for particular phases of the process, and notify parties of extensions of timelines and the reasons for the same

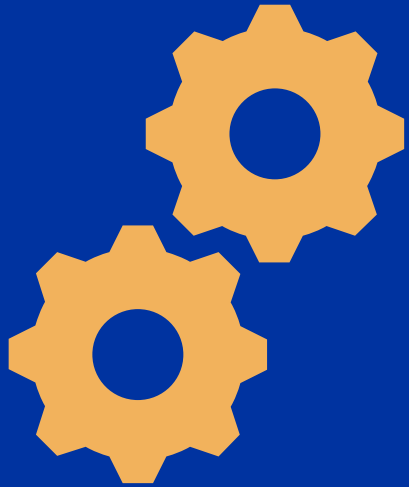




# What do we do if we find sexual harassment occurred?

- If grievance process results in a finding of sexual harassment:
  - Discipline for the respondent as determined by those with authority over the respondent
  - For complainant, grant remedies reasonably necessary to restore or preserve access to education programs and activities

## Group Scenario



Clinical Student A reports that Clinical Student B stalked Clinical Student A by peeping through Clinical Student A's changing room door at the hospital where both are doing rotations, and by stealing Clinical Student A's underwear from the laundry at the student lounge at the hospital. Clinical Student A seeks supportive measures but does not wish to file a formal complaint and is concerned Clinical Student B may retaliate if Clinical Student B learns of the report. Clinical Student A graduates in two months, while Clinical Student B will not graduate for another year. It is unclear whether Clinical Student A will testify at a hearing.

# Questions







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# Investigations





# What is the purpose of an investigation?

- For the institution
- To collect relevant inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
- Sufficient to permit an impartial decision-maker to determine
- Whether or not the reported sexual harassment occurred

# What is inculpatory evidence?

---

- Evidence tending to support the proposition a respondent committed sexual harassment as alleged
- Example: A text message sent the day after an incident from the respondent stating: “I never should have forced you to have sex with me after you said ‘no.’ I’m so sorry for what I did.”



# What is exculpatory evidence?



- Evidence tending to support that the respondent did not commit sexual harassment as alleged
- Example: A text message sent the day after an incident from the complainant stating: “I know that I said ‘yes’ at the time. And I knew what I was doing. But now I feel like you just used me as a one-night-stand.”



# What are the general principles of an investigation?

- Parties must have sufficient notice to prepare and meaningfully participate
- Investigator has an independent duty to collect relevant inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
- Parties have an equal opportunity to present their statements, evidence, and to identify witnesses
- Parties have equal opportunity to review and comment on evidence developed
- Investigation is evidence-gathering; not fact-finding



# How do we tell the parties about an investigation?

- Institution must provide the parties written notice of a formal complaint that includes sufficient details about the “who, what, when, where, and how”

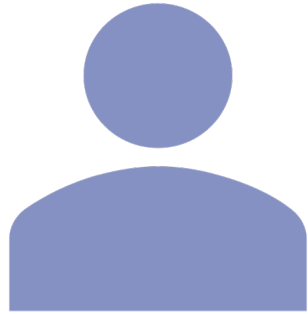




# What else does the notice need to say?

- Written notice must also include:
  - Statement of presumption respondent is not responsible unless and until a determination is made at the end of the process
  - That parties have the right to an advisor of their choice
  - That parties have the right to inspect and review evidence
  - Any prohibition on providing knowingly false statements or information

# How do we collect evidence in an investigation?



Interviews of parties and witnesses



Collection of non-testimonial evidence



# What are some general principles about interviewing?

Timing	Conduct interviews as soon as reasonably possible to maximize the most accurate memories
Setting	Choose a private and quiet setting
Role	Maintain role as fact-gatherer; not a prosecutor; not a defense attorney
Prepare	Anticipate questions that you will be asked and have responses ready

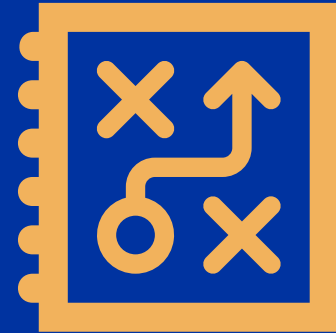


# Example question

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From student witness: “Will I be disciplined if I don’t show up for the hearing?”

Answer: “It’s very important for you to attend so we have accurate and complete information. And I’m personally asking you to attend if your presence is requested. But no, you won’t be disciplined for failing to attend.”



# Another example question



- From a party: “I want to tell you something ‘off-the-record.’ Is that okay?”
- Answer: “The nature of the interview is that everything is ‘on-the-record.’ So no, I can’t have an ‘off-the-record’ conversation with you. But you can have a confidential conversation with one of the University counselors.”

# How do you structure an interview?

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Rapport building/information providing phase



Substantive testimony collection



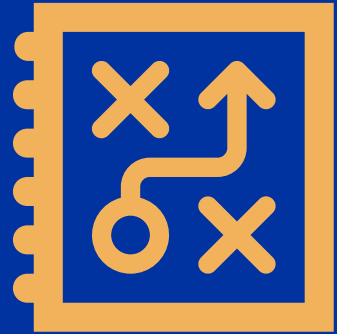
Closure/information providing phase



# Example of rapport building

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“I saw in the directory that you are from Colorado. My family likes to visit the state. Are there any places you’d recommend we visit?”





# Things helpful to say in every interview . . .

- “If I ask a question you don’t understand, please tell me.”
- “If I ask a question and you don’t know the answer, it’s okay to say you don’t know.”
- “If you think I’ve misunderstood anything you say today, please tell me.”
- “I want to get as much information as possible, so please be detailed in what you share. And if I don’t ask about something you think is important, please tell me.”
- “To do my job, I need accurate information. So I always remind every witness that it’s important to tell the truth.”



# How do I ask questions in the substantive phase?

- Open-ended and non-suggestive invitations
  - E.g., “Tell me about ...”
- Use facilitator words to keep the narrative flowing
  - E.g., “uh-huh,” “go on”
- Use cued-invitations to expand topics
  - E.g., “Tell me more about ...”
- Delay use of recognition prompts as long as possible
- Avoid suggestive or leading questions
- Save externally derived information for last



# Examples of recognition prompts



“What did she say?” (directive)



“What day did that happen?” (directive)



“Did it hurt?” (option choosing)



“Was he slurring words?” (option choosing)



## Examples of suggestive questions (avoid)

“I’m sure it’s difficult when you see him on campus. Do you agree?”

“You probably thought that was an invitation to have sex, right?”

“If I were in your position, I would probably feel threatened. Did you?”



# How do we make a record of the interview?

- Note-taking and audio recording are both appropriate methods of making a record of the interview
- If the investigator takes notes, they should be used to create a coherent interview memorandum shortly after the interview while the interview is fresh in the investigator's mind
- If the investigator records the interview, the investigator must be sure to clearly state on the record the time, place, date, and persons involved in the interview



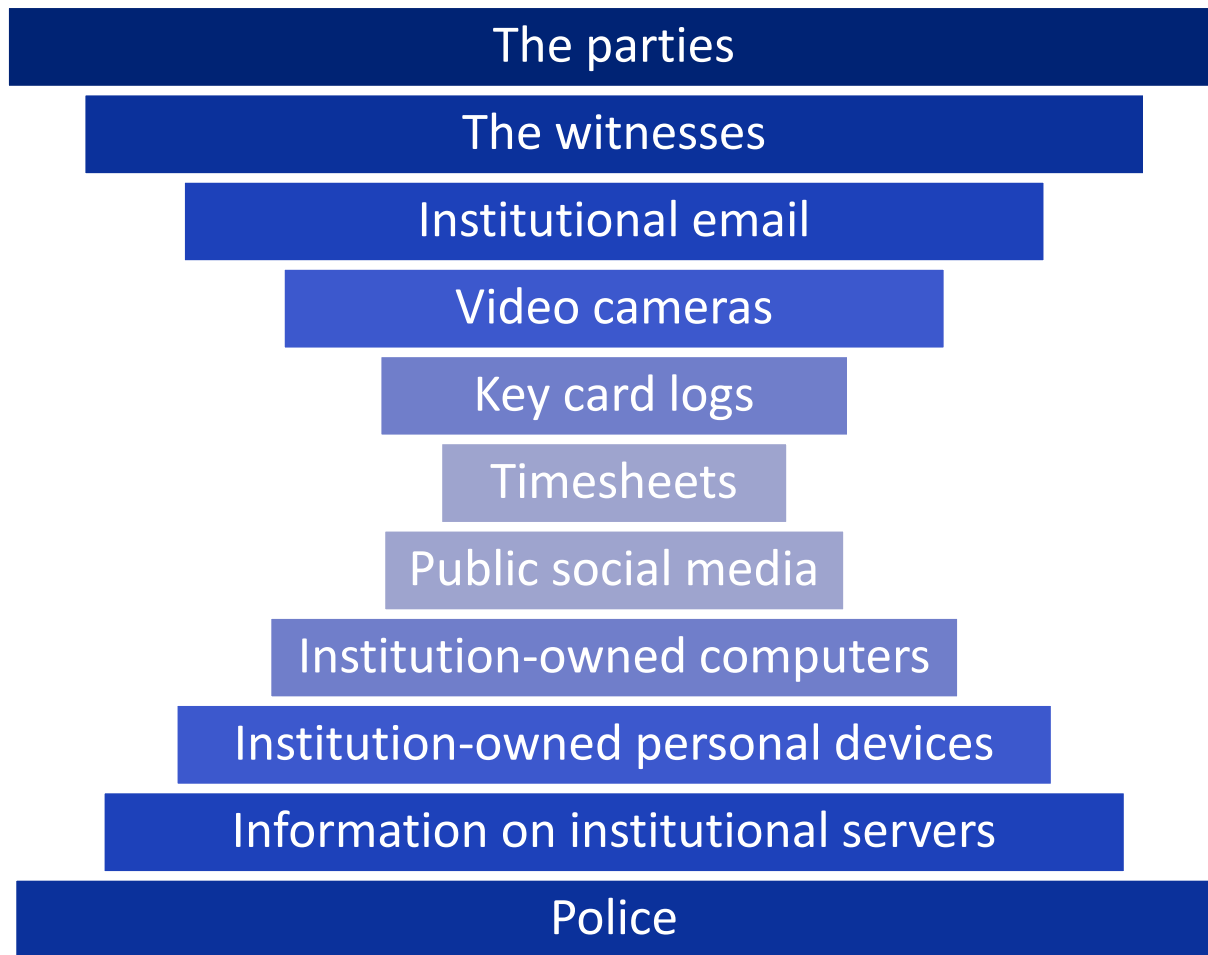


# Do parties/witnesses have a right to record the interview themselves?

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- No – parties do not have the right to insist on recording an interview
- If the interview is recorded, the institution should make the recording and give the parties access as required at the appropriate time

**Example  
sources of  
non-testimonial  
evidence**





# May an investigation collect evidence on sexual history?

- Generally, no – Evidence of a complainant’s prior sexual behavior is relevant only if offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct, or if evidence of specific incidents of the complainant’s prior sexual behavior with the respondent are offered to prove consent



# May an investigation collect and rely on privileged records?

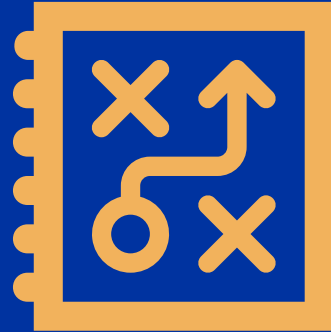


- Only if a party waives the privilege
- An institution may not access information under a legally recognized privilege unless the holder of the privilege waives it
- Institution cannot unilaterally access its own counseling and health files for investigation purposes



# Example of permissible use

—  
Student who makes report of sexual assault executes a HIPAA-compliant release requesting and authorizing the hospital to provide a copy of a SANE/SART examination to the investigator.



# Example of impermissible use

—



Respondent tells investigator  
Respondent met with an attorney the day after the alleged sexual assault. Investigator demands that Respondent reveal what was said to the attorney. When Respondent declines, Investigator notes that in the report and advises the hearing panel to draw an adverse inference against Respondent for “failing to cooperate.”





# May parties present expert witnesses?

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- Parties must have equal opportunity to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses



# Do the parties have access to the evidence?

- At a minimum, parties must be given access to all inculpatory and exculpatory evidence directly related to the allegations (regardless of whether the institution intends to rely on it) at least 10 days before the investigation report is finalized
- Evidence must be provided to a party and their advisor in physical copy or electronically
- Any earlier access to the evidence must be provided equally





# Do the parties get to respond to the evidence?

- Yes – after they review the evidence provided at least 10 days prior to issuance of the investigation report, parties can provide written responses
- Depending on written responses, additional investigation may be needed
- Investigator should consider the written responses in drafting final language of investigation report





# How is the investigation concluded?

- Issuance of a written investigation report
- Must fairly summarize the evidence collected, including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
- Must be provided to each party and their advisor at least 10 days prior to any hearing





# Does the investigation report make findings?

- No – the investigation report fairly summarizes the relevant inculpatory and exculpatory evidence collected during the investigation
- Under the new Title IX regulation, factual findings and determinations of policy violations are made by a decision-maker at a subsequent hearing



# May parties have an advisor during the investigation?

- Yes – parties may be accompanied to any investigative interviews and meetings by an advisor of their choice
- Advisor may be an attorney, but does not have to be
- Institution may confine advisor to a passive role during the investigation phase
- Institution is not required to provide an advisor during the investigation phase





# What if the advisor breaks the rules?



- Institution may impose limits on the advisor's role and certain behavior standards
- Must be applied equally for both parties
- Institution may exclude advisor who violates rules, but must pause the relevant interview, meeting, or interaction until the party has a new advisor

# Example of advisor breaking the rules

Dining Service Employee brings an aggressive Union Representative as an advisor to an interview. The institution's policy states that advisors are to remain passive and not argue on behalf of the parties they are advising. During the interview, Union Representative repeatedly interrupts the investigator, objects to questions, argues that the investigator should ask different questions, and attempts to present legal arguments citing caselaw.







# Example of advisor breaking the rules

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Psychology Student names the student's Mother as advisor. The institution's policy states that advisors may not obstruct communications between the institution and a party. Mother tells Investigator the Investigator is to communicate solely through Mother and not send any emails directly to the student. When Investigator emails Student directly to schedule an interview, Mother calls and verbally attacks Investigator.





# Are parties subject to a “gag” order during the investigation?

- No – the institution may not restrict the ability of parties to discuss the allegations or to gather and present relevant evidence, which includes talking to witnesses
- But institution can still enforce prohibitions on witness intimidation, witness manipulation, false statements, retaliation, harassment, etc.



# Example of permissible conduct

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Respondent accused of sexual assault sends text messages to various students who may have observed the complainant's level of intoxication on the night in question. Respondent's text says: "Please contact me ASAP if you believe the complainant was sober."

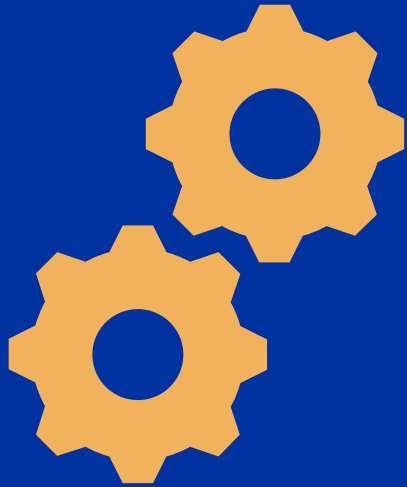


# Example of impermissible conduct



Respondent tells Roommate that respondent has been accused of sexual assault and “it’s important that we get our stories lined up.” Roommate states a belief that Respondent arrived home at 2:00 a.m. Respondent says: “No. You’re going to say you saw me here in bed at 11:00 p.m. That’s what you need to say or I’m screwed. I’ll owe you for this . . .”

## Group Scenario



Political Science Student accuses Graduate Teaching Assistant of using a power differential to coerce student into performing oral sex. Student has received counseling since the incident and tells the investigator the counselor has diagnosed PTSD. GTA denies the oral sex was coerced. GTA claims that student consented and previously performed oral sex on another GTA. GTA tells investigator GTA has procured an expert witness who will opine student was not coerced and was not influenced by the power differential. Student identifies several witnesses who will testify GTA was a “creep.”

# Questions





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# Trauma Issues





# Balance

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- Illinois statute requires trauma-informed approaches (110 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 155/1 et seq.)
- “Trauma-informed investigation techniques that bleed over into ... bias detract from the fundamental tenets of fairness and impartiality that are [key to] disciplinary proceedings.”
  - Candace Jackson, Acting Asst. Secretary of Ed (2017)





# Trauma might affect a party

- Not in every case
- Not just one party
- Never assume anyone interviewed or questioned suffered any trauma

# Possible trauma impact

People who have suffered trauma may, but may not, experience any or a mix of the following

Flashbacks

Delayed recollection

Inability to concentrate

Non-linear recollection

Self-blame



# Trauma & credibility

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- Don't assume information is not credible due to the manner delivered
- Understand memory may be clarified in time
- Address inconsistencies
- Ascertain fair and impartial assessment of the facts and give appropriate weight to party and witness statements

# What is the definition of trauma?



**Merriam-Webster**: a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time



**English Oxford**: Deeply distressing or disturbing experience



**Wikipedia**: is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability to cope, or integrate the emotions involved with that experience



## Physical reaction

- Brain—Trauma triggers chemical reaction which impacts
  - Perception
  - Ability to React
  - Memory
- Each individual reacts differently



# Investigating trauma

- Avoid judgment, impatience, disrespect, misuse of power
- Emphasize
  - Safety/comfort
  - Choices
  - Support for person
    - Personal support
    - Available services
    - Remain objective on facts
  - Trustworthiness/transparency





# Trauma-informed interview

---

- Provide information to the party
- Acknowledge the difficult situation
- Provide as many options as possible
- The process
  - Your role
  - Policy
  - Communication



# Trauma-informed interview (cont.)

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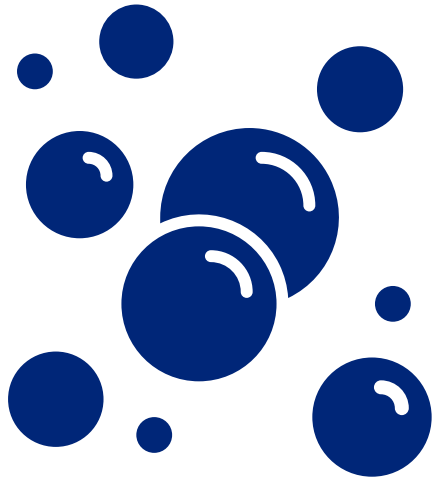
- Important to focus on two concepts:
- What are you **able** to tell me about your **experience**?
  - Allow complainant to begin where he/she wants
  - Allow an uninterrupted statement
  - Use follow-up questions (non-leading)





# Trauma-informed interview (cont.)

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- Instead of asking “why,” ask about what witness was thinking during the experience
- Ask about memories associated with the senses:
  - Sights
  - Smells
  - Feelings



# Awareness of respondent trauma

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- Own experience
- Around event
- Around accusations
- Thoughts in the respondent's mind:
  - Will this be a criminal investigation?
  - Could I go to jail?
  - Could I get kicked out of school?
  - Should I have a lawyer?
  - Should I tell my parents?
  - You can't answer these questions but must give time and options
- Always offer interim measures and counseling

# Resource for consideration: Harvard implicit bias test

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<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>





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Hearings





# What is the purpose of the hearing?

- To hear testimony and receive non-testimonial evidence so that
- The decision-maker can determine facts under a standard of evidence
- Apply those facts to the policy, and
- Issue a written determination resolving the formal complaint and imposing discipline/remedial measures as necessary



# What standard of evidence can be used?

- Either
  - Preponderance of the evidence or
  - Clear and convincing evidence
- Institution must select a standard and apply it uniformly in all cases, regardless of the identity of the respondent

# Who runs the hearing?

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- Regulation requires hearing to be administered by “decision-maker(s)”
- Means institution can use a single hearing officer or a hearing panel (presumably, with a chairperson)



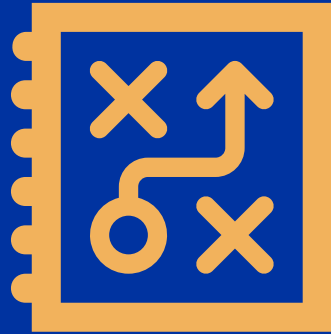


# Can we set standards of behavior for hearings?

Yes, provided they are applied equally and do not violate explicit guarantees from the Title IX regulation.



# Example (permissible)

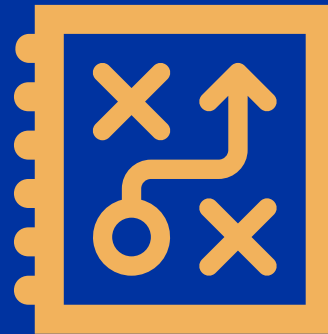


Institution's hearing procedures require all participants to maintain decorum, remain at their respective assigned table at all times, and direct all communications to the hearing officer with the exception of questions posed to the other party and witnesses by each party's respective advisor.



# Example (impermissible)

—  
Institution's policy prohibits a party or advisor from "doing anything that would make another party uncomfortable or suffer anxiety, including asking questions that may cause a party to relive an experience in a traumatizing way."





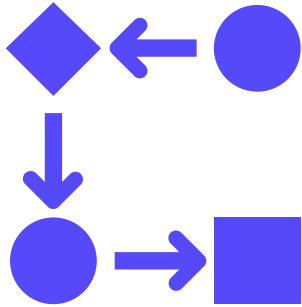
# What happens before a hearing?

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- Notice of hearing
- Name decision maker(s)
- Share hearing procedures
- May allow raising/consideration of evidentiary/relevance arguments



# What are the logistics of a hearing?



- Hearing must be recorded (audio or video) or transcribed
- Hearing must have “live” – i.e., contemporaneous participation by parties and their advisors
- Hearing can be held in a single room or with the parties separated in different rooms
- Hearing can be held virtually using suitable software



# Who attends a hearing?

---

- The decision-maker(s)
- Other necessary institutional personnel or institutional advisors (e.g., attorneys)
- The parties
- Each party's advisor
- Witnesses as they are called to testify
- Other support persons for parties, if permitted by institution



# Do we provide a party's advisor?

- Default rule is that a party selects and brings an advisor of their choice to the hearing
- Advisor can be, but does not have to be, an attorney
- If a party does not have an advisor, institution must supply one for the purpose of questioning the other party and witnesses on behalf of the student in question

# How does the hearing actually work?

- Title IX regulation is largely silent on specific elements
- Required elements include:

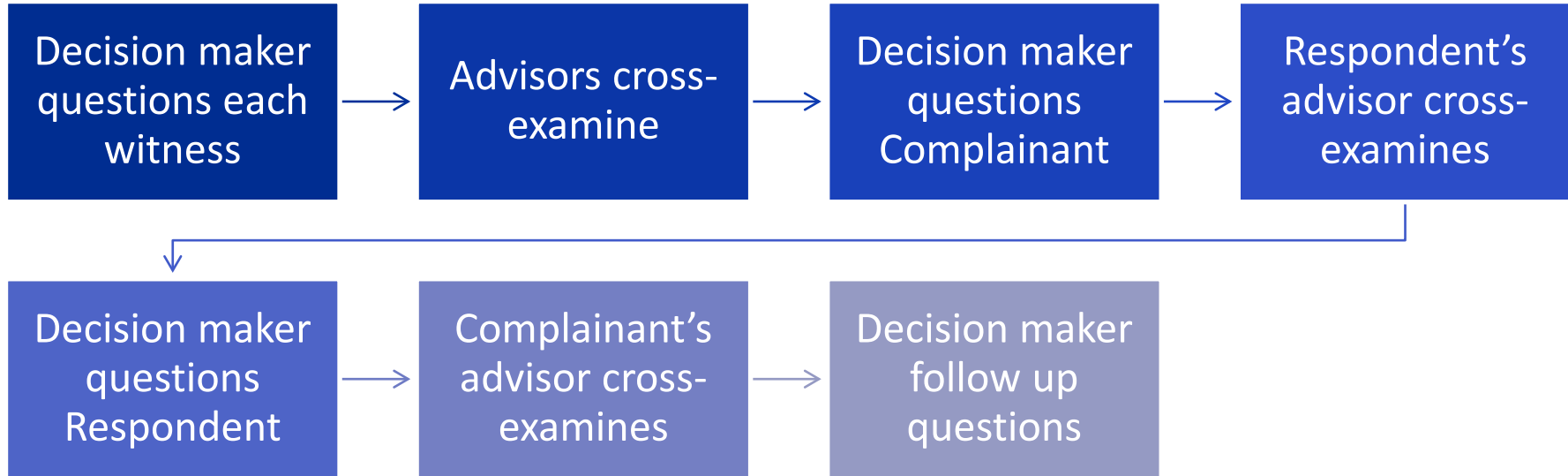
Decision-maker(s) must independently evaluate questions for relevance and resolve relevancy objections

Party's advisors must be allowed to conduct live questioning of other party and witnesses

Party or witness who refuses to submit to live questioning from other party's advisor must have their testimony excluded from consideration

Questioning of sexual history generally not permitted

# What is a potential sequence?







# Who determines relevance?

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- Decision-maker(s) must screen questions for relevance and resolve relevance objections
- Decision-maker(s) must explain any decision to exclude a question as not-relevant



# What is relevance?

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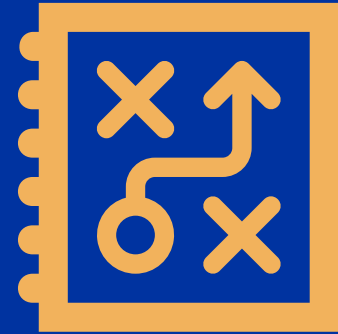
Evidence is relevant if:

- It has a tendency to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without the evidence; and
- The fact is of consequence in determining the action



## Example (relevant)

—  
Med Student has accused Physical Therapy Student of sexual assault by having sex with Med Student while Med Student was incapacitated by alcohol after a happy hour. Advisor for P.T. student asks Med Student: “Did you send any text messages or make any phone calls during the happy hour?”



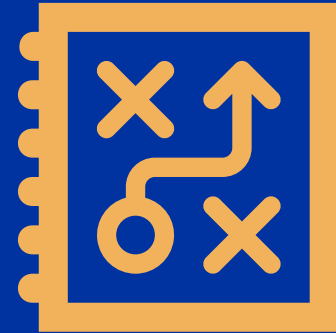
# Example (relevant)



Coach is accused of sexually propositioning Player in exchange for more playing time. Advisor for Player asks the Coach: “Didn’t you tell one of the trainers that Player is ‘extremely attractive?’”

# Example (not relevant)

Complainant alleges Significant Other engaged in dating violence by kicking complainant during an argument. Advisor for Significant Other asks complainant: “Isn’t it true that you are only dating Significant Other because of the Other family’s money?”



# Example (not relevant)



Journalism Student has accused Professor of sexual harassment. Advisor for Professor asks Journalist: “Were you convicted for driving under the influence when you were a sophomore in high school?”



# Is sexual history considered?

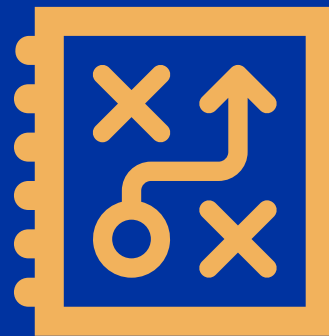
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- Generally, no – Evidence of a complainant’s prior sexual behavior is relevant only if:
  - Offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct, or
  - If evidence of specific incidents of the complainant’s prior sexual behavior with the respondent are offered to prove consent



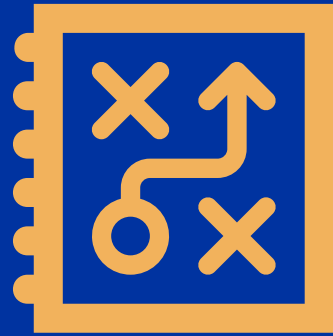
# Example (impermissible)

—  
Law Student has accused Clinical Supervisor of sexual harassment. Advisor for the Clinical Supervisor asks Law Student: “How many men did you sleep with in the month before you claimed the Clinical Supervisor sexually harassed you?”





# Example (permissible)

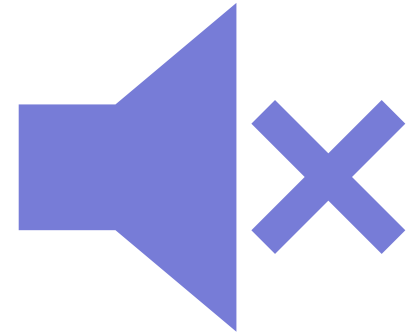


Engineering Student has accused Fine Arts Student of sexual assault. Engineer testified that Artist had intercourse with Engineer without using a condom without Engineer's agreement—Engineer always requires protection. Advisor for Artist asks Engineer: “But didn't you have unprotected sex with Artist a week prior? And didn't you tell Artist it was 'okay' that the two of you didn't use protection?”



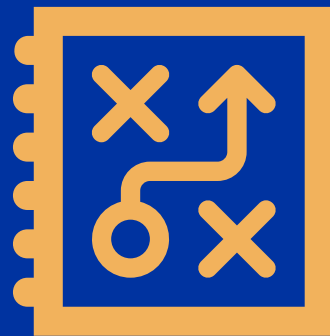
# Does any testimony get excluded?

- Yes – Decision-maker(s) must exclude the statements of any party or witness who refuses to submit to cross-examination from the other party’s advisor
- “[P]rovided, however, that the decision-maker(s) cannot draw an inference about the determination regarding responsibility based solely on a party’s or witness’s absence from the live hearing or refusal to answer cross-examination or other questions.” (34 C.F.R. § 106.45)

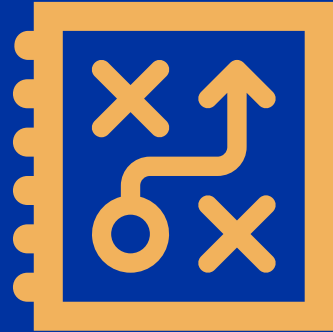


# B H — + Example (excluded)

Complainant gives emotional account of sexual assault and answers questions from hearing panel chair. Complainant then answers only one question from respondent's advisor before breaking down and refusing to answer any more. After a break is taken, complainant tells hearing panel chair complainant cannot endure cross-examination. Complainant leaves the hearing.



# Example (excluded)

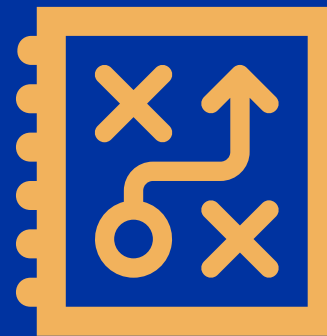


Witness gives statement to investigator that witness observed Complainant right after alleged instance of harassment. Witness told Investigator that Complainant was in tears and had to leave a school event. Witness fails to attend hearing. Investigator is prepared to relay what Witness told investigator.



# Example (not-excluded)

—  
Witness answers questions from hearing officer. After consulting with Complainant, Advisor for Complainant says that Advisor has no questions for Witness. Advisor for Respondent then proceeds to cross-examine witness.





# Potential transition point

- If witness previously interviewed does not testify at hearing and lack of such witness statement precludes a determination
- Title IX case may be dismissed
- May transfer to other policy
  - All information gathered during investigation and hearing can be considered
  - Includes statements from witnesses who did not testify at hearing

# How long does a hearing last?



- Decision-maker(s) have the ability to set reasonable time limits on the hearing and its constituent parts
- Parties must have a reasonable opportunity to conduct questioning/cross-examination, but do not have the right to question/cross-examine witnesses as long as they want
- Decision-maker(s) should set an overall length to the hearing in advance and keep parties on schedule

# How do(es) the decision-maker(s) decide a case?



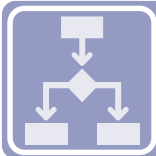
After hearing, decision-maker(s) must deliberate and consider all the admissible testimony and admissible non-testimonial evidence



Evaluate evidence for weight and credibility



Resolve disputed issues of fact under the standard of evidence adopted by the institution



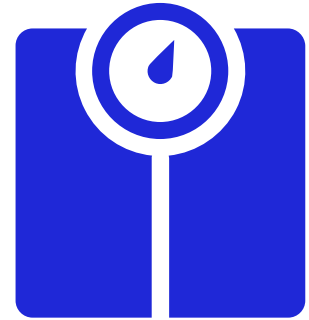
Using the facts as found, apply the policy's definitions to those facts to determine whether sexual harassment occurred





# What does it mean to weigh evidence?

- Not all evidence has equal value
- Some evidence may be more reliable and probative than other evidence
- Weight may vary depending on a range of factors, such as credibility; corroboration; consistency; level of detail; expertise of the witness; whether a witness is disinterested, etc.



# Example of considerable weight

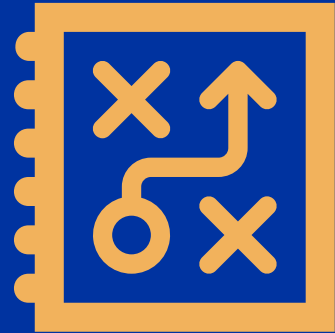
Witness testified Witness saw Complainant and Respondent leave the bar at 11:05 pm as Witness was arriving. Witness clearly saw their faces and remarked to a friend about a particular t-shirt the Complainant was wearing and how Respondent had a nose ring. Witness testified the time was exactly 11:05 pm because Witness remembers receiving a phone call right as Witness entered the bar, and Witness's call log indicates the call was received at 11:05 pm.





# Example of less weight

Witness says Witness saw a couple leaving the bar “sometime after ten but before midnight” but Witness is not “sure exactly” when. Witness testified they “sort of looked” like Complainant and Respondent and Witness is “pretty sure” it was them. But Witness also says Witness had spent two hours at a different bar before that and was “pretty drunk at the time I saw them.”





# How do(es) the decision-maker(s) issue a decision?

- In a written document, provided contemporaneously to the parties that:
  - Identifies the allegations of sexual harassment
  - Describes the various procedural steps taken from the time the formal complaint was made
  - States findings of facts supporting the determination
  - Reaches conclusions regarding application of relevant policy definitions to the facts
  - Includes a rationale for each finding for each allegation
  - States the disciplinary sanctions and remedies, if implicated by the determination made, and
  - Explains the procedures and grounds for appeal



# Who determines discipline and remediation?

- This is a question of institutional choice
- Some institutions will have the decision-maker(s) also impose discipline
- Others may refer a disciplinary authority with jurisdiction over the respondent (i.e., Dean of Students, Provost, Director of Human Resources, etc.)
- Faculty and Staff – may have different process than students
- If referred to someone else, that must occur before the written determination is issued



# What principles do we use to determine discipline?

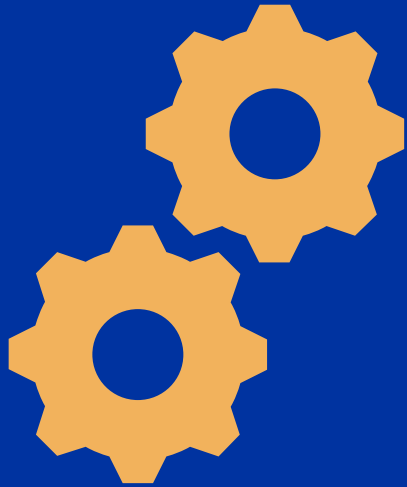
- Discipline should vary depending on the nature of the violation found considering aggravating and mitigating factors
- All things being equal, like violations should have like punishments
- Discipline has educational, punitive, and protective elements



# What principles do we use to determine remediation?

- If a violation is found, institution must take steps to restore or preserve the complainant's access to education
- Various types of supportive measures may be utilized after the determination to restore or preserve access
- Institution is not required to provide the exact remedy requested, but must provide a remedy that is not clearly unreasonable

## Group Scenario



Geology Student accuses Instructor of sexual assault. During the investigation, Student Witness told Investigator that Student Witness saw Instructor carry Geology Student—passed out—into Instructor’s office immediately before the alleged sexual assault. Student Witness does not appear for the hearing as expected. Geology Student testifies to the hearing officer that Investigator told Geology Student that Student Witness saw that Geology Student was passed out. When Geology Student testifies to this, Instructor’s advocate objects, demands a “mistrial,” and refuses to be silent after the hearing officer declines to exclude the testimony.



# Questions





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# Appeals





# What is the purpose of the appeal?

- Appeal permits challenge of a dismissal or determination on certain limited grounds
- Appeals are not an opportunity to re-argue an outcome or seek “de novo” review





# Who can appeal?

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- Title IX regulation requires that either party be allowed to appeal
- Third-party persons cannot file appeals on behalf of a party



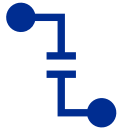
# Can an institution set a time limit to appeal?

- Yes – an institution can and should require an appeal to be filed within a reasonable number of days after a dismissal or determination
- Institution may set a secondary deadline for the non-appealing party to elect to file a cross-appeal *after* the first party has appealed



# What are the grounds for appeal?

Title IX regulation requires the following permitted grounds:



Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter



New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made, that could affect the outcome of the matter; or



Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or decision-maker (hearing official) had a conflict of interest or bias against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter



## Example (procedural irregularity)

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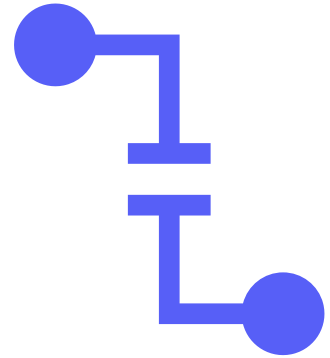
During a hearing, the hearing officer denies Respondent's Advisor the right to question witnesses. Respondent appeals, citing this procedural irregularity, and argues that key witness testimony relied on by the hearing officer must be excluded because the witness was not subjected to questioning by Advisor, as required by the policy. And without such testimony, the outcome cannot be supported.





# Are all procedural errors appealable?

- No – the procedural irregularity must be one that “affected the outcome of the matter”
- Errors that affect the outcome may be referred to as “prejudicial” errors
- Errors that do not affect the outcome may be called “non-prejudicial” or “harmless” errors







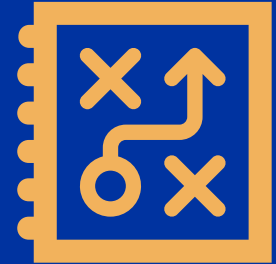
# Example (harmless error)

—  
Policy requires hearing to be held within 60 days of submission of Formal Complaint. Hearing was held 61 days after submission of Formal Complaint due to a counting error. The evidence would have been the same if the hearing were held a day earlier.



# Example (new evidence)

After determination is made that Respondent did not commit sexual harassment, Complainant secures a previously unknown video made by Bystander at a party that depicts Respondent groping Complainant and Complainant attempting to pull away from Respondent. Bystander has been out of the country and only learned of the hearing after returning a few days ago.





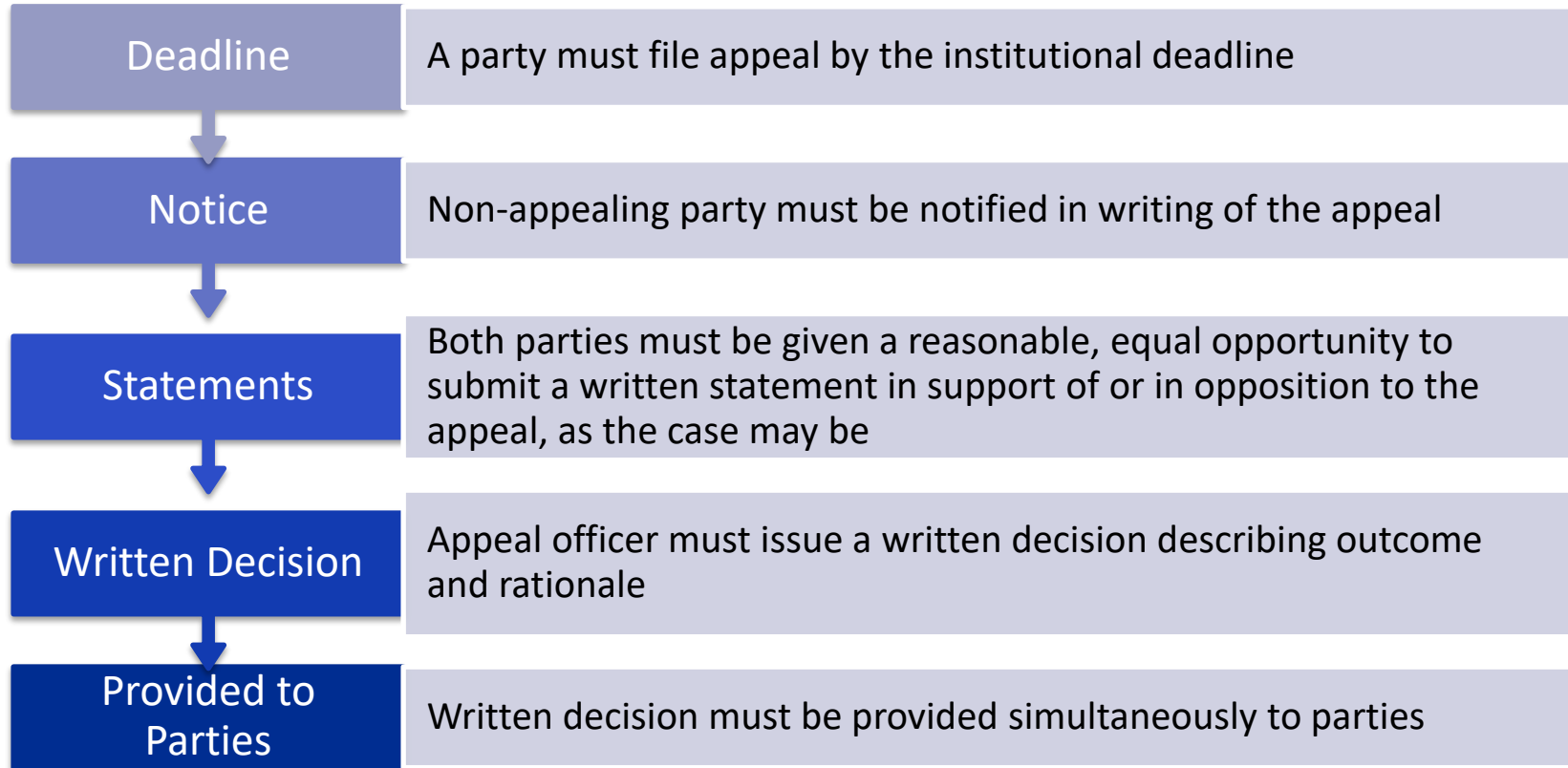
## Example (conflict of interest/bias)

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After a determination is made that Respondent committed sexual harassment, Respondent sees social media post by hearing officer stating: “All victims of sexual harassment must be believed. False reports of harassment are exceedingly rare. A person accused of sexual harassment probably did it in my book.” Respondent argues bias resulted in a sham hearing with the outcome predetermined.



# What is the appeal process?





# Should we ever dismiss an appeal?

- Yes – dismissal is appropriate if:
  - Appeal is filed after the reasonable deadline set in the policy
  - Appealing party does not articulate one of the permissible grounds for appeal



# May the institution appeal if the parties don't?

- No – the institution does not take appeals of its own determinations
- In the event a formal complaint is filed by the Title IX Coordinator, the Title IX Coordinator should not have the right to appeal





# Can we require an appealing party to explain their appeal?

Yes – an institution can require that the appealing party state the grounds for appeal and also explain, with some level of specificity, why the appeal should be granted.



# How is the appeal decision made?

- Review is limited in scope to the grounds stated for appeal
- Appeal decision maker does not hold a new hearing
- Appeal decision maker must review the appeal, response, and hearing record (to the extent necessary, depending on the grounds for appeal)
- Appeal decision maker must then draft a written decision that states the outcome of the appeal and rationale



# What are the potential outcomes of an appeal?



Appeal is denied and determination is made final



Appeal is granted and determination is changed by the appeal officer



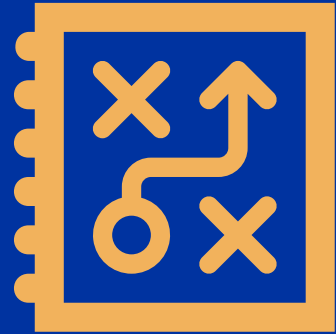
Appeal is granted, determination is “vacated”, and appeal officer sends matter back for a new investigation and/or hearing as appropriate, depending on the nature of the error the appeals officer found



# Example (procedural error)

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Appeals officer finds there was a prejudicial procedural error because the hearing officer failed to send notices requesting that several of Respondent's key witnesses appear. Appeals officer vacates the adverse finding against Respondent and directs that a new hearing take place after appropriate notices to appear have been issued.



# Questions





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# Informal Resolution





# What is informal resolution?

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A voluntary process to resolve formal complaints of sexual harassment through a mechanism other than the default investigation and hearing.



# Does every case with disputed facts have to proceed to hearing?

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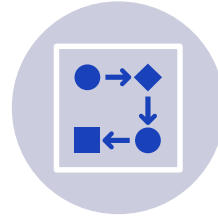
- No – As long as the procedural requirements to enter informal resolution are met, Title IX regulations permit a wide range of alternative models, including a decision by a single individual (i.e., “arbitration”)
- It is especially important to advise the parties of the nature of this type of resolution and how it differs from the default investigation and hearing

# What are the key concepts of informal resolution?

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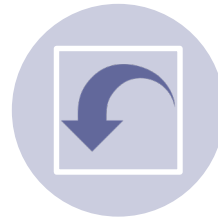
A formal complaint must first have been filed and written notice given to the parties



The parties must be apprised in writing of how the informal resolution process will work and the consequences of participating in it



The parties must voluntarily agree to participate in writing

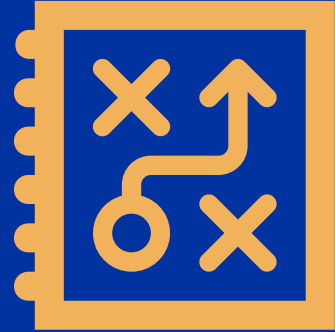


The parties must be allowed to withdraw from informal resolution up until the point it is final



## Example (informal resolution)

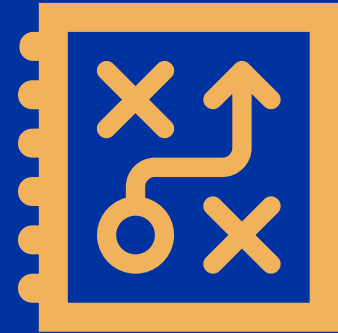
Parties agree to engage in informal resolution in the form of mediation. Parties meet with third-party mediator three times over the course of two weeks and are very near to reaching a complete agreement. The morning of the last session, the complainant indicates a desire to stop mediation and resume the formal investigation/hearing process.





## Example (cont.) - resolution

- Investigation and hearing process would resume
- If Complainant withdraws complaint, or refuses to participate, institution might elect to dismiss complaint
- But Title IX Coordinator might also elect to file formal complaint and cause the issue to be adjudicated fully





# What are the limitations?

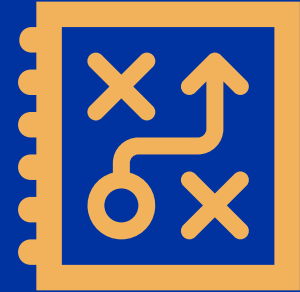
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- Informal resolution cannot be used where an employee is accused of sexually harassing a student
- Informal resolution cannot be used in the absence of a formal complaint
- Institution cannot require persons to consent to informal resolution as a condition of employment or enrollment



# Example (impermissible)

Student files a formal complaint accusing Professor of offering to give Student better grades in exchange for sexual favors. Professor proposes to informally resolve the complaint by apologizing for a “bad joke” and having a colleague grade student’s work product. Student indicates they are amenable to the Professor’s proposal.



# Example (impermissible)



Enrollment agreement for students contains a clause stating: “Student hereby waives their right to a formal investigation and hearing as contemplated by Title IX and instead agrees that all reports of sexual harassment will be summarily resolved by a decision issued by the Dean of Students after an investigation.”



# Who facilitates an informal resolution?

- Any suitably qualified and trained person may facilitate informal resolution, including the Title IX Coordinator
- Facilitator can be a third-party mediator or alternative dispute resolution specialist
- Default rules on conflicts of interest and bias apply

# What are some examples of informal resolution?

Facilitated exchange of resolution offers

Mediation

Arbitration

Restorative justice

Settlement with the involvement of attorneys



# How long can an informal resolution take?

- Informal resolution should be reasonably prompt
- Typically has the effect of suspending any default investigation and hearing process
- If informal resolution fails or appears futile, institution should promptly resume default investigation and hearing process





# Is an informal resolution final?

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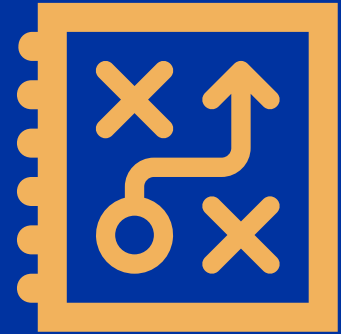
- Generally, yes – Most informal resolutions will result in an agreement that resolves the allegations in a definitive and final way
- A party cannot demand an investigation and hearing of the same conduct that has been resolved through informal resolution
- Exception exists if terms of the informal resolution are not final (i.e., contingent) and contemplate a potential return to the formal process





# Example of informal resolution

Informal resolution indicates that, in lieu of investigation and hearing, Respondent will apologize for Respondent's misconduct and attend counseling, but should Respondent sexually harass Complainant again, Complainant will be free to file a formal complaint encompassing the entire range of sexual harassment.

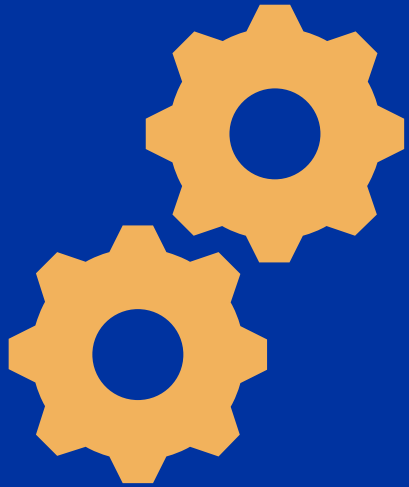




# How is an informal resolution documented?

- Agreements should be well-documented by the informal resolution facilitator
- Ideally, parties will sign the agreement or provide some other form of written confirmation
- Formal settlement agreements are typically not required unless they are resolving legal claims that have been asserted

## Group Scenario



Tech Employee makes a report that Faculty Member slapped, punched, and shoved Techie while the two were dating. Techie and Faculty Member verbally agree to engage in informal resolution.

Title IX Coordinator meets separately with each party and mediates a resolution that involves Faculty Member apologizing and attending anger management classes. Each signs a term sheet. Faculty Member attends two weeks of anger management classes and then stops going. Techie then files a formal complaint based on the allegations in the previous report.

# Questions





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Confidentiality





# Are sexual harassment cases confidential?

- Sexual harassment cases should be treated as confidential by the institution, with information only shared as necessary to effectuate the policy
- Records containing identifying information on students are subject to FERPA analysis
- The Title IX regulation contains an express preemption, permitting FERPA-protected material to be used as required by Title IX itself





# Are parties allowed to talk about a case?

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- Title IX regulation prohibits an institution from restricting the ability of a party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather or present evidence
- Free expression policies (and First Amendment for public institutions) may limit ability to restrict speech about a case
- Witness manipulation and intimidation can still be addressed by institution



## Example (permitted communication)

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Student Respondent in sexual harassment case affirmatively calls several other students who know complainant. Respondent tells such persons Respondent has been accused of sexual harassment and is attempting to determine whether Complainant discussed the effect of Respondent's actions with any of them.

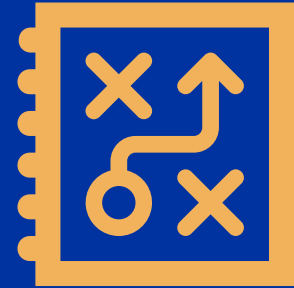






## Example (institution may restrict)

Complainant contacts Witness who Complainant knows will testify to Witness' belief, based on observation, that Complainant was not incapacitated and desired to have sex with Respondent. Complainant tells Witness to ignore Investigator's request for an interview, to lie if Witness is asked what Witness observed, and not to show up at a hearing under any circumstances.

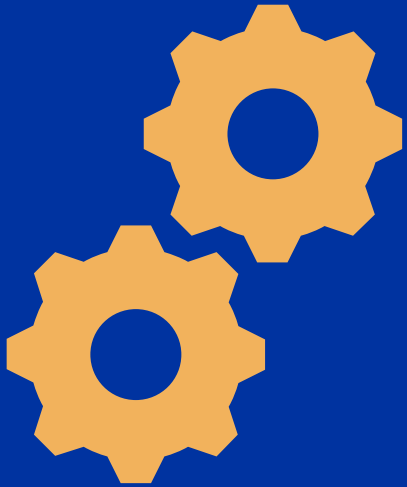




# Are interviews and hearings confidential?

- Institution should restrict access to investigations and hearings to those persons whose attendance is required to effectuate policy
- Parties may be accompanied by advisors of choice and potentially others if justified by the need for a reasonable accommodation
- Media should not be granted access to interviews and hearings

## Group Scenario



Student Respondent is being investigated for sexually assaulting Student Complainant. Respondent contacts various individuals who were present at a party immediately before the alleged sexual assault and asks the individuals to sign a declaration attesting that Complainant was sober and fondling Respondent in front of others. One such individual is a friend of Complainant and complains to the Title IX Coordinator. Later, when Respondent is given access to the investigation evidence before the conclusion of the investigation, Respondent posts the entire evidentiary record online.

# Questions





# Thank you!

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- ✓ Title IX Scope & Jurisdiction
- ✓ Title IX & Other Policies
- ✓ Institutional Response to Sexual Harassment
- ✓ Investigations
- ✓ Trauma & Bias
- ✓ Hearings
- ✓ Appeals
- ✓ Informal Resolution
- ✓ Confidentiality

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