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REFRESHER TRAINING ON TITLE IX REGULATIONS

November 1, 2023

Rebecca Leitman Veidlinger

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Before we begin

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Meet your trainer



Rebecca Leitman Veidlinger is an attorney specializing in Title IX and the institutional response to complaints of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Rebecca has conducted and supervised hundreds of Title IX investigations, and she regularly serves as a Title IX hearing officer for institutions.

Rebecca teaches and trains on school-related sexual misconduct nationwide. As an adjunct professor at the University of Michigan Law School, she teaches a seminar on Title IX, and she frequently provides sexual misconduct prevention and response training to higher education administrators, Title IX implementers, and K-12 personnel.

In 2022, Rebecca was appointed as the external co-chair of the University of Michigan's Coordinated Community Response Team, a group that examines the University's prevention and response efforts, identifies areas for growth, and makes policy recommendations to the University's leadership.

Before entering private practice, Rebecca worked at the University of Michigan as a Title IX investigator. She also served as Michigan State University's interim deputy Title IX coordinator, overseeing MSU's creation of a free-standing civil rights investigation unit in 2015. Rebecca is the former sex crimes prosecutor in Monroe County, Indiana (home of Indiana University), where she prosecuted hundreds of cases of domestic and sexual violence involving children and adults.

Today we will cover:

- Scope and jurisdiction of Title IX regulations
- Understanding the institution's mandatory response
- Formal complaints and mandatory and discretionary dismissals
- Roles in the process, and how to serve impartially, without bias, and without conflicts of interest
- Informal resolution
- Title IX hearings
- Appeals
- Possible changes to come . . .

The Legal Framework

Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments

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

2020 Title IX Regulations



Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- 1) An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- 2) 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; or
- 3) "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

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Mandatory jurisdiction to respond

- Actual knowledge
- Sexual harassment
- Education program or activity
- Person in the United States

Respond promptly in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent

- Promptly contact complainant to discuss availability of supportive measures regardless of whether complaint is filed and explain process for filing complaint
- Supportive measures for complainants
- Supportive measures for respondents (when the time is right)
- Keep records of supportive measures for seven years

Emergency removal of student

- Not a determination of responsibility
- Must conduct an individualized safety and risk analysis
- For immediate threats to anyone's physical health or safety
- Respondent must have an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal
- Whether or not grievance process is underway

Administrative leave of employee

- May place employee respondent on administrative leave during the pendency of a grievance process that complies with Title IX regulations



Mandatory jurisdiction to investigate Formal complaint filed by a complainant

- What is a formal complaint?
- How to file it/where is it?
- What does it need to say?



Mandatory jurisdiction to investigate Formal complaint filed by Title IX coordinator

*Under what
circumstances do you
think a Title IX
Coordinator might
choose to file a
complaint?*



Formal complaint is filed ... what now? NOTICE LETTER

- Grievance process
- Allegations, including sufficient details
- Statement of presumption of non-responsibility
- Right to an advisor/attorney
- Right to inspect evidence
- Any provision in code that prohibits making false statements during process



Dismissing complaints

MANDATORY

- Not sexual harassment
- Did not occur in program or activity
- Not against person in the U.S.

DISCRETIONARY

- Complainant withdraws complaint
- Respondent no longer enrolled/employed
- School unable to collect sufficient info



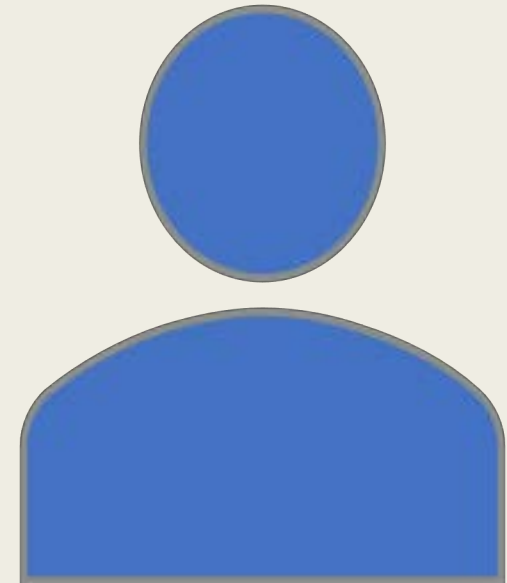
Q AND A

Stretch Break



- Title IX Coordinator
- Facilitator of informal resolution
- Investigator
- Decisionmaker
- Appeals officer
- Party advisor

Title IX Roles





How to serve impartially

- Avoid pre-judgment of the facts
- Conflict of interest
- Bias

What does it mean to be unbiased?

- Don't have a bias for or against complainants or respondents generally
- Don't have a bias for or against an individual complainant or respondent
- Treat parties equally/equitably during interviews
- Seek to interview witnesses identified by both parties

Deeper dive into bias



- Bias is not an action; it occurs in a person's head
- What is implicit bias?
- Different kinds of bias

- Can only be offered after formal complaint has been filed
- May include arbitration, mediation, restorative justice, or other means
- Facilitators must be trained in informal resolution

Informal resolution

Steps of investigation

Trained investigator collects information

Investigator shares evidence “directly related” to allegations with parties

Parties have 10 days to respond

Investigator creates summary of “relevant” evidence (investigation report) and shares with parties

Parties have 10 days to respond prior to hearing

Understanding relevance

Relevance IS



- Tends to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without that evidence
- Logical connection between the evidence and facts at issue
- Assists in coming to the conclusion – it is “of consequence”

Relevance IS NOT



- Strength of the evidence
- Believability of the evidence
- Based on type of evidence: circumstantial v. direct
- Based on complicated rules of court



Q AND A



HEARINGS

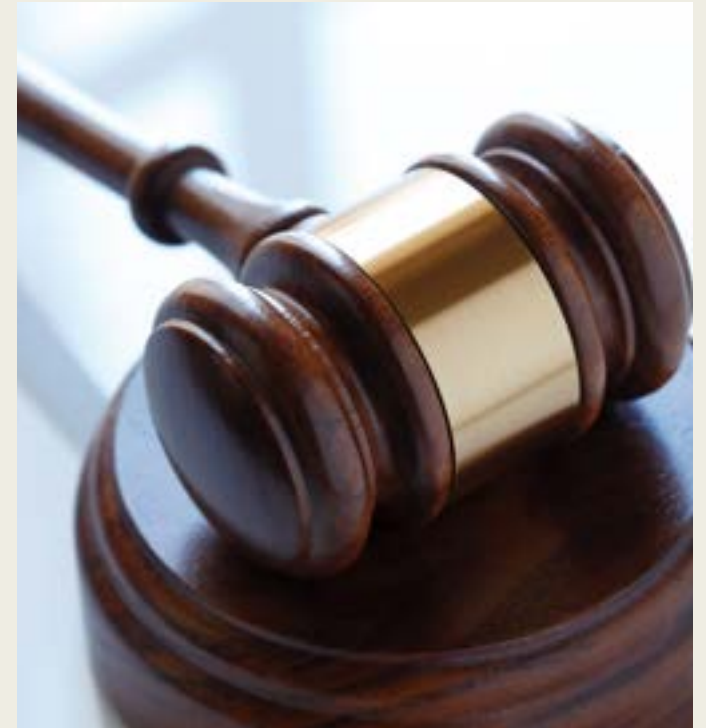


Pre-hearing work

- Confirm advisors for each party; appoint if necessary
- Figure out who will be requested to attend
- Explain to the parties what to expect
- Establish ground rules and structure of hearing
- Consider convening a pre-hearing conference
- Make logistical and technology decisions (including recording, having info available for parties, and remote access)

Hearings

- Live hearing (can be by videoconference)
- Parties' advisors conduct cross-examination
- Hearing officer determines the relevance of each individual question
- Can't draw an inference regarding responsibility based solely on absence or refusal to answer a question



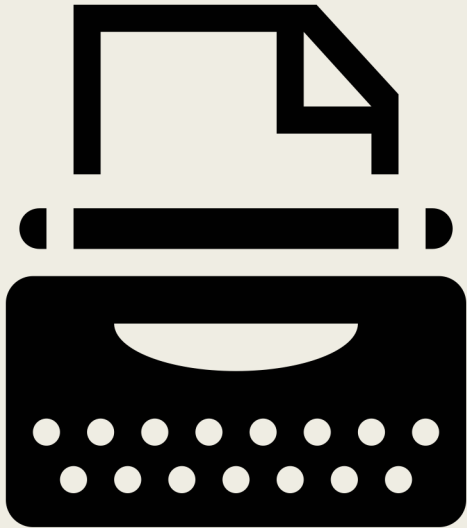


Refresher: Special categories of evidence that are off-limits

- **IRRELEVANT:** Complainant's prior sexual predisposition or prior sexual history (with two exceptions)
- **IRRELEVANT:** Information protected under a legally-recognized privilege
- **CAN'T USE:** Medical, psychological and similar records without written consent of party

Decision and written determination

- Use disciplined, unbiased evaluation of relevant evidence
- Include specific elements required by regulations



Required elements in written determination

- Description of procedural steps from complaint through determination
- Findings of fact
- Conclusions regarding application of policy to facts
- Rationale for each result of each allegations
- Sanctions/remedies
- Appeal options (must permit appeal)

Grounds for appeals

- Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter
- 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
- Title IX coordinator, investigator, or decisionmaker had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter
- Any other grounds, as long as offered equally to both parties



Q AND A

Proposed new Title IX regulations

- Broader coverage– sex discrimination, not just sexual harassment
- Different definition of Title IX hostile environment sexual harassment
- Makes explicit that discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity
- Includes several explicit and expanded protections related to pregnancy and parenting status
- Essentially prohibits adopting a policy or practice that prevents a person from participating in an education program or activity consistent with their gender identity
- Requirement that Title IX Coordinator “monitor” the education programs and activities for any “barriers” to reporting sex discrimination and take steps to address such barriers

Proposed new Title IX regulations (cont'd)

- Mandatory reporting:
 - OWAs: **Must** report any possible sex discrimination to TIXC
 - Other employees who have responsibility for administrative leadership, teaching, or advising **must** report possible sex discrimination of a student to TIXC
 - Other employees who have responsibility for administrative leadership, teaching, or advising **must** either:
 - Report possible sex discrimination of an employee to TIXC, or
 - Provide contact info of TIXC and info about how to report sex discrimination to that employee
 - All other employees: *Must either*
 - Notify the TIXC about possible sex discrimination, or
 - Provide contact info of TIXC and info about how to report to the person who disclosed

Proposed new Title IX regulations (cont'd)

- General grievance procedures for sex discrimination
 - *Permitted to use same person as investigator and decision-maker*
 - *Must provide each party with “a description of” the relevant evidence and “a reasonable opportunity to respond”*
 - *Must use preponderance of the evidence, unless institution uses clear and convincing in all other comparable proceedings*
 - *Must notify parties of the outcome of the complaint*

Proposed new Title IX regulations (cont'd)

- Specific grievance procedures for complaints of sex-based harassment involving student complainants or student respondents
 - *Must provide access to the relevant evidence OR a written investigative report that accurately summarizes the evidence (but party in latter case can request and must get copy of the relevant evidence)*
 - *Must provide parties with a reasonable opportunity to review and respond to the evidence. Response can be at the live hearing.*
 - *Must provide a process for decisionmaker to evaluate credibility of the parties and witnesses. Can be either:*
 - Allow decisionmaker to ask parties and witnesses questions during individual meetings
 - Allow decisionmaker to ask parties and witnesses questions at a live hearing (including questions requested by the parties)
 - *Live hearing may include opportunity for questioning by parties' advisors*
 - *If party does not respond to questions related to their credibility, decisionmaker must not rely on any statement of that party that supports that party's position*

QUESTIONS?

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