

## **Sexual Harassment of District Staff Prohibited**

The Yakima School District is committed to a positive and productive education free from discrimination, including sexual harassment. This commitment extends to all employees and other persons involved in academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic, and other programs or activities of the school, whether that program or activity is in a school facility, on school transportation or at a class or school training held elsewhere.

### **Definitions**

For purposes of this operational procedure, sexual harassment means unwelcome conduct or communication of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can occur student to adult, adult to adult or can be carried out by a group of students or adults and will be investigated by the District even if the alleged harasser is not a part of the school staff or student body. The district prohibits sexual harassment of district employees by other students, employees or third parties involved in school district activities.

Under federal and state law, the term “sexual harassment” may include:

- acts of sexual violence;
- unwelcome sexual or gender-directed conduct or communication that interferes with an individual’s educational performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment;
- unwelcome sexual advances;
- unwelcome requests for sexual favors;
- sexual demands when submission is a stated or implied condition of obtaining an educational benefit;
- sexual demands where submission or rejection is a factor in an academic, or other school-related decision affecting an individual.

A "hostile environment" for an employee is created where the unwanted conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidation, hostile, or abusive.

### **Investigation and Response**

If the district knows, or reasonably should know, that sexual harassment has created a hostile environment, the district will promptly investigate to determine what occurred and will take appropriate steps to resolve the situation. If an investigation reveals that sexual harassment has created a hostile environment, the district will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end sexual harassment, eliminate the hostile environment, prevent its occurrence and, as appropriate, remedy its effects. the district will take prompt, equitable and remedial action within its authority every time a report, complaint and grievance alleging sexual harassment comes to the attention of the district, either formally or informally.

Allegations of criminal misconduct will be reported to law enforcement and suspected child abuse will be reported to law enforcement or Child Protective Services. Regardless of whether the misconduct is reported to law enforcement, school staff will promptly investigate to determine what occurred and take appropriate steps to resolve the situation, to the extent that such investigation does not interfere with an ongoing criminal investigation. A criminal investigation does not relieve the district of its independent obligation to investigate and resolve sexual harassment.

Engaging in sexual harassment will result in appropriate discipline or other appropriate sanctions against offending staff or third parties involved in school district activities. Anyone else who engages in sexual harassment on school property or at school activities will have their access to school property and activities restricted, as appropriate.

**Retaliation and False Allegations**

Retaliation against any person who makes or is a witness in a sexual harassment complaint is prohibited and will result in appropriate discipline. The district will take appropriate actions to protect involved persons from retaliation.

It is a violation of this operational procedure to knowingly report false allegations of sexual harassment. Persons found to knowingly report or corroborate false allegations will be subject to appropriate discipline.

**Staff Responsibilities**

The superintendent will develop and implement formal and informal procedures for receiving, investigating and resolving complaints or reports of sexual harassment. These will include reasonable and prompt time lines and delineate staff responsibilities under this -operational procedure.

Any school employee who witnesses sexual harassment or receives a report, informal complaint, or written complaint about sexual harassment is responsible for informing the district Title IX or Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator. All staff are also responsible for directing complainants to the formal complaint process.

Reports of discrimination and discriminatory harassment will be referred to the district's Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator. Reports of disability discrimination or harassment will be referred to the district's Section 504 Coordinator.

**Notice and Training**

The superintendent will develop procedures to provide information and education to district staff, parents and volunteers regarding this operational procedure and the recognition and prevention of sexual harassment. At a minimum sexual harassment recognition and prevention and the elements of this operational procedure will be included in staff, student and regular volunteer orientation. This operational procedure, which includes the complaint process, will be posted on the District's public website and will be available to all staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. Information about the District's prohibition of sexual harassment will be clearly stated and conspicuously posted throughout each school building, provided to each employee and reproduced in each staff, volunteer and parent handbook. Such notices will identify the District's Title IX coordinator and provide contact information, including the coordinator's email address.

This operational procedure is intended to set forth legal requirements, including the process for a prompt, thorough, and equitable investigation of allegations of sexual harassment and the need to take appropriate steps to resolve such situations. If sexual harassment is found to have created a hostile environment, staff must take immediate action to eliminate the harassment, prevent its reoccurrence, and address its effects.

This procedure applies to sexual harassment (including sexual violence) targeted at district employees carried out by other students, employees or third parties involved in school district activities. The

district has jurisdiction over these complaints pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Chapter 28A.640, RCW and Chapter 392-190 WAC.

### **Notice**

- Information about the district's prohibition of sexual harassment will be easily understandable and conspicuously posted throughout each school building, be reproduced in each staff, volunteer and parent handbook.
- In addition, the district will provide annual notice to employees that complaints pursuant to this procedure may be filed at *104 North 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902*.

### **Staff Responsibilities**

- In the event of an alleged sexual assault, the school principal will immediately inform:
  - 1) the Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator so that the district can appropriately respond to the incident consistent with its own grievance procedures; and
  - 2) law enforcement.
- The principal will notify the targeted district staff person of their right to file a criminal complaint and a sexual harassment complaint simultaneously.

### **Confidentiality**

- If a complainant requests that his or her name not be revealed to the alleged perpetrator or asks that the district not investigate or seek action against the alleged perpetrator, the request will be forwarded to the *Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator for adults* for evaluation.
- The *Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator for adults* should inform the complainant that honoring the request may limit its ability to respond fully to the incident, including pursuing disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator.
- If the complainant still requests that his or her name not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator or that the district not investigate or seek action against the alleged perpetrator, the district will need to determine whether or not it can honor such a request while still providing a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, staff and other third parties engaging in district activities, including the person who reported the sexual harassment. Although a complainant's request to have his or her name withheld may limit the district's ability to respond fully to an individual allegation of sexual harassment, the district will use other appropriate means available to address the sexual harassment.

### **Retaliation**

Title IX prohibits retaliation against any individual who files a complaint under these laws or participates in a complaint investigation. When an informal or formal complaint of sexual harassment is made, the district will take steps to stop further harassment and prevent any retaliation against the person who made the complaint, was the subject of the harassment, or against those who provided information as a witness. The district will investigate all allegations of retaliation and take actions against those found to have retaliated.

### **Informal Complaint Process**

Anyone may use informal procedures to report and resolve complaints of sexual harassment. Informal reports may be made to any staff member. Staff will always notify complainants of their right to file a formal complaint and the process for same. Staff will also direct potential complainants to:

Cece Mahre, Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator for Title IX | ADA  
104 North 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Yakima WA 98902 | (509) 573-7039 | mahre.cece@yakimaschools.org

Additionally, staff will also inform an appropriate supervisor or professional staff member when they receive complaints of sexual harassment, especially when the complaint is beyond their training to resolve or alleges serious misconduct.

During the course of the informal complaint process, the district will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end any harassment and to correct any discriminatory effects on the complainant. If an investigation is needed to determine what occurred, the district will take interim measures to protect the complainant before the final outcome of the district's investigation (e.g., allowing the complainant to change academic or extracurricular activities or break times to avoid contact with the alleged perpetrator).

Informal remedies may include:

- An opportunity for the complainant to explain to the alleged harasser that his or her conduct is unwelcome, offensive or inappropriate, either in writing or face-to-face;
- A statement from a staff member to the alleged harasser that the alleged conduct is not appropriate and could lead to discipline if proven or repeated;
- A general public statement from an administrator in a building reviewing the district prohibition of sexual harassment without identifying the complainant;
- Developing a safety plan;
- Separating staff person; or
- Providing staff and/or student training

Informal complaints may become formal complaints at the request of the complainant, parent/guardian, or because the district believes the complaint needs to be more thoroughly investigated.

The district will inform the complainant how to report any subsequent problems. Additionally, the district will conduct follow-up inquiries to see if there have been any new incidents or instances of retaliation, and to promptly respond and appropriately address continuing or new problems. Follow-up inquiries will follow a timeline agreed to by the district and complainant.

## **Formal Complaint Process**

### **Level One – Complaint to District**

Anyone may initiate a formal complaint of sexual harassment, even if the informal complaint process is being utilized. At any level in the formal complaint process, the district will take interim measures to protect the complainant before the final outcome of the district's investigation.

The following process will be followed:

### **Filing of Complaint**

- All formal complaints will be in writing and will set forth the specific acts, conditions or circumstances alleged to have occurred and to constitute sexual harassment. The Title IX Coordinator may draft the complaint based on the report of the complainant for the complainant to review and approve. The superintendent or Title IX Coordinator may also conclude that the

district needs to conduct an investigation based on information in his or her possession, regardless of the complainant's interest in filing a formal complaint.

- The time period for filing a complaint is one year from the date of the occurrence that is the subject matter of the complaint. However, a complaint filing deadline may not be imposed if the complainant was prevented from filing due to:
  - 1) Specific misrepresentations by the district that it had resolved the problem forming the basis of the complaint; or
  - 2) Withholding of information that the district was required to provide under WAC 392-190-065 or WAC 392-190-005.
- Complaints may be submitted by mail, fax, e-mail or hand-delivery to the district Title IX Coordinator for adults:  
Cece Mahre, Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator for Title IX | ADA  
104 North 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Yakima WA 98902 | (509) 573-7039 | mahre.cece@yakimaschools.org
- Any district employee who receives a complaint that meets these criteria will promptly notify the Coordinator.

### **Investigation and Response**

- The Title IX Coordinator will receive and investigate all formal, written complaints of sexual harassment or information in the coordinator's possession that they believe requires further investigation. The Coordinator will delegate his or her authority to participate in this process if such action is necessary to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Coordinator will provide the complainant a copy of this procedure.
- Investigations will be carried out in a manner that is adequate in scope, reliable and impartial. During the investigation process, the complainant and accused party or parties, if the complainant has identified an accused harasser(s), will have an equal opportunity to present witnesses and relevant evidence. Complainants and witnesses may have a trusted adult with them during any district-initiated investigatory activities. The school district and complainant may also agree to resolve the complaint in lieu of an investigation. When the investigation is completed, the Coordinator will compile a full written report of the complaint and the results of the investigation.

### **Superintendent Response**

- The superintendent will respond in writing to the complainant and the alleged perpetrator within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant or if exceptional circumstances related to the complaint require an extension of the time limit. In the event an extension is needed, the district will notify the complainant in writing of the reason for the extension and the anticipated response date.
- At the time the district responds to the complainant, the district must send a copy of the response to the office of the superintendent of public instruction.
- The response of the superintendent or designee will include:
  - 1) a summary of the results of the investigation;
  - 2) a statement as to whether a preponderance of the evidence establishes that the complainant was sexually harassed ;
  - 3) if sexual harassment is found to have occurred, the corrective measures the district deems necessary, including assurance that the district will take steps to prevent recurrence and remedy its effects on the complainant and others, if appropriate;

- 4) notice of the complainant's right to appeal to the school board and the necessary filing information; and
  - 5) any corrective measures the district will take, remedies for the complainant (e.g., sources of counseling, advocacy and other support), and notice of potential sanctions for the perpetrator(s) (e.g., discipline).
- The superintendent's or designee's response will be provided in a language the complainant can understand and may require language assistance for complainants with limited English proficiency in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If the complaint alleges discriminatory harassment by a named party or parties, the coordinator will provide the accused party or parties with notice of the outcome of the investigation and notice of their right to appeal any discipline or corrective action imposed by the district.
  - Any corrective measures deemed necessary will be instituted as quickly as possible, but in no event more than thirty (30) days after the superintendent's mailing of a written response, unless the accused is appealing the imposition of discipline and the district is barred by due process considerations or a lawful order from imposing the discipline until the appeal process is concluded. Staff may also pursue complaints through the appropriate collective bargaining agreement process or anti-discrimination operational procedure.
  - The district will inform the complainant how to report any subsequent problems. Additionally, the district will conduct follow-up inquiries to see if there have been any new incidents or instances of retaliation, and to promptly respond and appropriately address continuing or new problems. Follow-up inquiries will follow a timeline agreed to by the district and complainant.

## **Level Two - Appeal to Board of Directors**

### **Notice of Appeal and Hearing**

- If a complainant disagrees with the superintendent's or designee's written decision, the complainant may appeal the decision to the district board of directors, by filing a written notice of appeal with the secretary of the board within ten (10) calendar days following the date upon which the complainant received the response.
- The board will schedule a hearing to commence by the twentieth (20th) calendar day following the filing of the written notice of appeal, unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant and the superintendent or for good cause.
- Both parties will be allowed to present such witnesses and testimony as the board deems relevant and material.

### **Board Decision**

- Unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant, the board will render a written decision within thirty (30) calendar days following the filing of the notice of appeal and provide the complainant with a copy of the decision.
- The decision will be provided in a language that the complainant can understand which may require language assistance for complainants with limited English proficiency in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.
- The decision will include notice of the complainant's right to appeal to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and will identify where and to whom the appeal must be filed. The district will send a copy of the appeal decision to the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

## **Level Three - Complaint to the Superintendent of Public Instruction**

## **Filing of Complaint**

- If a complainant disagrees with the decision of the board of directors, or if the district fails to comply with this procedure, the complainant may file a complaint with the superintendent of public instruction.
- A complaint must be received by the Superintendent of Public Instruction on or before the twentieth (20) calendar day following the date upon which the complainant received written notice of the board of directors' decision, unless the Superintendent of Public Instruction grants an extension for good cause. Complaints may be submitted by mail, fax, electronic mail, or hand delivery.
- A complaint must be in writing and include:
  - 1) A description of the specific acts, conditions or circumstances alleged to violate applicable anti-sexual harassment laws;
  - 2) The name and contact information, including address, of the complainant;
  - 3) The name and address of the district subject to the complaint;
  - 4) A copy of the district's complaint and appeal decision, if any; and
  - 5) A proposed resolution of the complaint or relief requested. If the allegations regard a specific student, the complaint must also include the name and address of the student, or in the case of a homeless child or youth, contact information.

## **Investigation, Determination and Corrective Action**

- Upon receipt of a complaint, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction may initiate an investigation, which may include conducting an independent on-site review. OSPI may also investigate additional issues related to the complaint that were not included in the initial complaint or appeal to the superintendent or board.
- Following the investigation, OSPI will make an independent determination as to whether the district has failed to comply with RCW 28A.642.010 or Chapter 392-190, WAC and will issue a written decision to the complainant and the district that addresses each allegation in the complaint and any other noncompliance issues it has identified. The written decision will include corrective actions deemed necessary to correct noncompliance and documentation the district must provide to demonstrate that corrective action has been completed.
- All corrective actions must be completed within the timelines established by OSPI in the written decision unless OSPI grants an extension. If timely compliance is not achieved, OSPI may take action including but not limited to referring the district to appropriate state or federal agencies empowered to order compliance.

A complaint may be resolved at any time when, before the completion of the investigation, the district voluntarily agrees to resolve the complaint. OSPI may provide technical assistance and dispute resolution methods to resolve a complaint.

### **Level Four - Administrative Hearing**

A complainant or school district that desires to appeal the written decision of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction may file a written notice of appeal with OSPI within thirty (30) calendar days following the date of receipt of that office's written decision. OSPI will conduct a formal administrative hearing in conformance with the Administrative Procedures Act, Chapter 34.05, RCW.

### **Other Complaint Options**

*Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Education*

OCR enforces several federal civil rights laws, which prohibit discrimination in public schools on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age. File complaints with OCR within 180 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination.

206-607-1600 | TDD: 1-800-877-8339 | OCR.Seattle@ed.gov | www.ed.gov/ocr

*Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC)*

WSHRC enforces the Washington Law Against Discrimination (RCW 49.60), which prohibits discrimination in employment and in places of public accommodation, including schools. File complaints with WSHRC within six months of the date of the alleged discrimination.

1-800-233-3247 | TTY: 1-800-300-7525 | www.hum.wa.gov

**Mediation**

At any time during the complaint procedure set forth in WAC 392-190-065 through 392-190-075, a district may, at its own expense, offer mediation. The complainant and the district may agree to extend the complaint process deadlines in order to pursue mediation.

The purpose of mediation is to provide both the complainant and the district an opportunity to resolve disputes and reach a mutually acceptable agreement through the use of an impartial mediator. Mediation must be voluntary and requires the mutual agreement of both parties. It may be terminated by either party at any time during the mediation process. It may not be used to deny or delay a complainant's right to utilize the complaint procedures.

Mediation must be conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who may not:

- 1) Be an employee of any school district, public charter school, or other public or private agency that is providing education related services to a student who is the subject of the complaint being mediated; or
- 2) Have a personal or professional conflict of interest. A mediator is not considered an employee of the district or charter school or other public or private agency solely because he or she serves as a mediator.

If the parties reach agreement through mediation, they may execute a legally binding agreement that sets forth the resolution and states that all discussions that occurred during the course of mediation will remain confidential and may not be used as evidence in any subsequent complaint, due process hearing or civil proceeding. The agreement must be signed by the complainant and a district representative who has authority to bind the district.

**Training and Orientation**

A fixed component of all district orientation sessions for staff, students and regular volunteers will introduce the elements of this operational procedure. Staff will be provided information on recognizing and preventing sexual harassment. Staff will be fully informed of the formal and informal complaint processes and their roles and responsibilities under this operational procedure.

Certificated staff will be reminded of their legal responsibility to report suspected child abuse, and how that responsibility may be implicated by some allegations of sexual harassment. Regular volunteers will get the portions of this component of orientation relevant to their rights and responsibilities.



Students will be provided with age-appropriate information on the recognition and prevention of sexual harassment and their rights and responsibilities under this and other district policies and rules at student orientation sessions and on other appropriate occasions, which may include parents.

As part of the information on the recognition and prevention of sexual harassment staff, volunteers, students and parents will be informed that sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Demands for sexual favors in exchange for preferential treatment or something of value;
- Stating or implying that a person will lose something if he or she does not submit to a sexual request;
- Penalizing a person for refusing to submit to a sexual advance, or providing a benefit to someone who does;
- Making unwelcome, offensive or inappropriate sexually suggestive remarks comments, gestures, or jokes; or remarks of a sexual nature about a person's appearance, gender or conduct;
- Using derogatory sexual terms for a person;
- Standing too close, inappropriately touching, cornering or stalking a person; or
- Displaying offensive or inappropriate sexual illustrations on school property.

### **Review**

Annually, the superintendent and/or compliance officer will review the use and efficacy of this operational procedure.

#### Cross References:

(cf: 2161 - Education of Students with Disabilities Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973)

(cf: 3200 - Student Rules, Regulations and Conduct: Discipline)

(cf: 3210 - Nondiscrimination)

(cf: 3215 - Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying)

(cf: 3441 - Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention)

#### Legal References:

RCW 28A.640.020 Regulations, guidelines to eliminate discrimination — Scope—Sexual Harassment policies

WAC 392-190-056-058 Sexual harassment

20 U.S.C. 1681-1688

#### Adoption Date:

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