

411.11 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND NON-DISCRIMINATION IN DISTRICT PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AND OPERATIONS

The Wisconsin Rapids School District prohibits all forms of unlawful discrimination against students, employees, and other persons in all aspects of the District's programs, activities, and operations. The term "unlawful discrimination" encompasses any unlawful policy, practice, conduct, or other unlawful denial of rights, benefits, or privileges that is based on any legally-protected status or classification (e.g., race, national origin, sex, disability, religion, etc.). Various state and federal laws establish the actions that do (and do not) constitute unlawful discrimination with respect to each protected status or classification. Where applicable, unlawful harassment that is based on a legally-protected status is one form of unlawful discrimination.

The District requires and will enforce nondiscrimination in a manner that is consistent with applicable constitutional provisions and with the rights and obligations that are established under all applicable state and federal civil rights laws, including but not limited to the current provisions of the following federal laws, which jointly serve to identify and protect the rights of students, employees, and other persons:

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex discrimination);
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (disability discrimination);
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (including both the employment-related provisions of the ADA as well as Title II of the ADA, which broadly prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in state and local government services);
- Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (addressing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, or religion);
- The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (age discrimination);
- The nondiscrimination provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act;
- The civil rights provisions associated with the District's participation in federal nutrition programs.

There are a significant number of additional state and federal nondiscrimination laws that are not listed above that further establish the rights of students and/or employees. In recognition of such laws, the District maintains additional nondiscrimination policies and rules that specifically and uniquely cover students and all aspects of employment and personnel administration within the District.

Special Statement Regarding Sex Discrimination under Title IX

In compliance with the federal Title IX statutes and the regulations set forth in Chapter 106 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations ("the federal Title IX regulations"), the District does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that the District operates. Title IX's requirement not to discriminate in any education program or activity extends to District students, certain admissions processes, and District employment. Inquiries regarding how Title IX and the federal Title IX regulations apply to the District may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator (as designated below), to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, or to both.

Under this policy, "sexual harassment" in violation of Title IX means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- 1) An employee of the District 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 District's education program or activity; or
- 3) "Sexual assault," "dating violence," "domestic violence," and "stalking" as all are defined by Title IX and the Title IX regulations.

Designation and Authorization of Nondiscrimination Coordinator(s)

Any questions concerning the District's nondiscrimination and equal opportunities policies, the application of any nondiscrimination law to the District, or the District's discrimination-related reporting and complaint procedures should be directed to the Director of Human Resources, who is also designated as the District's Title IX Coordinator. The contact information for this position is as follows:

Brian Oswall

Director of Human Resources
Wisconsin Rapids School District
510 Peach Street
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
715-424-6710
titleixcoordinator@wrps.net

In the capacity of Title IX Coordinator, the above-identified individual is authorized to coordinate the District's efforts to comply with the District's responsibilities under Title IX and the federal Title IX regulations.

Any Person May Submit a Complaint or Report of Discrimination to the District

The District is committed to the appropriate resolution of complaints and reports that allege (1) unlawful discrimination or a violation of a District nondiscrimination policy, including any form of prohibited harassment that is based on a legally-protected status; or (2) any type of retaliation that is prohibited by a nondiscrimination law or a District nondiscrimination policy.

Accordingly, except as otherwise required by law, any person (including a witness or other person who has not been harmed/victimized by the alleged conduct or challenged policy) may report a concern or allegation of prohibited discrimination or prohibited retaliation to the Director of Human Resources / Title IX Coordinator, using the contact information provided above and any of the following methods:

- 1) By U.S. mail, by electronic mail, or by telephone, at any time; or
- 2) By any other means that results in the Director of Human Resources / Title IX Coordinator actually receiving the person's verbal or written report, including by submitting the report to the Director of Human Resources / Title IX Coordinator in person (e.g., at an arranged meeting or when the coordinator is otherwise reasonably available during normal working hours).

As an exception to the above reporting procedure, if the report or complaint identifies the Director of Human Resources/ Title IX Coordinator as a person responsible for the alleged prohibited conduct, or if the Director of Human Resources / Title IX Coordinator is affected by a conflict of interest or otherwise unavailable, then the person making the report may submit it to the Director of Pupil Services or the Director of Curriculum & Instruction either in person, by mail, by telephone, or by electronic mail. The contact information is as follows:

Steven Hepp
Director of Pupil Services
School District of Wisconsin Rapids
510 Peach Street

Roxanne Filtz
Director of Curriculum & Instruction
School District of Wisconsin Rapids
510 Peach Street

Individuals submitting a report or complaint of prohibited discrimination under this policy are strongly encouraged to contact the District to confirm that their report was received as intended. Except as provided below regarding formal complaints of Title IX sexual harassment or as otherwise required by any law, a report or complaint received under this policy will be processed according to the discrimination complaint procedures that the District has established under its student nondiscrimination policies or under its equal employment opportunities policies, as applicable to the facts and circumstances. For reports or complaints of alleged discrimination that are neither student matters nor employment matters, the District will normally process the matter under the complaint procedures that apply to students.

Filing a Formal Complaint of Title IX Sexual Harassment

An individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment under Title IX (i.e., a Title IX “complainant”), or a parent or guardian who has a legal right to act on behalf of such an individual, may file a “formal complaint” of “sexual harassment,” as those terms are defined above and in the Title IX regulations.

No Title IX complainant is obligated to file a formal complaint, but a qualifying formal complaint is necessary for the District to start an investigation of Title IX sexual harassment allegations using the District’s formal Title IX grievance process. Even in the absence of a formal complaint that initiates the formal grievance process, the District still has legal obligations to respond to allegations of Title IX sexual harassment whenever the District has sufficient notice of the allegations (i.e., from any source). Whether a complaint is formalized, the District will promptly respond, in a manner not deliberately indifferent, when it has actual knowledge of real or alleged sexual harassment in one of its educational programs or activities.

All of the following apply to a formal complaint of Title IX sexual harassment:

- 1) At the time of filing a formal complaint, the complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in the education program or activity of the District (including through employment).
- 2) The formal complaint must be in the form of a document or an electronic submission (e.g., an electronic mail message or a file attached to an email) that:
 - a. Alleges sexual harassment against a respondent (if the identity of the respondent is not known, it is not necessary to identify the respondent by name);
 - b. Requests that the District investigate the allegation(s) of sexual harassment; and
 - c. Contains the complainant's physical or digital signature, or otherwise indicates that the complainant is the person filing the formal complaint.

The formal complaint must normally be filed with the District's Title IX Coordinator by submitting the document or electronic submission either in person, by U.S. mail, or by electronic mail, using the District-designated contact information listed above in this policy. However, if the formal complaint identifies the Title IX Coordinator as a respondent (i.e., a person reported as a perpetrator of the alleged sexual harassment), or if the Title IX Coordinator is affected by a conflict of interest or is otherwise unavailable, then the complainant may file the document or electronic submission directly with the Director of Pupil Services, either in person, by mail, or by electronic mail using the contact information provided above.

When a formal complaint is not filed in person, complainants are strongly encouraged to contact the District to confirm that their complaint was actually received as intended.

If a complainant files a formal complaint of Title IX sexual harassment, or if a Title IX Coordinator signs such a formal complaint on behalf of the District, then:

- 1) The formal complaint must be resolved according to the federal regulations and District processes that specifically apply to such formal complaints; and
- 2) Unless otherwise directed by the School Board or this policy, the District Superintendent or his/her administrative-level designee is expected to designate and assign qualified individuals to perform the roles that are defined for District agents within the District's grievance process for formal complaints of Title IX sexual harassment. In addition:
 - a. The District Superintendent may assign one or more of the roles to a qualified individual who is not an employee of the District, including an outside attorney or other contracted service provider with notice to the Board.
 - b. The Title IX Coordinator and the District Superintendent shall ensure that the individual(s) assigned to perform such roles have completed any training required by the federal Title IX regulations.
 - c. If the District determines that a person assigned to such a role is unavailable, disqualified by a conflict of interest or bias, or otherwise unable to perform the responsibilities of the role, the administration shall assign another qualified individual to perform the role.
 - d. The Board or a person designated by the Board shall assign such roles with respect to any formal complaint in which the District Superintendent is alleged to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute Title IX sexual harassment. The Title IX Coordinator and the District Superintendent shall inform the Board of any such need to assign the roles.

Filing a formal complaint of Title IX sexual harassment is one way to report such harassment. However, if a Title IX complainant or other person is not eligible to file a qualifying formal complaint, or if they choose not to do so, the person may still submit a report of the allegations to the District as further described above within this policy (i.e., a report that is not a formal complaint for purposes of Title IX). Moreover, any report of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment under Title IX that causes the District to have actual knowledge of the relevant conduct/allegations requires an appropriate response by the District, even if the reporting procedures defined in this policy were not followed and even if no formal complaint has been or ever is filed.

Deadline for Filing an Initial Report or Complaint

There is no absolute deadline for the initial filing of a report or complaint of discrimination under this policy. The District always has an interest in being made aware of potential concerns with prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. However, any person who has a complaint or concern involving such a matter is encouraged to notify the District or pursue a complaint as soon as reasonably possible after the occurrence of the relevant events. A material gap in pursuing a complaint or concern can affect the ability to thoroughly investigate the matter, and a delay may also limit the range of remedies and resolutions that are reasonably available.

The following apply to any report or complaint of discrimination that has been filed under this policy, except for formal complaints of Title IX sexual harassment (which are instead subject to the dismissal and appeal provisions of the grievance process that the District has adopted for such complaints):

- 1) At least one of the following administrators, acting in consultation as needed with District legal counsel, must authorize the dismissal or other alternative disposition of a report or complaint due to a lack of timeliness: District Superintendent; Director of Human Resources; Director of Pupil Services; or Director of Curriculum.
- 2) Any actual party in interest to the allegations raised by the report or complaint (i.e., any alleged victim or any person alleged to be responsible for the discrimination) may appeal a decision authorized under the previous paragraph to the District Superintendent. Or, if the District Superintendent authorized the initial decision, the party may request reconsideration.

Confidentiality of Reports and Complaints

Although absolute confidentiality cannot be assured, the District will maintain the confidentiality of discrimination reports and complaints to the extent required by any applicable law, and the District will otherwise make efforts to maintain confidentiality where non-disclosure does not interfere with the District's ability to appropriately process and respond to the report or complaint. Nonetheless, investigating a matter often involves disclosing (directly or indirectly) the identity of persons involved in the particular events/issues. Individuals who have specific concerns about confidentiality should arrange to discuss those concerns with the District as early as possible in the process.

Retaliation Prohibited

No official, employee, or agent of the District or any other person may intimidate, threaten, coerce, or unlawfully discriminate against any individual (1) for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by any nondiscrimination statute or related regulation, or (2) because the individual has made a report or complaint, or testified, assisted, participated, or exercised a legal right to refuse to participate in any manner in an investigation or proceeding conducted under the this policy or any other District nondiscrimination policy.

Prohibition on Bad Faith Conduct/Abuse of Process

To the extent permitted by law, the District prohibits and reserves authority to appropriately address and impose consequences for bad-faith conduct by individuals who make a report or complaint, testify, assist, or participate in any manner in an investigation or proceeding conducted under this policy or any other District nondiscrimination policy. For example, the District may impose lawful consequences for making a materially false statement in bad faith in the course of any proceeding that is conducted under this

policy or any other District nondiscrimination policy. Examples of abuse of process include, but are not limited to, the pursuit of allegations that the complaining party knows to be wholly frivolous or the use of dilatory tactics that have the purpose or reasonably foreseeable result of unreasonably interfering with a prompt and equitable resolution of alleged discrimination or retaliation.

Consequences for Violations

Any person who is determined to be responsible for any form of unlawful discrimination, any act of prohibited retaliation, or other violation of this policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action and/or other appropriate consequences that are within the District's lawful authority.

In addition, any employee or authorized agent of the District who, considering the duties, responsibilities, and expectations established for his/her position/role, fails to reasonably respond to complaints or reports of alleged discrimination or retaliation, or who otherwise fails to reasonably act on their knowledge of a possible violation of a nondiscrimination law or a District nondiscrimination policy, is also subject to possible disciplinary action. The District may establish specific guidelines and expectations for employees and other authorized agents of the District to take appropriate action with respect to such knowledge through rules adopted as written administrative procedures, provisions within the employee handbook, and/or through other means.

Nondiscrimination Notices; Dissemination of Policy and Complaint/Reporting Procedures

The District Superintendent and the District's designated nondiscrimination coordinators share joint responsibility for ensuring that the District prepares and issues, on a timely basis, all legally-required general notices of (1) the rights of students, employees, and other persons under the state and federal nondiscrimination laws; (2) the District's nondiscrimination policies; and (3) applicable reporting and complaint procedures. Beyond meeting legal requirements and any local policy requirements, the administration is encouraged to further disseminate such information using such methods as the administration deems appropriate.

Maintenance of Complaint Records; Report Preparation

The District Superintendent and the District's designated nondiscrimination coordinators share joint responsibility for ensuring that the District maintains adequate records of reports and complaints of discrimination and retaliation, including records of the District's response and disposition. Such records shall meet applicable legal requirements for documentation and records retention. The District Superintendent and the applicable coordinators shall also direct and oversee the timely preparation of all annual or other reports and evaluations regarding nondiscrimination initiatives/compliance that the District is required to provide to the Department of Public Instruction or to any other oversight entity.

LEGAL REF.: Wis. Stat. Subch. III of Ch. 106
 Wis. Stat. Subch. II of Ch. 111
 Wis. Stat. § 118.13
 Wis. Stat. § 118.134
 Wis. Admin. Code P.I. 9, 41
Federal Laws:
 8 U.S.C. § 1324b(a)
 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.

20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.
20 U.S.C. § 6312(e)(3)(D)
29 U.S.C. § 621 et seq.
29 U.S.C. § 794 et seq.
42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.
42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.
42 U.S.C. § 12111 et seq.
42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.

CROSS REF.: 411 – Student Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment
411 Exhibit 1 – Complaint Form
411.11 Rule (1) – Procedure for District Response to Alleged Sexual Harassment
Under Title IX
411.11 Rule (2) – Expectations for Employees to Report Discrimination and Harassment
511 – Non-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity
511.5 – Employee Anti-Harassment
511.5 Exhibit – Employee Anti-Harassment Complaint Form

APPROVED: January 11, 2021

REVISED: July 31, 2024
February 10, 2025