Sexual Harassment and the New Title IX Regulations: Who Am I and What is My Role?

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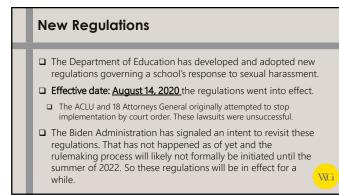


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What is Title IX?

- □ Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
 - □ Title IX is all of 37 words.
 - It prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance.
- Harassment based on sex is a form of discrimination based on sex. This has been established in the law for a long time.
- □ Specific guidance on compliance has been limited, until now.
 - No officially adopted regulations addressing sexual harassment or school response
 - Primary guidance from court interpretations and "Dear Colleague" letters issued by the Department of Education (DOE).

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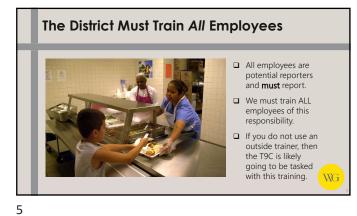


Overview

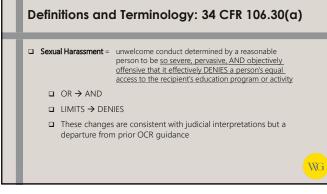
- The Title IX Coordinator ("T9C") coordinates the district's efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
- The regulations significantly expand and change the role and responsibilities of the Title IX Coordinator ("T9C") with regard to dissemination of information, training, setting standards, and conducting investigations.
- In this session, we will outline the key provisions of the new regulations and emphasize the practical implications for each of the roles at the district or campus level.

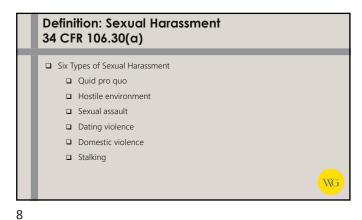
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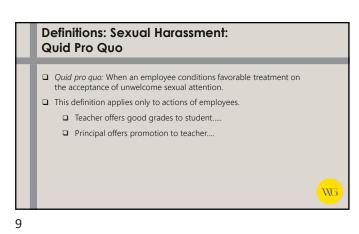










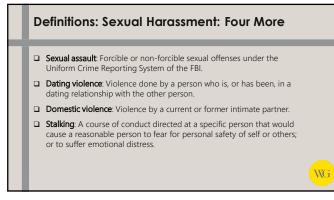


Definitions: Sexual Harassment: Hostile Environment

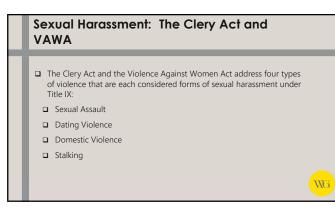
- Conduct that it is so SEVERE, PERVASIVE AND OBJECTIVELY OFFENSIVE that it effectively DENIES a person EQUAL ACCESS to the program.
- What has changed from prior guidance?
 - □ OR → AND
 - □ LIMITS → DENIES
 - These changes are consistent with judicial interpretations but a departure from prior OCR guidance.
- □ This could be student-to-student conduct, employee-to-student conduct, or employee-to-employee conduct.
- □ **Note**: A lot of things happen in schools that are inappropriate and sexually oriented, but fall short of this definition.

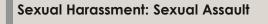
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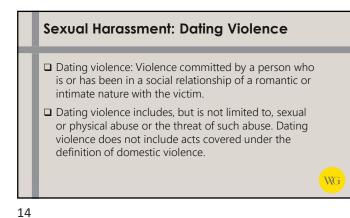
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- <u>Sexual assault</u>: Forcible or non-forcible sexual offenses under the Uniform Crime Reporting System of the FBI.
- <u>Rape:</u> The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.
- <u>Eondling</u>. The 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 unable to consent (age, disability).
- Incest: Sexual intercourse between persons who are related to each other an unable to marry.
- <u>Statutory Rape</u>: Sexual intercourse with a person who is under the statutory age of consent.

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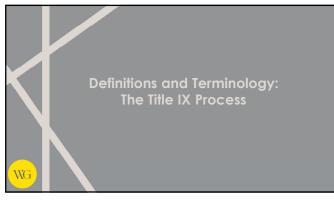


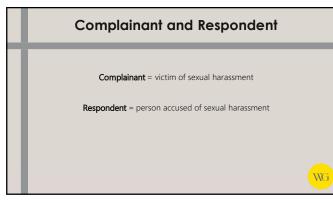
Sexual Harassment: Stalking

- Stalking: A course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for personal safety of self or others; or to suffer emotional distress.
- Course of conduct means two or more acts, including, but not limited to, acts in which the stalker directly, indirectly, or through third parties, by any action, method, device, or means, follows, monitors, observes, surveils, threatens, or communicates to or about, a person, or interferes with a person's property.
- Substantial emotional distress means significant mental suffering or anguish that may, but does not necessarily require medical or other professional treatment or counseling.
- Reasonable person means a reasonable person under similar circumstances and with similar identities to the victim.

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Complainant

- This term always refers to the victim of sexual harassment, even if someone else is the one who made the complaint.
- Parent complains that Child is being harassed. Parent has made the complaint, but Child is the "complainant."

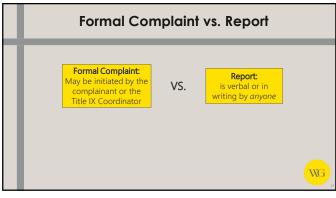
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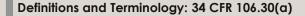
Teacher reports that Student is being harassed. Teacher makes the Report, but Student is the "complainant."

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Respondent This term refers to the person accused of sexual harassment. Note: these terms (Complainant, Respondent) apply even when there is a Report, but no Formal Complaint. Example: Mom complains that Billy is being harassed by a coach based on his sex. The T9C meets with mom and explains the Formal Complaint process. Mom does not want that. T9C also decides not to initiate Formal Complaint process. So there is no Formal Complaint, but there is a Report. Billy is the Complainant and Coach is the Respondent.

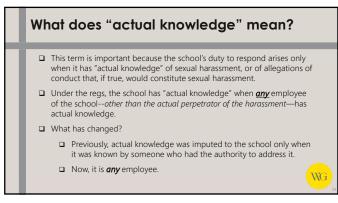
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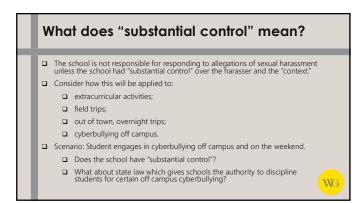


- □ *Actual Knowledge = when any employee finds out
- □ Substantial Control = over both the alleged harasser and the context in which the harassment occurred
- Education program or activity = any academic, extracurricular, vocational or other education program operated by a district

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Supportive Measures

□ Supportive Measures = Non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered to Complainant or Respondent at no charge designed to "restore or preserve equal access to...the education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party" whether or not a formal complaint is filed.

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- □ Examples:
- Counseling.
- Mutual restrictions on contact.
- Modification of schedule.
- Campus escort services.

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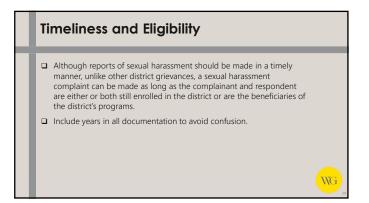


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Reporting and Responding Any person may report. Not just the alleged victim. A report can be verbal or written. Reports can be made my mail, by telephone, or by email at any time (business or non-business hours) to the T9C. The T9C may also receive a report from an employee of an elementary or secondary school who receives notice of sexual harassment or alleged sexual harassment: what we would consider *actual knowledge*. If the district has "actual knowledge" of "sexual harassment" it "must respond promptly in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent.

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The Duty to Respond:

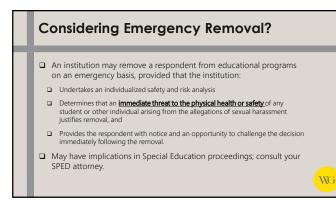
- If the district has "actual knowledge" of "sexual harassment" it "must respond promptly in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent."
 - □ Actual knowledge = notice or awareness of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment received by *any* employee.
 - □ The district's response must not be "clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances.

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Responding to a "Report" T9C must promptly contact a complainant to discuss: The Report Supportive Measures Process to file Formal Complaint Make an initial determination if all things are taken as true, does the allegation rise to Title IX Sexual Harassment.

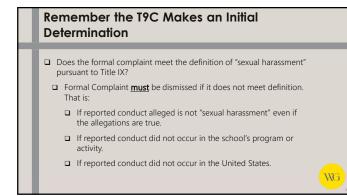
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Formal Complaint

- □ We are distinguishing a "report" from a "formal complaint."
- □ A "formal complaint" is a printed document or electronic submission filed by a complainant that alleges sexual harassment and requests the recipient school investigate the allegation.
- □ At the time of filing a formal complaint, a complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in the education program or activity of the recipient with which the formal complaint is filed.
- The T9C may also sign a complaint, which does not make the T9C a party in the grievance process.
- A third party reporter may not file a formal complaint, but the T9C can and often may need to so to protect the District.







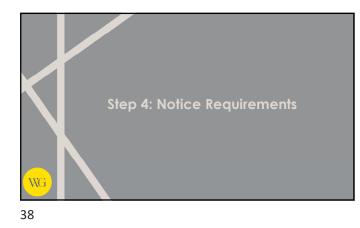
Formal Complaint Considerations

- Must dismiss a Formal Complaint if the conduct did not occur in the United States or if the conduct alleged does not constitute "sexual harassment."
- Does not preclude action under another provision of the district's code of conduct.
 May dismiss a Formal Complaint if:
- Complainant notifies T9C in writing that the complainant wishes to withdraw the Formal Complaint.
- Complainant or Respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the district.
- Circumstances prevent the district from gathering sufficient evidence to make a determination.

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- If the T9C dismisses the formal complaint of sexual harassment, the T9C must provide written notice to both parties.
 The notice must document the rationale for the dismissal and must
- detail why the dismissal is not deliberately indifferent.

 The notice must alert both parties to the possibility of appeal.
- □ The notice must be kept for seven (7) years.

Provide Written Notice

- Upon receiving a formal complaint, an institution (likely the T9C) must provide written notice to the known <u>parties</u>, including:
- $\hfill\square$ Description of the process, including availability of informal resolution.
- $\ensuremath{\square}$ $\ensuremath{\square}$ Allegations, the identities of the parties, and the date and location of the incident.
- Statement respondent is presumed not responsible.
- $\hfill\square$ The parties' right to an advisor of their choice (who may be an attorney).
- Parties' right to inspect evidence relevant to the allegations.
- Notice any provision in the code of conduct/handbook that prohibits knowingly making false statements or providing false information.
- Must allow sufficient amount of time for respondent to prepare a response before any initial interview.

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Must be supplemented <u>each time</u> new allegations opened for investigation.

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	Responding: Benchmarks for Response to Formal Complaint of Sexual Harassment		
1.	Equal Access/Treatment		
2.	Objective Evaluation		
3.	Bias Free Training		
4.	Presumption of Innocence		
5.	Reasonable Time Frames		
6.	Description of Possible Outcomes		
7.	Standard of Evidence – Preponderance or Clear and Convincing		
8.	Appeal		
9.	Supportive Measures		
10.	Protection of Privilege		

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Investigation vs. Investigation

□ Investigation #1: Initial fact finding

- In order to determine who made the report, the contents of the report, whether the alleged conduct could constitute "sexual harassment", etc.
- Likely conducted by a campus administrator.
- · Will determine what process should be used to respond to the report.

Investigation #2: Title IX investigation

- Investigation required following the filing of a Formal Complaint
- The following slides will focus on Investigation #2, the formal Title IX investigation following a Formal Complaint.

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Key Investigation Steps

- Determine who will investigate
- Review board policies related to alleged conduct
- FFH (LOCAL) Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation
- Student Code of Conduct
- Employment policies/employee handbook

□ Consider whether interim actions are necessary to protect any person or to preserve the integrity of the investigation.

• Actions likely would have been taken by district following initial report.

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Key Investigation Steps Interview the Complainant first, if possible Get a clear understanding of what is being alleged, including who, what, where, when, why. Serves as road map for rest of investigation Interview the person who made the report, if different than complainant. Interview witnesses Interview the Respondent

Key Investigation Steps

- Obtain written, signed and dated statements from each person interviewed.
- Gather any relevant documentation or evidence:
 - Email or other correspondence or notes
 - Surveillance video, cell phone video
 - Electronic messages, posts to social media
- □ Prepare investigation report that will be provided to parties.

□ Report to law enforcement, CPS, SBEC, etc., if required.

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Documentation Tips

Notes should be thorough and detailed

Include date, start/end times, location and names of people present

- $\hfill\square$ Use exact quotes where possible
- Label rumors as rumors
- Avoid opinions of interviewer
- □ Recap notes with witness to confirm understanding
- Obtain a signature of any statement made by witness

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Interview Tips

□ To Record or Not?

- Probably NOT required to record but check your local policy
- No secret recordings! Keep recorder in plain view and advise the witness you are recording
- State the date, time, location and identify individuals present
- □ Label and secure the recording

Interview Tips

- Be professional.
- Address concerns or reluctance of interviewee.
- Ask open-ended questions in a non-judgmental way.
- $\hfill\square$ Ask witness to be clear about what is rumor or speculation and what was seen/heard.
- □ Ask witness to identify other witnesses.
- Discuss concerns about on-going interaction with the Respondent, if any.
- Encourage complainant to additional information as it becomes available.
- Obtain a written statement.
- Have another administrator or employee present to witness the interview where possible, especially in regard to Complainant and Respondent.

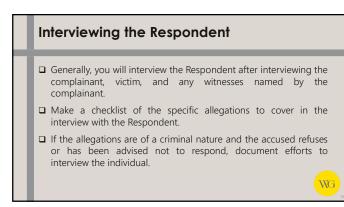
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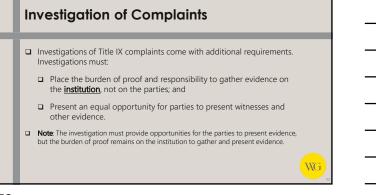
Interview Tips Obtain copies of any documents identified or referenced by witness. Make no promises regarding confidentiality or the outcome of investigation. Interview all witnesses separately. Explain the process and reason for meeting. Be factual, avoid implication that Respondent is guilty or innocent, or that a decision has already been made. Ensure witness that s/he has right to be free from retaliation.

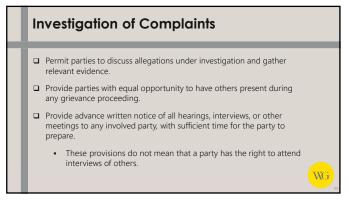
Don't identify other witnesses/discuss the merits of the complaint.

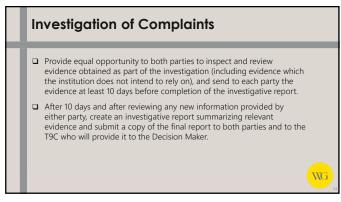
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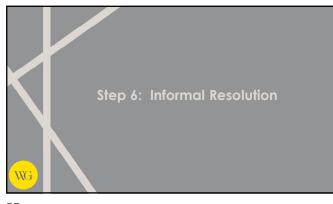
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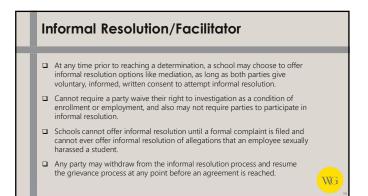


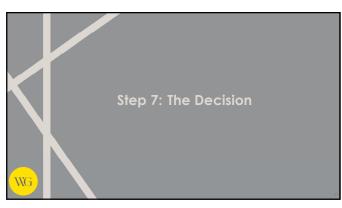








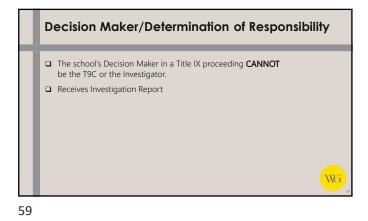


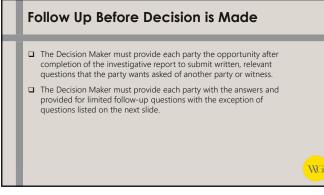




Hearings - Postsecondary institutions are required to hold live hearings as a component of the grievance process, but for K-12, live hearings are optional.

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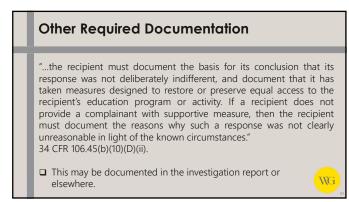




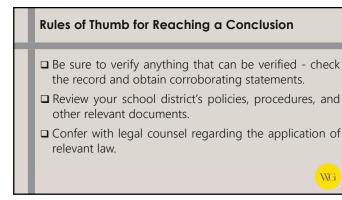
"Rape Shield" Provision

- Questions and evidence about a complainant's sexual predisposition or behavior are categorically not relevant to a Title IX Investigation, <u>unless</u>:
- Evidence is offered to prove someone other than the respondent committed the alleged conduct.
- Evidence concerns the complainant's prior sexual history with the respondent and is offered to prove consent.

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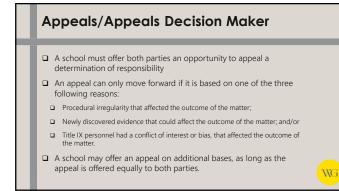
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Determination of Responsibility

- □ The Decision Maker must use the standard of evidence selected by the district (preponderance of the evidence).
- The Decision Maker must issue a written determination of responsibility with:
- Findings of fact;
- Conclusions about whether the misconduct occurred;
- Explanations of each conclusion; and
- Any disciplinary sanctions or remedies being enacted
- Written copy of determination must be sent simultaneously to both parties and the T9C* with information on filing an appeal.





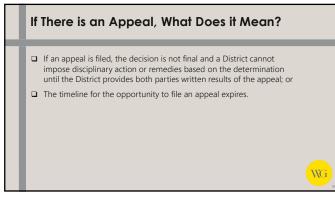
Notice of Appeal

□ If an appeal is filed, the District must:

- Notify the other party that an appeal was filed;
- $\hfill\square$ Implement appeal procedures equally for both parties;
- Ensure the Appeal Hearing Officer is not the same person as the original Decision Maker, the T9C, or the Investigator;
 Allow both parties to submit written statements in support or
- rejection of the determination; and
- Have the Appeal Hearing Officer provide written notice of the decision and the rationale for the decision to both parties <u>SIMULTANEOUSLY</u>.

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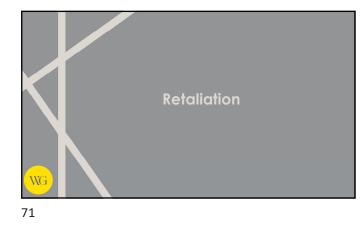


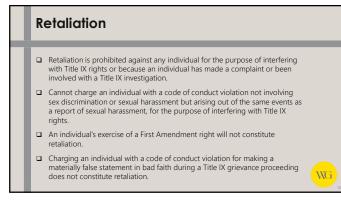
Record-Keeping

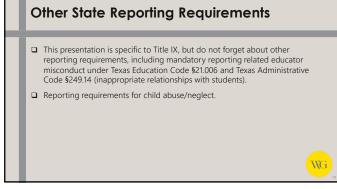
□ Maintain all documents from the Formal Complaint for seven (7) years:

- The Determination;
- Any Disciplinary Sanctions issued;
- $\hfill\square$ Remedies provided to the Complainant;
- Any appeal; and
- Any Supportive Measures implemented or if none were provided, the reasons why.
- Any materials used to train T9Cs, investigators, decisions makers, and any employee designated for facilitate an informal process must be posted on the District website.

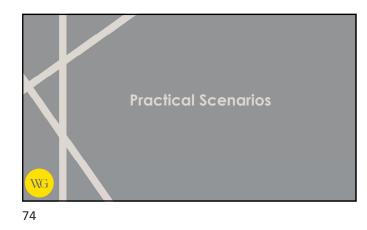
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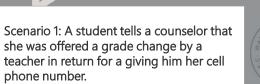






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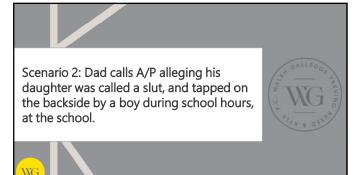


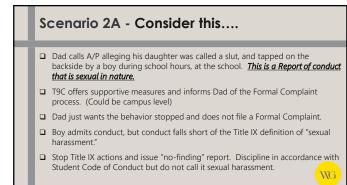
Scenario 1

- This is quid pro quo sexual harassment as defined by Title IX. The counselor should report this to the T9C. The T9C will prepare to reach out expeditiously to the student. She plans to offer supportive measures.
- □ What else should the T9C do?
- □ Action can be taken against the teacher prior to initiation of any Formal Complaint.
- Must identify a relevant policy or rule violated in order to support this action.

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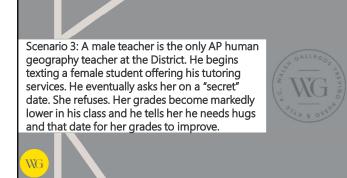
Scenario 2B - But what if....

- Dad calls A/P alleging his daughter was called a slut, and tapped on the backside by a boy during school hours, at the school. <u>This is a Report of conduct</u> <u>that is sexual in nature</u>.
- T9C meets with and offers supportive measures and informs Dad of the Formal Complaint process.
- Dad decides to file a Formal Complaint.
- "The recipient must investigate the allegations in a formal complaint. If the conduct alleged in the formal complaint would not constitute sexual harassment as defined in 106.30 even if proved... then the recipient must dismiss the formal complaint for purposes of sexual harassment under Title IX or this part; such a dismissal does not preclude action under another provision of the recipient's code of conduct." 34 CFR 106.45(b)(3)(i).

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	Scenario 2C - But what if the conduct went further	
		Dad calls A/P alleging his daughter was called a slut, and tapped on the backside by a boy during school hours, at the school. <i><u>This is a Report of conduct</u></i> <u>that is sexual in nature.</u>
		T9C meets with and offers supportive measures and informs Dad of the Formal Complaint process. During this meeting it is alleged that the boy is also leaving sexually explicit notes in the student's notebook, sending sexually suggestive text messages and tweets.
		Dad is not satisfied that supportive measures are enough and decides to file a Formal Complaint.
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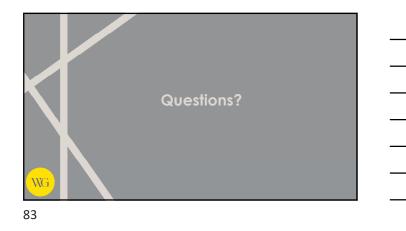


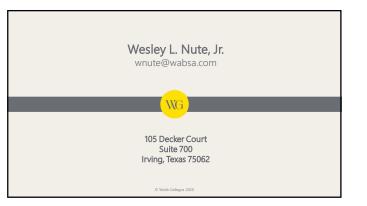
Scenario 3 - Discuss

- □ How does the District approach this?
- What type of sexual harassment, if any, is this?
- □ What supportive measures could be offered?



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The information in this presentation was prepared by Walsh Gallegos Treviño Russo & Kyle P.C. It is intended to be used for general information only and is not to be considered specific legal advice. If specific legal advice is sought, consult an attorney.

