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Hearings in the New Era: Are You Ready?

Day One

Jody Shipper and Chantelle Cleary



Jody Shipper, J.D.

Co-founder and Managing Director
Grand River Solutions



Chantelle Cleary, J.D.

Senior Consultant
Grand River Solutions



About Us

Grand River Solutions provides Title IX, equity, and Clery Act consulting services. Together, our experts have decades of direct, on-campus experience at both small and large, public and private institutions. This practical expertise derived from years of hands-on experience enables our team to offer customized solutions unique to your educational institution's needs. Grand River has a suite of creative, cost-effective and compliant solutions to help schools meet their needs in innovative ways.



Today's Agenda

01

Regulatory Overview

05

Hearings Logistics

02

The Infrastructure for
Compliance

06

Evidentiary Issues

03

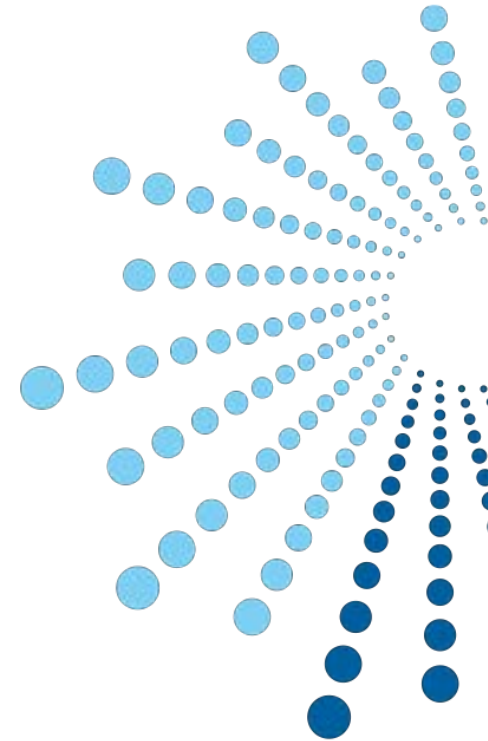
Roles and Responsibilities

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Post-Hearing

04

Pre-Hearing Tasks



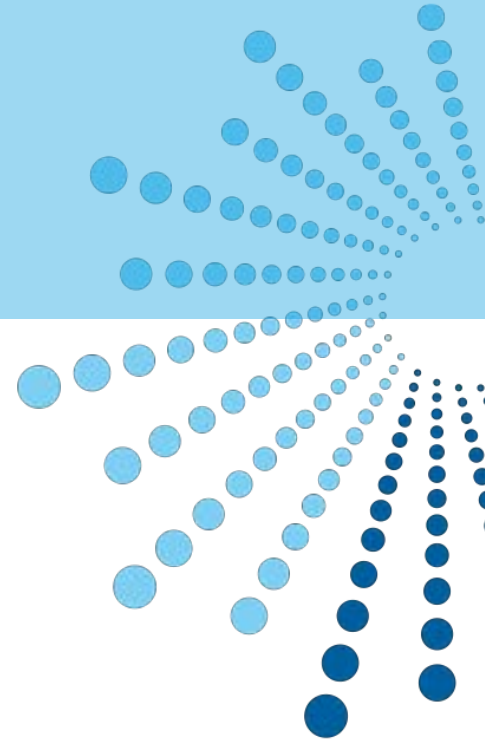


Regulatory Overview

Narrowed jurisdiction and expansive procedural requirements

01

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Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972

"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."

Title IX Applies to All Forms of Sex Discrimination

- Sexual Harassment
- Achievement Awards
- Athletics
- Benefits
- Financial Aid
- Leaves of absence and re-entry policies
- Opportunities to join groups
- Pay rates
- Recruitment
- Retention Rates
- Safety
- Screening Exams
- Sign-on Bonuses
- Student and Employee Benefits
- Thesis Approvals
- Vocational or College Counseling
- Research opportunities

The May 2020 Title IX Regulations Cover A Narrow Scope of Title IX

-
- Sexual Harassment
 - Achievement Awards
 - Athletics
 - Benefits
 - Financial Aid
 - Leaves of absence and re-entry policies
 - Opportunities to join groups
 - Pay rates
 - Recruitment

Conduct Constituting
Sexual Harassment as
Defined in
Section 106.30

Section 106.30: 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).

Title IX Application Post May 2020 Regulations

All Forms of Sex
Discrimination,
Retaliation

106.30 Sexual
Harassment:

- Hostile Environment
- Quid Pro Quo
- Sexual Assault
- Dating/Domestic Violence
- Stalking

Title IX Application Post May 2020 Regulations

- Hostile Environment Sexual Harassment
- Quid Pro Quo
- Sexual Assault
- Dating/Domestic Violence
- Stalking



- Campus Program, Activity, Building, and
- In the United States, and
- Complainant is a member of the community, and
- Control over Respondent



Required Response:
Section 106.45
Procedures

First Question

What Happened?

Does the Complaint Allege:

1. sexual harassment in which the harassment was so severe and pervasive that it denied the complainant equal access to an educational program or activity, or denied the employee the equal ability to continue their work;
2. Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, Stalking, or Sexual Assault;
3. A complaint of quid pro quo sexual harassment by an employee respondent against a student.



Second Question

Where Did the Conduct
Occur?

Did the conduct occur:

1. The incident(s) occurred at school, within the United States;
2. The incident(s) occurred in any building owned or controlled by a student organization that is officially recognized by the institution, and within the United States;
3. The incident(s) was part of one of the school's programs or activities, such as part of a field trip or team athletic event, and within the United States.



Third Question

Who Experienced the
Conduct?

Is the Complainant:

1. a student (whether applicant, admitted, or currently enrolled); or
2. An employee (applicant, hired but not yet working, or employed),
3. Or someone who is otherwise still accessing or attempting to access a university program or activity, within the United States.



Fourth Question

Is the Respondent:

1. A student (whether applicant, admitted, or currently enrolled), or
2. An employee (applicant, hired but not yet working, or employed).
3. Someone else that the institution may have control over (ie, a contractor, an alum, or a vendor)

Who is the Accused?





Apply the 106.45
Procedures

**What do we do
about misconduct
that does not fall
within this narrow
scope?**

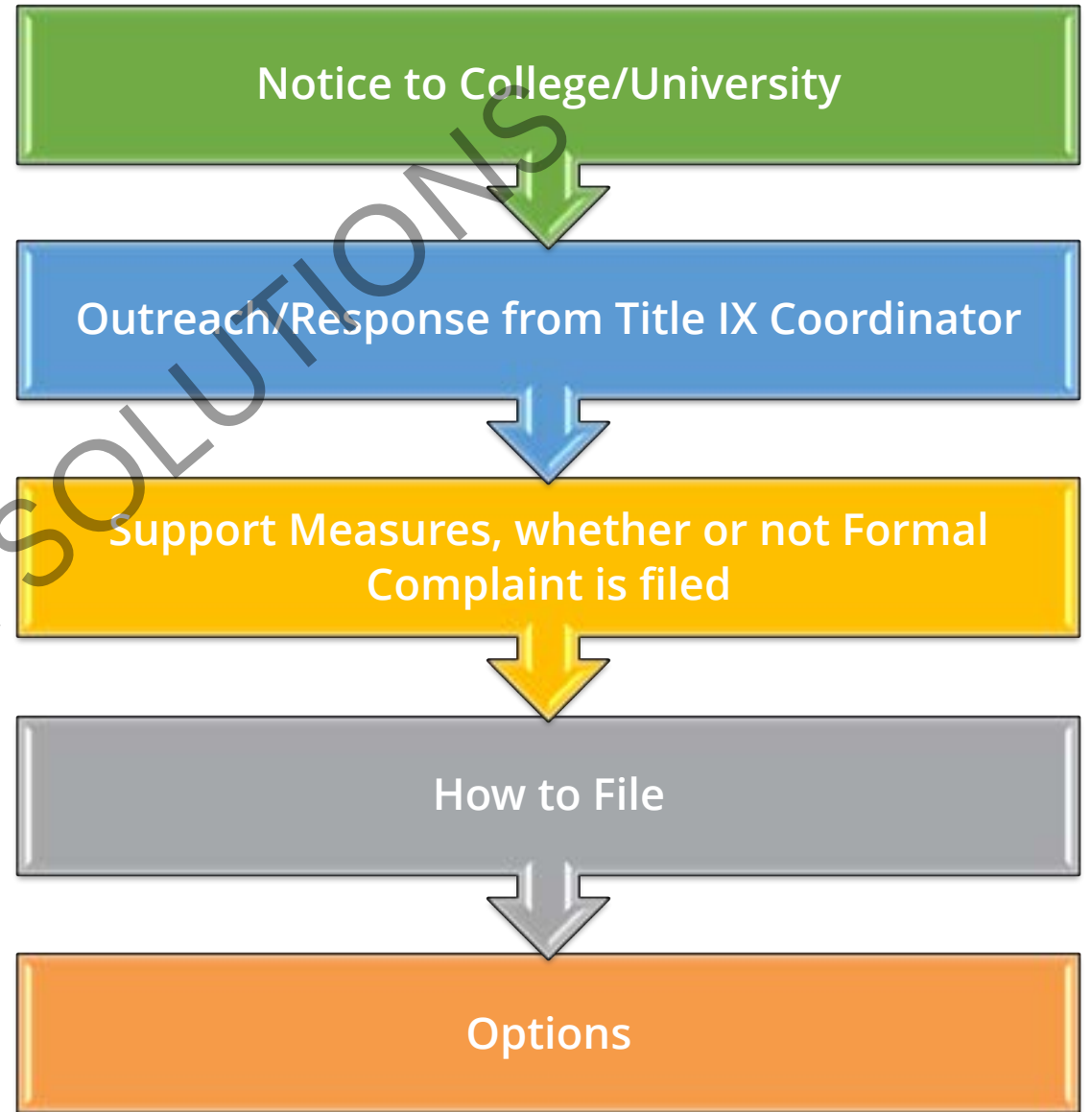


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*First
Things
First...*

Before The Investigation



Procedural Requirements for Investigations



NOTICE TO BOTH
PARTIES



EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY TO
PRESENT EVIDENCE



AN ADVISOR OF
CHOICE



WRITTEN
NOTIFICATION OF
MEETINGS, ETC.,
AND SUFFICIENT
TIME TO PREPARE



OPPORTUNITY TO
REVIEW ALL
EVIDENCE, AND 10
DAYS TO SUBMIT A
WRITTEN
RESPONSE TO THE
EVIDENCE PRIOR
TO COMPLETION
OF THE REPORT



REPORT
SUMMARIZING
RELEVANT
EVIDENCE AND 10
DAY REVIEW OF
REPORT PRIOR TO
HEARING

Procedural Requirements for Hearings

Must be live, but can be conducted remotely

No Compelling participation

Standard of proof used may be preponderance of the evidence or clear and convincing; standard must be the same for student and employee matters

Cross examination must be permitted and must be conducted by advisor of choice or provided by the institution

Decision maker determines relevancy of questions and evidence offered

Exclusion of Evidence if no cross examination

Written decision must be issued that includes finding and sanction

What do we
need to do
all of this?



Space



Technology



Clear & Comprehensive Procedures



Staff



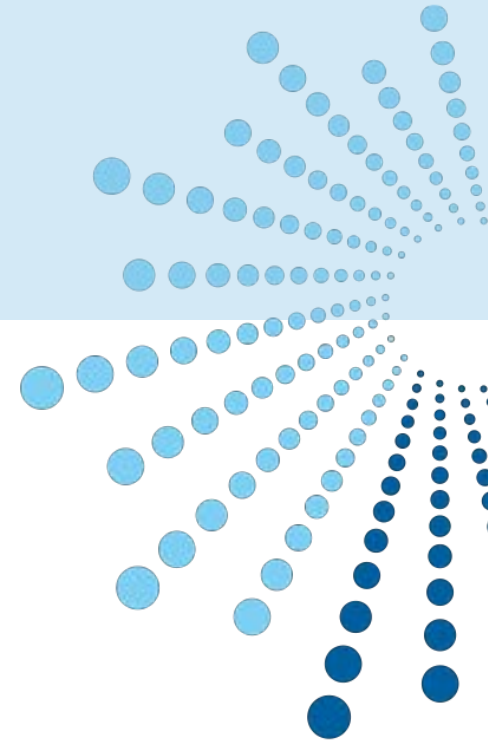
Expertise and Confidence



The Infrastructure for Compliance

02

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Purpose of the Hearing

Why does it matter?

Review and
Assess
Facts



Make
Findings of
Fact



Determine
Responsibility
/ Findings of
Responsibility



Determine
Sanction
and
Remedy

The Essential Elements of All Hearings

Clear Procedures

Due/Fair Process

Fair, Equitable, and Neutral

Consistency

Trauma Informed

Well Trained Personnel



Clear Procedures

The Process

- Pre-hearing process, submission of evidence, opening statements, other statements, closing statements, findings, impact statements, etc.

The Players

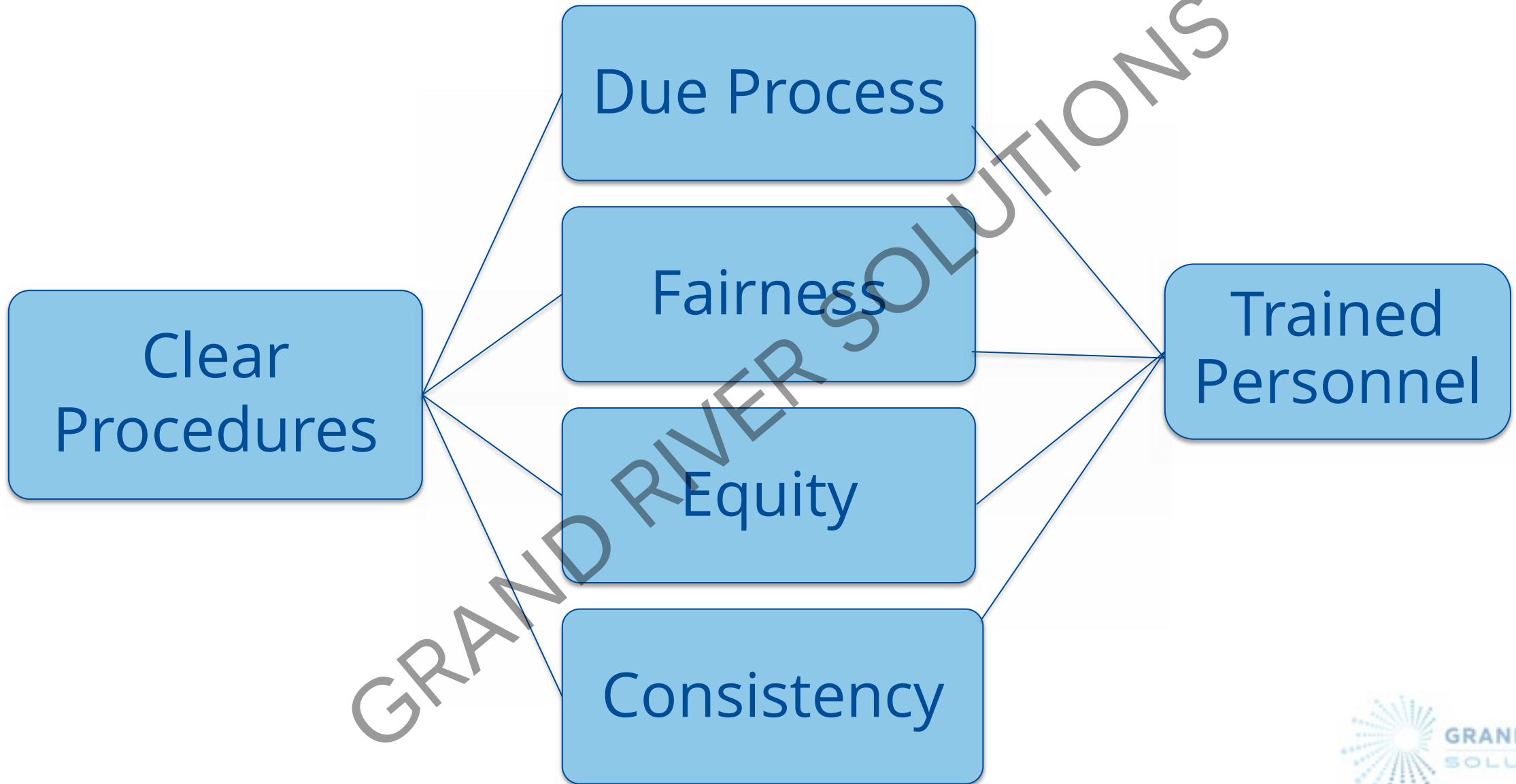
- The roles of all participants

The Evidence

- Relevancy, Exclusions, Timing of submission, how to submit, who decides, etc.

The Outcome

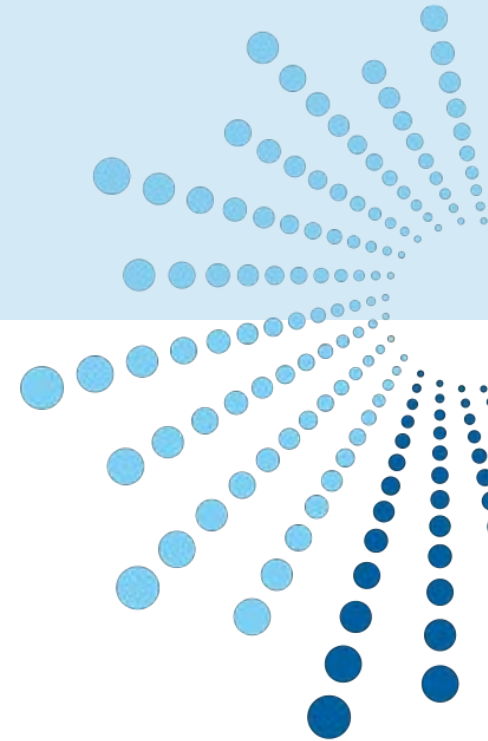
- Deliberations; Notice; manner and method communicated.





Roles and Responsibilities

People, Functions, and Impartiality



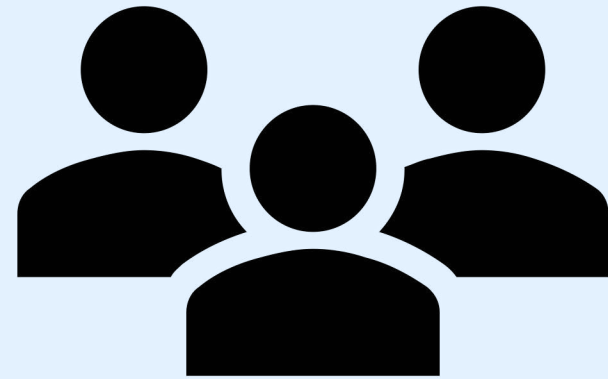
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Hearing Participants

Complainant	the person bringing the complaint
Respondent	the person against whom the complaint has been filed
Advisor	will conduct cross examination; role varies depending on school
Adjudicator(s) or Panelist(s)	role varies depending on when in the process the hearing occurs and responsibility of the officer
Investigator	summarizes the investigation, answers questions
Witnesses	present in the room only when answering questions
Hearing Coordinator/Officer	coordinates all aspects of the hearing, ensures a fair and equitable hearing process, acts as a resource for all participants
Decision-Maker	makes decision as to whether policy was violated
Administrative Staff	assists with the logistical coordination of the people, the space, technology, etc.

Other Considerations Panel

- Number of panelists?
- Can you have a panel of one?
- Must finding be unanimous?
- Internal, external, or some combination?



Who is
NOT
in the
Hearing?

General Counsel

Parents

Student newspaper

Interested faculty

Title IX Coordinator

The Players

Hearing Advisors

- Will conduct examination/cross
- Roles
- Training/Qualifications
- Communicating their role
- Enforcing their role



The Players

Support Person

- Optional
- Silent
- Roles
- Communicating their role
- Enforcing their role



The Players

The Coordinator/Chair

- Oversees the Process
- Maintains order/decorum
- Supports the panel
- Makes ruling
- Voting or non-voting
- Writes the decision
- Trained



The Players

The Decision Maker

- May be Hearing Chair or on panel
- Determines whether policy was violated
- Cannot be investigator, Title IX Coordinator, or Appeals Officer



The Players

The Panel

- Fact finders
- Number of panelists?
- Composition?
- Makes the finding
- Unanimous?
- Pool?
- Recruitment and retention



Impartiality

WHAT DOES THIS *REALLY* MEAN?



Prejudging

- “Believe all victims”?
- Is bringing forward a case a “judgment”?
- Avoiding any presumption of responsibility



Bias? Conflict of Interest

- Being anti-rape
- The investigator once took a women's studies course
- The appeals officer wrote on Facebook last week that if a boy is accused, he definitely did at least *something* wrong
 - The Title IX Coordinator went to the same college as the Complainant's mother
- The Title IX Coordinator's daughter works for the Complainant's mother



Logistics of a Hearing

Considerations for the Physical Space

- Room location and set-up
 - Entrances, exits, and proximity
- Privacy screens & partitions
- Technology
- Hallway control
- Space for extra visitors

Hearing Room Configuration

Investigator & Hearing
Coordinator

Hearing Officer

Witness

Respondent &
Advisor

Complainant &
Advisor



Remote Participation

- In whole or in part?
- Communication considerations
 - Chat function or emails
- Private consultation between parties and advisors
 - Use of breakout rooms
 - Communication considerations
- Practice runs
- Connectivity Considerations

Other Considerations

Time Limits

Breaks

Formality,
Order and
Gate-Keeping

Handling
disruptions and
interruptions

Poor behavior?

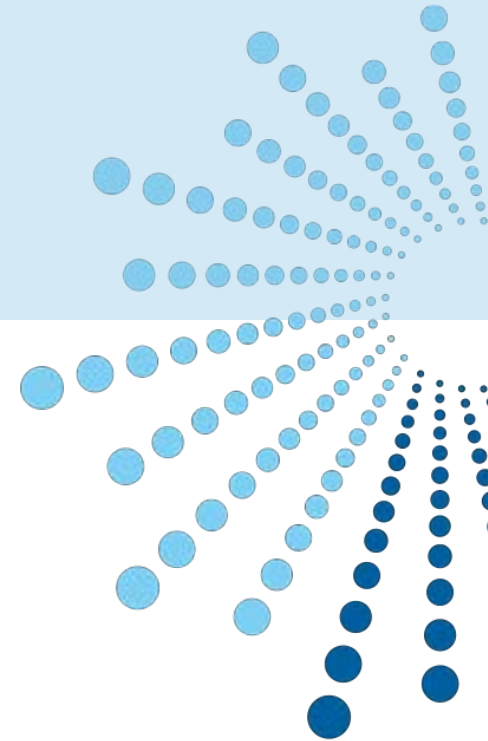
Recording



The Hearing

PART 2

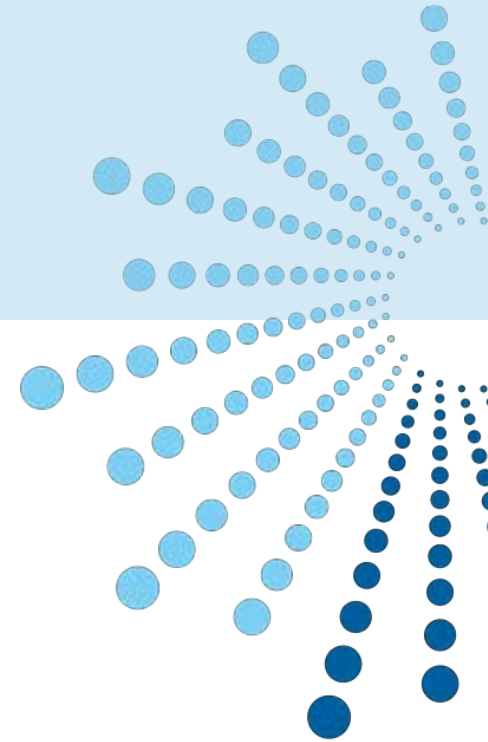
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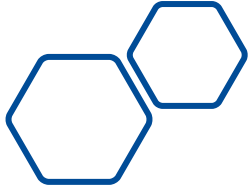


Pre-Hearing Tasks

What should be done in advance of the hearing



04



Logistics

Scheduling participants

Reserving space

Provision of accommodations

Requests for delays; adjournments

The Parties and their Advisors, and the Witnesses

Pre-hearing instructions

- Via conference or meeting
- In writing

Set expectations

- Format
- Roles of the parties
- Participation
- Evidence
- Decorum
- Impact of not following rules

The Decision Maker(s)



Review evidence and report



Review applicable policy and procedures



Preliminary analysis of the evidence



Determine areas for further exploration



Develop questions of your own



Anticipate the party's questions



Anticipate challenges or issues

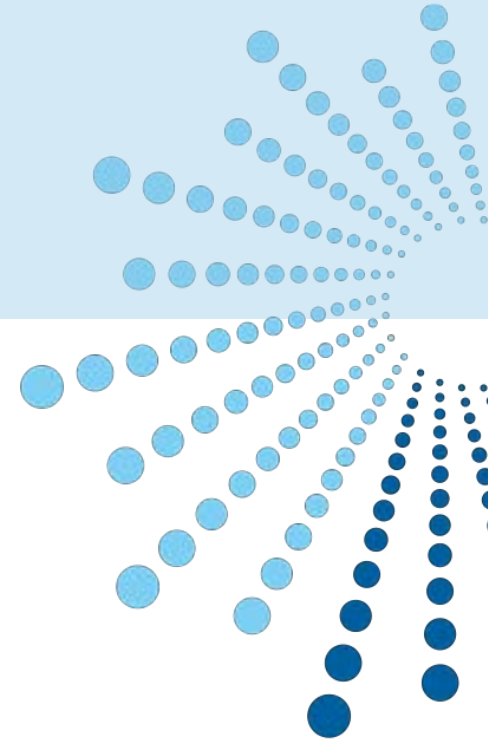




Hearing Logistics

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Opening Instructions by the Chair

- Set the stage
- Reiterate charges
- Reiterate rules and expectations
- Reiterate logistics for the day

This should be scripted and used consistently.



Opening Statements

- Permitted, but not required
- Policy should include purpose and scope
- If permitted, consider
 - Requiring submission prior to hearing
 - Word limit
 - Time limit

Testimony

Procedures should be clear about:

- Order of/parties and witnesses
 - Could simply leave this up to the decision maker
- Order of examination
 - Questioning by the decision maker
 - Cross examination by the advisor
 - Will the advisor be permitted to question their own party?
 - Will there be a second round of questioning?
- Consistency is essential. Consider putting this all in your procedures.

Cross Examination

Who does it?

- Must be conducted by the advisor
- If party does not appear or does not participate, advisor can appear and cross
- If party does not have an advisor, institution must provide one

Cross Examination

Permissible Questions

- Questions must be relevant
- Not relevant
 - Duplicative questions
 - Questions that attempt to elicit information about
 - Complainants prior sexual history
 - Privileged information
 - Mental health

Cross Examination

Role of the Decision Maker

- Rulings by Decision Maker required
 - Explanation only required where question not permitted

Cross Examination

Impact of Not Appearing

- Exclusion of all statements of that party
- Exception- DOE Blog
- What if a party or witness appears, but does not answer all questions

Closing Statements

- Permitted, but not required
- Policy should include purpose and scope
- If permitted, consider
 - Time limit
 - Submission in writing after the hearing

Common Challenges

- Non-appearance by a party or witness
- Non-appearance by an advisor
- Party or witness appears but declines to answer some (or all) questions
- Disruptions
- Maintaining Decorum

Tips for Increasing Efficiency

01

Be prepared

02

Have an
experienced chair

03

Have back up plans
for technology
issues

04

Require pre-
hearing written
submissions

- of opening statements
- of questions in advance

Being Trauma-Informed

Training your panel/adjudicators

- Asking questions
- Asking “why”
- Filtering questions of the parties

Preparing parties

- Reviewing the investigation report
- Sharing their story again
- Answering questions again

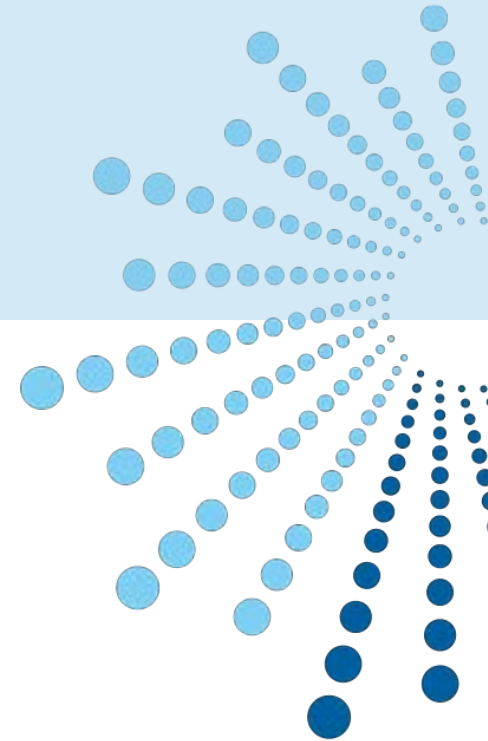
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Evidentiary Issues

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Evidence

“Something (including testimony, documents, tangible objects) that tends to prove or disprove the existence of an alleged fact; anything presented to the senses and offered to prove the existence or non-existence of a fact.”

Black's Law Dictionary

Types of Evidence

Direct Evidence

Evidence that is based on personal knowledge or observation and that, if true, proves a fact without inference or presumption.

Circumstantial Evidence

Evidence based on inference and not on personal knowledge or observation.

Corroborating Evidence

Evidence that differs from but strengthens or confirms what other evidence shows

Non-Testimonial Evidence

Text Messages

Social Media
posts

Social Media
Communications

Emails

Surveillance

Videos

Photographs

Police Body
Camera
Footage

Swipe Records

Medical
Records

Phone Records

Audio
Recordings

Some Other Evidentiary Issues

- Character evidence
- Polygraph examinations
- SANE reports
- Articles from journals
- Past conduct of complainant, respondent
- Unlawfully obtained evidence

EVIDENCE

Evaluating the Evidence

Is it relevant?

Evidence is relevant if it has a tendency to make a material fact more or less likely to be true.



Is it authentic?

Is the item what it purports to be?



Is it credible?

Is it convincing?



Is it reliable?

Can you trust it or really on it?



What weight, if any, should it be given?

Weight is determined by the finder of fact!

Logical connection between the evidence and facts at issue

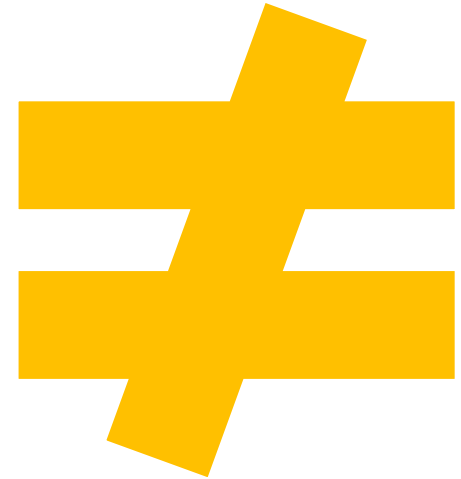
Assists in coming to the conclusion – it is “of consequence”

Tends to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without that evidence



Relevance is Not...

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



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Assessing Authenticity

Investigating the products of the investigation



Never assume that an item of evidence is authentic.



Ask questions, request proof.



Investigate the authenticity if necessary.



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Assessing Credibility and Reliability

No formula exists, but consider the following:

- opportunity to view
- ability to recall
- motive to fabricate
- plausibility
- consistency
- character, background, experience, and training
- coaching
- Your own bias and limited experience

Assessing Reliability

Inherent plausibility

Logic

Corroboration

Past record

Other indicia of reliability

Credibility Versus Reliability

Reliable Evidence

- I can trust the consistency of the person's account of their truth.
- It is probably true and I can rely on it.

Credibility

- I trust their account based on their tone and reliability.
- They are honest and believable.
- It might not be true, but it is worthy of belief.
- It is convincingly true.
- The witness is sincere and speaking their real truth.

Being Convinced

It Is True, or Biased Conclusion?

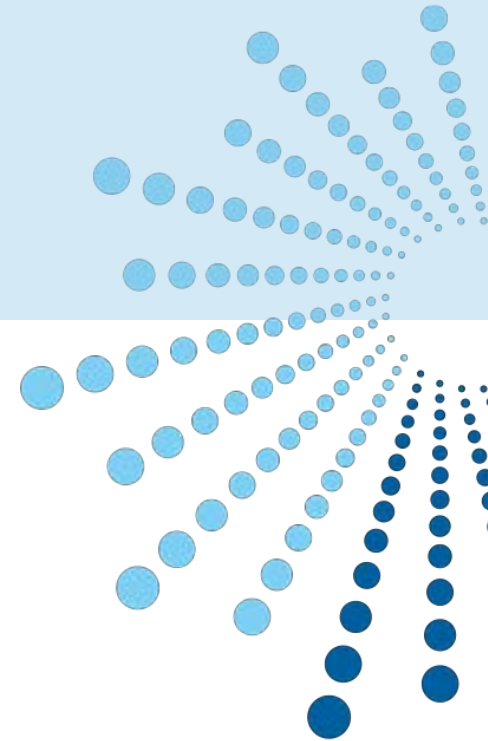
**A credible witness may give
unreliable testimony**



After the Hearing

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Deliberations

Weighing the Evidence & Making A Determination

- 1) Evaluate the evidence collected to determine what factually is more likely to have occurred, and then
- 2) Analyze whether the conduct that happened constitutes a violation of the school's policies

Policy Analysis

- Break down the policy into elements
- Organize the facts by the element to which they relate



Preponderance of the Evidence

- More likely than not
- Does not mean 100% true or accurate
- A finding = There was sufficient reliable, credible evidence to support a finding, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the policy was violated



Final Report

- The allegations
- Description of all procedural steps
- Findings of fact
- Conclusion of application of facts to the policy
- Rationale for each allegation
- Sanctions and Remedies
- Procedure for appeal



Questions?



Email Us

Jody@grandriversolutions.com

Chantelle@grandriversolutions.com

info@grandriversolutions.com

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Jody Shipper

Jody@grandriversolutions.com



Chantelle Cleary

Chantelle@grandriversolutions.com



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