

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

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**Note:** This policy addresses discrimination, harassment, and retaliation involving District students. For provisions regarding discrimination, harassment, and retaliation involving District employees, see DIA. For reporting requirements related to child abuse and neglect, see FFG. Note that FFH shall be used in conjunction with FFI (bullying) for certain prohibited conduct.

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STATEMENT OF  
NONDISCRIMINATION

The District prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any student on the basis of ~~age~~, race, color, ancestry, national origin, ~~sex~~, gender, handicap or disability, ~~age~~, marital status, religion, veteran status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, or ~~on~~ any other basis prohibited by law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of District policy and is prohibited.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination against a student is defined as conduct directed at a student on the basis of ~~age~~, race, color, ancestry, ~~religion~~, ~~gender~~, national origin, ~~sex~~, ~~gender~~, handicap or disability, ~~age~~, marital status, ~~religion~~, veteran status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, or any other basis prohibited by law that adversely affects the student.

PROHIBITED  
HARASSMENT

Prohibited harassment of a student is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student's ~~age~~, race, color, ancestry, national origin, ~~sex~~, gender, handicap or disability, ~~age~~, marital status, religion, veteran status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, or any other basis prohibited by law that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

1. Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

Prohibited harassment includes dating violence as defined by this policy.

EXAMPLES

Examples of prohibited harassment may include offensive or derogatory language directed at another person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threaten-

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

ing, intimidating, or humiliating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; display of graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
BY AN EMPLOYEE

Sexual harassment of a student by a District employee includes both welcome and unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct; or other conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

1. A District employee causes the student to believe that the student must submit to the conduct in order to participate in a school program or activity, or that the employee will make an educational decision based on whether or not the student submits to the conduct; or
2. The conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:
  - a. Affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities; or
  - b. Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment.

Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and District employees are prohibited. Any sexual relationship between a student and a District employee is always prohibited, even if consensual. [See ~~DFDH~~]

BY OTHERS

Sexual harassment of a student, including harassment committed by another student, includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; or sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct when the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:

1. Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

EXAMPLES

Examples of sexual harassment of a student may include sexual advances; touching intimate body parts or coercing physical con-

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

tact that is sexual in nature; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

Necessary or permissible physical contact such as assisting a child by taking the child's hand, comforting a child with a hug, or other physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature is not sexual harassment.

GENDER-BASED  
HARASSMENT

Gender-based harassment includes physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student's gender, the student's expression of characteristics perceived as stereotypical for the student's gender, or the student's failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. For purposes of this policy, gender-based harassment is considered prohibited harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

1. Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

EXAMPLES

Examples of gender-based harassment directed against a student, regardless of the student's or the harasser's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, may include offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; threatening or intimidating conduct; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

DATING VIOLENCE

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the relationship. Dating violence also occurs when a person commits these acts against a person in a marriage or dating relationship with the individual who is or was once in a marriage or dating relationship with the person committing the offense.

For purposes of this policy, dating violence is considered prohibited harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

1. Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

EXAMPLES

Examples of dating violence against a student may include physical or sexual assaults; name-calling; put-downs; or threats directed at the student, the student's family members, or members of the student's household. Additional examples may include destroying property belonging to the student, threatening to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship, attempting to isolate the student from friends and family, stalking, threatening a student's spouse or current dating partner, or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

RETALIATION

The District prohibits retaliation by a student or District employee against a student alleged to have experienced discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, or another student who, in good faith, makes a report of harassment or discrimination, serves as a witness, or participates in an investigation.

EXAMPLES

Examples of retaliation may include threats, rumor spreading, ostracism, assault, destruction of property, unjustified punishments, or unwarranted grade reductions. Unlawful retaliation does not include petty slights or annoyances.

FALSE CLAIM

A student who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with a District investigation regarding discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

PROHIBITED  
CONDUCT

In this policy, the term "prohibited conduct" includes discrimination, harassment, dating violence, and retaliation as defined by this policy, even if the behavior does not rise to the level of unlawful conduct.

REPORTING  
PROCEDURES

STUDENT REPORT

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced prohibited conduct or believes that another student has experienced prohibited conduct should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, school counselor, principal, other District employee, or the appropriate District official listed in this policy.

EMPLOYEE REPORT

Any District employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced prohibited conduct shall immediately notify the appropriate District official listed in this policy and take any other steps required by this policy.

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

DEFINITION OF  
DISTRICT  
OFFICIALS

For the purposes of this policy, District officials are the Title IX coordinator, the Section 504 coordinator, and the Superintendent.

TITLE IX OFFICE  
COORDINATOR

Reports of discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment or gender-based harassment, may be directed to the designated Title IX coordinator office. The District designates the following employee office to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended for students:

Name: Marmion Dambrine

Position: Director, Athletics

Office: Student Support Services

Address: 4400 W. 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092

Telephone: (713) 556-72856943

ADA/SECTION  
504 OFFICE  
COORDINATOR

Reports of discrimination based on disability may be directed to the designated ADA/Section 504 coordinator office. The District designates the following person office to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, for students:

Name: Michael Webb

Position: ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, Child Study Department

Office: Special Education Services

Address: 4040 West Fuqua Street8128 West 28th Street, Houston, TX 7700877425

Telephone: (713) 556-8000296-1000

SUPERINTENDENT

The Superintendent shall serve as coordinator for purposes of District compliance with all other antidiscriminationnondiscrimination laws.

ALTERNATIVE  
REPORTING  
PROCEDURES

A student shall not be required to report prohibited conduct to the person alleged to have committed the conduct. Reports concerning prohibited conduct, including reports against the Title IX coordinator or ADA/Section 504 coordinator, may be directed to the Superintendent.

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

A report against the Superintendent may be made directly to the Board. If a report is made directly to the Board, the Board shall appoint an appropriate person to conduct an investigation.

TIMELY REPORTING

Reports of prohibited conduct shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to immediately report may impair the District's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.

NOTICE TO PARENTS

"Parent" for purposes of notice includes a legal guardian or a person acting as a parent, such as a grandparent or other person who has enrolled the student. The District official or designee shall promptly notify the parents of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct by a District employee or another adult.

INVESTIGATION OF  
THE REPORT

The District may request, but shall not require, a written report. If a report is made orally, the District official shall reduce the report to written form.

INITIAL  
ASSESSMENT

Upon receipt or notice of a report, the District official shall determine whether the allegations, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by this policy. If so, the District official shall immediately ~~authorize or undertake an investigation, regardless of whether a criminal or regulatory investigation regarding the same or similar allegations is pending.~~ If not, the District official shall refer the complaint for consideration under FFI except as provided below at CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION.

~~If an investigation is required in accordance with this policy, the District official shall also determine whether~~ determines that the allegations, if proven, would not constitute bullying, prohibited conduct as defined by this policy, the District official shall refer the complaint for consideration under FFI.

INTERIM ACTION

If appropriate and regardless of whether a criminal or regulatory investigation regarding the alleged conduct is pending, the District shall promptly take interim action calculated to address prohibited conduct or bullying during prior to the course completion of an the District's investigation.

DISTRICT  
INVESTIGATION

The investigation may be conducted by the District official or a designee, such as the principal, or by a third party designated by the District, such as an attorney. When appropriate, the principal shall be involved in or informed of the investigation.

The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the person making the report, the person against whom the report is filed, and others with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the allegations. The investigation may also include analysis of other information or documents related to the allegations.

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

<u>CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION</u>	<u>If a law enforcement or regulatory agency notifies the District that a criminal or regulatory investigation has been initiated, the District shall confer with the agency to determine if the District investigation would impede the criminal or regulatory investigation. The District shall proceed with its investigation only to the extent that it does not impede the ongoing criminal or regulatory investigation. After the law enforcement or regulatory agency has finished gathering its evidence, the District shall promptly resume its investigation.</u>
CONCLUDING THE INVESTIGATION	Absent extenuating circumstances, <u>such as a request by a law enforcement or regulatory agency for the District to delay its investigation</u> , the investigation should be completed within ten District business days from the date of the report; however, the investigator shall take additional time if necessary to complete a thorough investigation.  The investigator shall prepare a written report of the investigation. The report shall include a determination of whether prohibited conduct or bullying occurred. The report shall be filed with the District official overseeing the investigation.
<u>NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME</u>	<u>Notification of the outcome of the investigation shall be provided to both parties in compliance with FERPA.</u>
DISTRICT ACTION PROHIBITED CONDUCT	If the results of an investigation indicate that prohibited conduct occurred, the District shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and may take corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct.
CORRECTIVE ACTION	Examples of corrective action may include a training program for those involved in the complaint, a comprehensive education program for the school community, counseling to the victim and the student who engaged in prohibited conduct, follow-up inquiries to determine if any new incidents or any instances of retaliation have occurred, involving parents and students in efforts to identify problems and improve the school climate, increasing staff monitoring of areas where <u>harassment/prohibited conduct</u> has occurred, and reaffirming the District's policy against discrimination and harassment.
BULLYING	If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying occurred, as defined by FFI, the District official shall refer to FFI for appropriate notice to parents and District action. The District official shall refer to FDB for transfer provisions.
IMPROPER CONDUCT	

STUDENT WELFARE  
FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

FFH  
(LOCAL)

If the investigation reveals improper conduct that did not rise to the level of prohibited conduct or bullying, the District may take disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct or other corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct.

COURT ORDERS

The school shall, to the extent possible, enforce court-ordered protective orders resulting from dating violence and related issues, and, when deemed appropriate, shall implement school-based alternatives to protective orders, which shall include transferring an alleged victim or perpetrator under the safe school choice option or placing the alleged perpetrator in a District alternative educational program. [See FDE]

CONFIDENTIALITY

To the greatest extent possible, the District shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation and comply with applicable law.

APPEAL

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through FNG(LOCAL), beginning at the appropriate level. A student or parent shall be informed of his or her right to file a complaint with the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

RECORDS RETENTION

~~Retention of records shall be in accordance with FB(LOCAL) and CPC(LOCAL).~~

The District shall retain copies of allegations, investigation reports, and related records regarding any prohibited conduct in accordance with the District's records retention schedules, but for no less than the minimum amount of time required by law. [See CPC]

ACCESS TO POLICY  
AND PROCEDURES

Information regarding this policy and any accompanying procedures shall be distributed annually in the employee and student handbooks. Copies of the policy and procedures shall be posted on the District's ~~Web site~~ website, to the extent practicable, and readily available at each campus and the District's administrative offices.