



Grievance Procedures Under Title IX

The Holliston Public Schools has adopted grievance procedures that provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints made by students, employees, or other individuals who are participating or attempting to participate in its education program or activity, or by the Title IX Coordinator, alleging any action that would be prohibited by Title IX or the Title IX regulations.

Definitions:

Complainant means:

1. A student or employee who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute sex discrimination under Title IX or its regulations; or
2. A person other than a student or employee who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute sex discrimination under Title IX or its regulations and who was participating or attempting to participate in the recipient's education program or activity at the time of the alleged sex discrimination.

Complaint means an oral or written request to the recipient that objectively can be understood as a request for the recipient to investigate and make a determination about alleged discrimination under Title IX or its regulations.

Disciplinary sanctions mean consequences imposed on a respondent following a determination under Title IX that the respondent violated the recipient's prohibition on sex discrimination.

Party means a complainant or respondent.

Relevant means related to the allegations of sex discrimination under investigation as part of these grievance procedures. Questions are relevant when they seek evidence that may aid in showing whether the alleged sex discrimination occurred, and evidence is relevant when it may aid a decisionmaker in determining whether the alleged sex discrimination occurred.

Remedies means measures provided, as appropriate, to a complainant or any other person the recipient identifies as having had equal access to the recipient's education program or activity limited or denied by sex discrimination. These measures are provided to restore or preserve that person's access to the recipient's education program or activity after a recipient determines that sex discrimination occurred.

Respondent means a person who is alleged to have violated the recipient's prohibition on sex discrimination.

Retaliation means intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination against any person by the recipient, a student, or an employee or other person authorized by the recipient to provide

aid, benefit, or service under the recipient's education program or activity, for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Title IX or its regulations, or because the person has reported information, made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under the Title IX regulations.

Sex-based harassment is a form of sex discrimination and means sexual harassment and other harassment on the basis of sex, including on the basis of sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity, that is:

1. *Quid pro quo harassment*. An employee, agent, or other person authorized by the recipient to provide an aid, benefit, or service under the recipient's education program or activity explicitly or impliedly conditioning the provision of such aid, benefit, or service on a person's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
2. *Hostile environment harassment*. Unwelcome sex-based conduct that, based on the totality of the circumstances, is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the recipient's education program or activity (i.e., creates a hostile environment). Whether a hostile environment has been created is a fact-specific inquiry that includes consideration of the following:
 - a. The degree to which the conduct affected the complainant's ability to access the recipient's education program or activity;
 - b. The type, frequency, and duration of the conduct;
 - c. The parties' ages, roles within the recipient's education program or activity, previous interactions, and other factors about each party that may be relevant to evaluating the effects of the conduct;
 - d. The location of the conduct and the context in which the conduct occurred; and
 - e. Other sex-based harassment in the recipient's education program or activity; or
- 3 *Specific offenses*.
 - a. Sexual assault meaning an offense classified as a forcible or nonforcible sex offense under the uniform crime reporting system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
 - b. Dating violence meaning violence committed by a person:
 - i. Who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and
 - ii. Where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:
 1. The length of the relationship;
 2. The type of relationship; and
 3. The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship
 - c. Domestic violence meaning felony or misdemeanor crimes committed by person who:
 - i. Is a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim under the family or domestic violence laws of the jurisdiction of the recipient, or a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim;
 - ii. Is cohabitating, or has cohabitated, with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner;
 - iii. Shares a child in common with the victim; or
 - iv. Commits acts against a youth or adult victim who is protected from those acts under

- the family or domestic violence laws of the jurisdiction; or
- d. Stalking means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to:
 - i. Fear for the person's safety or the safety of others; or
 - ii. Suffer substantial emotional distress.

Supportive measures mean individualized measures offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, without unreasonably burdening a complainant or respondent, not for punitive or disciplinary reasons, and without fee or charge to the complainant or respondent to:

1. Restore or preserve that party's access to the recipient's education program or activity, including measures that are designed to protect the safety of the parties or the recipient's educational environment; or
2. Provide support during the recipient's grievance procedures or during an informal resolution process.

Complaints:

The following people have a right to make a complaint of sex discrimination, including complaints of sex-based harassment, requesting that Holliston Public Schools investigate and make a determination about alleged discrimination under

Title IX:

1. A "complainant," which includes:
 - a. a student or employee of Holliston Public Schools who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute sex discrimination under Title IX; or a person other than a student or employee of Holliston Public Schools who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute sex discrimination under Title IX at a time when that individual was participating or attempting to participate in Holliston Public Schools education program or activity;
2. A parent, guardian, or other authorized legal representative with the legal right to act on behalf of a complainant; or
3. Holliston Public Schools Title IX Coordinator.

Note that a person is entitled to make a complaint of sex-based harassment only if they themselves are alleged to have been subjected to the sex-based harassment, if they have a legal right to act on behalf of such person, or if the Title IX Coordinator initiates a complaint consistent with the requirements of 34 C.F.R. § 106.44(f)(1)(v).

With respect to complaints of sex discrimination other than sex-based harassment, in addition to the people listed above, the following persons have a right to make a complaint:

1. Any student or employee of Holliston Public Schools; or
2. Any person other than a student or employee who was participating or attempting to participate in the Holliston Public Schools education program or activity at the time of the alleged sex discrimination.

Holliston Public Schools may consolidate complaints of sex discrimination against more than one respondent, by more than one complainant against one or more respondents, or by one party against another party, when the allegations of sex discrimination arise out of the same facts or circumstances. When more than one complainant or more than one respondent is involved, references below to a party, complainant, or respondent include the plural, as applicable.

Basic Requirements of Title IX Grievance Procedures:

Holliston Public Schools will treat complainants and respondents equitably.

Holliston Public Schools requires that any Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or decisionmaker not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual complainant or respondent. A decisionmaker may be the same person as the Title IX Coordinator or investigator.

Holliston Public Schools presumes that the respondent is not responsible for the alleged sex discrimination until a determination is made at the conclusion of its grievance procedures.

Holliston Public Schools will act reasonably promptly throughout all stages of the grievance process (i.e., the decision whether to dismiss or investigate a complaint; investigation; determination; and appeal, if any). Reasonably prompt timelines will be established by the Title IX Coordinator based on the totality of the circumstances of the matter and included in the written notice to the parties.

The Title IX Coordinator may grant a reasonable extension to either party for good cause. Holliston Public Schools has also established the following process that allows for the reasonable extension of timeframes on a case-by-case basis for good cause with notice to the parties that includes the reason for the delay:

The party requesting the extension must submit a written request to the Title IX Coordinator explaining the reason for the request. The Title IX Coordinator or designee may, at their discretion, grant a brief extension for good cause. The Title IX Coordinator will notify the parties in writing that an extension has been granted. If the Title IX Coordinator requires an extension, they will notify the parties in writing of the extension.

Holliston Public Schools will take reasonable steps to protect the privacy of the parties and witnesses during its grievance procedures. These steps will not restrict the ability of the parties to obtain and present evidence, including by speaking to witnesses; consulting with their family members, confidential resources, or advisors; or otherwise preparing for or participating in the grievance procedures. The parties cannot engage in retaliation, including against witnesses.

Holliston Public Schools will objectively evaluate all evidence that is relevant and not otherwise impermissible – including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence. Credibility determinations will not be based on a person's status as a complainant, respondent, or witness.

The following types of evidence, and questions seeking that evidence, are impermissible (i.e., will not be accessed or considered, except by Holliston Public Schools to determine whether

one of the exceptions listed below applies; will not be disclosed; and will not otherwise be used), regardless of whether they are relevant:

1. Evidence that is protected under a privilege recognized by Federal or State law or evidence provided to a confidential employee, unless the person to whom the privilege or confidentiality is owed has voluntarily waived the privilege or confidentiality;
2. A party's or witness's records that are made or maintained by a physician, psychologist, or other recognized professional or paraprofessional in connection with the provision of treatment to the party or witness unless Holliston Public Schools obtains that party's or witness's voluntary, written consent for use in its grievance procedures; and
3. Evidence that relates to the complainant's sexual interests or prior sexual conduct, unless evidence about the complainant's prior sexual conduct is offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged conduct or is evidence about specific incidents of the complainant's prior sexual conduct with the respondent that is offered to prove consent to the alleged sex-based harassment. The fact of prior consensual sexual conduct between the complainant and respondent does not by itself demonstrate or imply the complainant's consent to the alleged sex-based harassment or preclude a determination that sex-based harassment occurred.

Notice of Allegations:

Upon initiation of Holliston Public School's Title IX grievance procedures, Holliston Public Schools will notify the parties of the following:

1. Holliston Public Schools Title IX grievance procedures and any informal resolution process;
2. Sufficient information available at the time to allow the parties to respond to the allegations, including the identities of the parties involved in the incident(s), the conduct alleged to constitute sex discrimination, and the date(s) and location(s) of the alleged incident(s);
3. Retaliation is prohibited; and
4. The parties are entitled to an equal opportunity to access the relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence or an accurate description of this evidence.

If, in the course of an investigation, Holliston Public Schools decides to investigate additional allegations of sex discrimination by the respondent toward the complainant that are not included in the notice provided or that are included in a complaint that is consolidated, Holliston Public Schools will notify the parties of the additional allegations.

Dismissal of a Complaint:

Holliston Public Schools may dismiss a complaint of sex discrimination if:

1. Holliston Public Schools is unable to identify the respondent after taking reasonable steps to do so;
2. The respondent is not participating in Holliston Public Schools education program or activity and is not employed by Holliston Public Schools;
3. The complainant voluntarily withdraws any or all of the allegations in the complaint, the

Title IX Coordinator declines to initiate a complaint, and Holliston Public Schools determines that, without the complainant's withdrawn allegations, the conduct that remains alleged in the complaint, if any, would not constitute sex discrimination under Title IX even if proven; or

4. Holliston Public Schools determines the conduct alleged in the complaint, even if proven, would not constitute sex discrimination under Title IX. Before dismissing the complaint, Holliston Public Schools will make reasonable efforts to clarify the allegations with the complainant.

Upon dismissal, Holliston Public Schools will promptly notify the complainant of the basis for the dismissal. If the dismissal occurs after the respondent has been notified of the allegations, then Holliston Public Schools will also notify the respondent of the dismissal and the basis for the dismissal promptly following notification to the complainant, or simultaneously if notification is in writing.

Holliston Public Schools will notify the complainant that a dismissal may be appealed and will provide the complainant with an opportunity to appeal the dismissal of a complaint. If the dismissal occurs after the respondent has been notified of the allegations, then Holliston Public Schools will also notify the respondent that the dismissal may be appealed. Dismissals may be appealed on the following bases:

1. Procedural irregularity that would change the outcome;
2. New evidence that would change the outcome and that was not reasonably available when the dismissal was made; and
3. The Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or decisionmaker had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that would change the outcome.

If the dismissal is appealed, Holliston Public Schools will:

1. Notify the parties of any appeal, including notice of the allegations, if notice was not previously provided to the respondent;
2. Implement appeal procedures equally for the parties;
3. Ensure that the decisionmaker for the appeal did not take part in an investigation of the allegations or dismissal of the complaint;
4. Ensure that the decisionmaker for the appeal has been trained consistent with the Title IX regulations;
5. Provide the parties a reasonable and equal opportunity to make a statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome; and
6. Notify the parties of the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result.

When a complaint is dismissed, Holliston Public Schools will, at a minimum:

1. Offer supportive measures to the complainant as appropriate;
2. If the respondent has been notified of the allegations, offer supportive measures to the respondent as appropriate; and
3. Take other prompt and effective steps, as appropriate, through the Title IX Coordinator to ensure that sex discrimination does not continue or recur within the Holliston Public Schools education program or activity.

Investigation:

Holliston Public Schools will provide for adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of complaints.

The burden is on Holliston Public Schools – not on the parties – to conduct an investigation that gathers sufficient evidence to determine whether sex discrimination occurred.

Holliston Public Schools will provide an equal opportunity for the parties to present fact witnesses and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence that is relevant and not otherwise impermissible.

Holliston Public Schools will review all evidence gathered through the investigation and determine what evidence is relevant and what evidence is impermissible regardless of relevance.

Holliston Public Schools will provide each party with an equal opportunity to access the evidence that is relevant to the allegations of sex discrimination and not otherwise impermissible, in the following manner:

1. Holliston Public Schools will provide an equal opportunity to access either the relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence, or an accurate description of this evidence.
2. Holliston Public Schools will provide a reasonable opportunity to respond to the evidence or the accurate description of the evidence; and
3. Holliston Public Schools will take reasonable steps to prevent and address the parties' unauthorized disclosure of information and evidence obtained solely through the grievance procedures. Disclosures of such information and evidence for purposes of administrative proceedings or litigation related to the complaint of sex discrimination are authorized.

Questioning the Parties and Witnesses:

Holliston Public Schools will provide a process that enables the decisionmaker to question parties and witnesses to adequately assess a party's or witness's credibility to the extent credibility is both in dispute and relevant to evaluating one or more allegations of sex discrimination. The decisionmaker or designee will contact the parties and/or witnesses to offer an opportunity for such questioning.

Determination of Whether Sex Discrimination Occurred:

Following an investigation and evaluation of all relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence, Holliston Public Schools will:

1. Use the preponderance of the evidence standard of proof to determine whether sex discrimination occurred. The standard of proof requires the decisionmaker to evaluate relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence for its persuasiveness. If the decisionmaker is not persuaded under the applicable standard by the evidence that sex

discrimination occurred, whatever the quantity of the evidence is, the decisionmaker will not determine that sex discrimination occurred.

2. Notify the parties in writing of the determination whether sex discrimination occurred under Title IX including the rationale for such determination, and the procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal, if applicable.
3. Not impose discipline on a respondent for sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX unless there is a determination at the conclusion of the grievance procedures that the respondent engaged in prohibited sex discrimination.
4. If there is a determination that sex discrimination occurred, the Title IX Coordinator will, as appropriate:
 - a. Coordinate the provision and implementation of remedies to a complainant and other people Holliston Public Schools identifies as having had equal access to Holliston Public Schools education program or activity limited or denied by sex discrimination;
 - b. Coordinate the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions on a respondent, including notification to the complainant of any such disciplinary sanctions; and
 - c. Take other appropriate prompt and effective steps to ensure that sex discrimination does not continue or recur within the Holliston Public Schools education program or activity.
5. Comply with the grievance procedures before the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions against a respondent; and
6. Not discipline a party, witness, or others participating in the grievance procedures for making a false statement or for engaging in consensual sexual conduct based solely on the determination of whether sex discrimination occurred.

Appeal of Determinations

Holliston Public Schools offers the following process for appeals from a determination of whether sex discrimination occurred. This appeal process will be, at a minimum, the same as Holliston Public Schools offers in all other comparable proceedings, including proceedings relating to other discrimination complaints.

Within a reasonable period of time (but no more than ten business days of receipt of the decision), either party may request an appeal by sending a written request to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will assign an appeal decisionmaker and notify all parties of their right to submit additional information for consideration by the appeal decisionmaker.

Informal Resolution

In lieu of resolving a complaint through Holliston Public Schools's Title IX grievance procedures, the parties may instead elect to participate in an informal resolution process. Holliston Public Schools does not offer an informal resolution to resolve a complaint that includes allegations that an employee engaged in sex-based harassment of an elementary school or secondary school student, or when such a process would conflict with Federal, State, or local law.

Supportive Measures:

Holliston Public Schools will offer and coordinate supportive measures as appropriate for the complainant and/or respondent to restore or preserve that person's access to Holliston Public Schools education program or activity or provide support during Holliston Public Schools Title IX grievance procedures or the informal resolution process. For complaints of sex-based harassment, supportive measures may include one or more of the following:

1. Counseling
2. Extensions of deadlines and other course-related adjustments
3. Campus escort services
4. Increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus
5. Restrictions on contact applied to one or more parties
6. Leaves of absence
7. Changes in class, work, housing, extracurricular, or any other activity, regardless of whether there is or is not a comparable alternative
8. Training and education programs related to sex-based harassment

Disciplinary Sanctions and Remedies:

Following a determination that sex-based harassment occurred, Holliston Public Schools may impose disciplinary sanctions in accordance with its student discipline policies/procedures.

Holliston Public Schools may also provide remedies to restore or preserve a person's access to the recipient's education program or activity.

If you have any questions regarding this information please contact :

Ms. Jessica Beattie
Holliston Public Schools:
Title IX Coordinator
Director of Student Services
(508) 429-0662
beattiej@holliston.k12.ma.us