

Title IX is an extremely important piece of legislation that affects all students in one way or another -- yet many students struggle to understand exactly how this law impacts them. Here are some things you should know about Title IX:

What is Title IX?

“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 of the Education Amendments of 1972

So, what does that mean? Title IX is a federal civil rights law that says it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex and gender at any educational institution that receives federal funding. Any college or university that receives money from the federal government (the vast majority) is legally required to fix any hostile environments where discrimination occurs based on gender or sex, and failure to remedy these situations could mean losing federal funding. Title IX was originally written to protect female athletes in college athletics, but the law also applies to issues of sexual violence, domestic abuse, gender-based harassment, and anything else that would create a hostile environment limiting equal access to education.

Who does Title IX protect?

In short, everyone. Because Title IX aims to keep campuses safe from gender discrimination, it doesn't just apply to undergraduate students, but also faculty, graduate students, staff, and visitors. Furthermore, Title IX doesn't just apply to women, it also protects LGBTQ+ students from discrimination based on their gender identity or sexual orientation.

How does Title IX protect survivors?

[Research](#) has shown, time and time again, that campus sexual assault is a national epidemic. There are a number of barriers that a survivor may face when reporting their assault, including fear of not being believed, worry that they themselves will be in trouble, fear of retribution from their abuser, and more. Based on a [well-documented history](#) of many cases across the country, it is clear that survivors on college campuses face unique difficulties when reporting their abuse. Many of these challenges can be attributed to an overall culture and environment on college campuses that fosters sexual assault, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ students, which is in direct violation of Title IX's requirement that campuses be free from gender discrimination. From allowing repeat abusers to stay enrolled, to mishandling rape investigations, to punishing survivors for coming forward, many college campuses have repeatedly failed to properly handle campus sexual assault. Title IX is the vital protector that makes sure all students are treated equally by their schools when they seek their education.

What exactly does Title IX require?

- Title IX requires that all schools have policies that clearly prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that these policies are publicly available and understood by all members of the campus community.
- Schools must have a Title IX Coordinator whose job it is to oversee the investigation and disciplinary process to make sure that schools are compliant with Title IX protections. This person also monitors for patterns and possible systematic problems at the schools that may contribute to a discriminatory environment.
- If a school becomes aware of sexual assault or harassment that creates a hostile environment, the school must respond immediately to eliminate the abuse and remedy its effects
- Title IX asserts that all survivors have the right to present their case. This means all investigations must be handled promptly, fairly, and reliably, and that all complainants must be notified of the time frame of their case, the outcome, and their options to appeal, if needed.
- Schools must notify complainants of all the options they have in the school's justice system. Schools cannot pressure students into using informal processes like mediation, and in cases of sexual assault, formal processes (ex. Police investigations, legal procedures) must be used.

If you want to learn more about how to support a survivor in an educational environment you can contact the Title IX coordinator. Every federally funded school has a designated Title IX coordinator, but students may alternatively contact the Dean of Students office, campus police, residence life, or counseling services. All campus officials are required to report instances of sexual assault to the Title IX coordinator, so they should have basic information to direct you to the right person. This includes professors, student affairs personnel, other administrators, and staff. The only staff exempt from reporting are religious clergy and counselors. Do you know where to find Title IX information and the sexual assault policy on your campus's website? Call Safe Connections 24-hour Crisis Helpline 312-531-2003 for support and resources.

Outline of Title IX requirements from Department of Education:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/title-ix-rights-201104.html>

10 Facts everyone should know (NSVRC):

<https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/10-facts-everyone-should-know-about-title-ix>

Title IX on College Campuses:

<https://www.knowyourix.org/college-resources/title-ix/>

Statistics:

<https://cultureofrespect.org/sexual-violence/statistics-at-a-glance/>