

EASTERN LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Page 1 of 8

ANTI-HARASSMENT

Relevant Definitions

“School District community” includes students, administrators, teachers, staff and all other school personnel, including Board members, agents, volunteers, contractors or other persons subject to the control and supervision of the Board of Education.

“Third parties” include, but are not limited to, guests and/or visitors on School District property (e.g., visiting speakers, participants on opposing athletic teams, parents), vendors doing business with, or seeking to do business with, the Board, and other individuals who come in contact with members of the School District community at school-related events/activities (whether on or off School District property).

“Sexual Harassment” has the same definition as set forth in the policy of the Board as reflective of the definition set forth in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Ohio Revised Code 4112.02.

Prohibited Behavior

- A. Conduct constituting sexual harassment may take different forms, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. **Verbal:**

The making of offensive written or oral sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions, threats, or propositions toward or by a fellow staff member, student, or other person associated with the District, or third parties.

2. **Nonverbal:**

Causing the placement of offensive sexually suggestive objects, pictures, graphic commentaries, or email in the school environment or the making of offensive sexually suggestive or insulting gestures, sounds, leering, whistling, and the like to or by a fellow staff member, student, or other person associated with the District, or third parties.

3. **Physical Contact:**

Threatening or causing unwanted touching, contact, or attempts at same, including patting, pinching, brushing the body, or coerced sexual activity with or by a fellow staff member, student, or other person associated with the District, or third parties.

B. Conduct constituting harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or disability may take different forms, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. **Verbal:**

The making of offensive written or oral innuendoes, comments, jokes, insults, threats, or disparaging remarks concerning a person's race, color, national origin, religious beliefs, or disability.

2. **Nonverbal:**

Placing offensive objects, pictures, graphic commentaries or email in the School environment or making insulting or threatening gestures based upon a person's race, color, national origin, religious beliefs, or disability.

3. **Physical:**

Any intimidating or disparaging action such as hitting, pushing, shoving, hissing, or spitting on or by a fellow staff member, student, or other person associated with the District, or third parties, based upon the person's race, color, national origin, religious beliefs, or disability.

Anti-Harassment Complaint Coordinators

The following individuals shall serve as "Anti-Harassment Complaint Coordinators" for the School District, hereinafter referred to as the "Complaint Coordinators".

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The Complaint Coordinators will be available during regular school/work hours to discuss concerns related to unlawful harassment, to assist members of the School District community and third parties who seek support or advice when informing another individual about “unwelcome” conduct, or to intercede informally on behalf of the member of the School District community or third party.

Complaint Coordinators are assigned to accept complaints of unlawful harassment directly from any member of the School District community or a visitor to the District, or to receive complaints which are initially filed with a school building administrator. Upon receipt of a complaint either directly or through a school building administrator, the Complaint Coordinator will begin either an informal or formal process (depending on the request of the member of the School District community alleging sexual harassment), or the Complaint Coordinator will designate a specific individual to conduct such a process. In the case of a formal complaint, the Complaint Coordinator will prepare recommendations or will oversee the preparation of such recommendations by a designee. All members of the School District community must report incidents of harassment which are reported to them to the Complaint Coordinator within five (5) calendar days of learning of the incident.

Investigation and Complaint Procedure

Any member of the School District community or third party who believes that s/he has been subjected to unlawful harassment may seek resolution of his/her complaint through either the informal or formal procedures as described below. While there are not time limits for initiating a complaint of harassment, individuals should make every effort to file an informal or a formal complaint as soon as possible after the harassing conduct occurs. Both the informal and formal procedures set forth below are established to provide a prompt and equitable process for resolving complaints of unlawful harassment.

Informal Complaint Procedure

The goal of the informal complaint procedure is to stop inappropriate behavior and to investigate and facilitate resolution through an informal means, if possible. The informal complaint procedure is provided as a less formal option for a member of the School District community or third party who believes s/he has been unlawfully harassed. This informal procedure is not required as a precursor to the filing of a formal complaint.

As an initial course of action, if a member of the School District community or third party feels that s/he is being unlawfully harassed and s/he is able and feels safe doing so, the individual should tell or otherwise inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The complaining individual should address the allegedly harassing conduct as soon after it occurs as possible. The Complaint Coordinator is available to support and counsel individuals when taking this initial step or to intervene on behalf of the individual if requested to do so. An individual who is uncomfortable or unwilling to inform the harasser of his/her complaint is not prohibited from otherwise filing an informal or a formal complaint.

A member of the School District community or third party who believes s/he has been unlawfully harassed may make an informal complaint, either orally or in writing: (1) to a building administrator in the building where the individual is employed; (2) to a building administrator in the building where the student attends; (3) to the Superintendent if the individual is not employed in or attending a specific school building; and/or (4) to the Complaint Coordinator. All informal complaints must be reported to the Complaint Coordinator who will either facilitate an informal resolution as described below on his/her own, or appoint another individual to facilitate an informal resolution.

The School District's informal complaint procedure is designed to provide members of the School District community and third parties who believe they are being unlawfully harassed with a range of options designed to bring about a resolution of their concerns. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the member of the School District community or third party claiming unlawful harassment, informal resolution may involve, but not be limited to, one of more of the following:

- A. Advising the member of the School District community or third party about how to communicate the unwelcome nature of the behavior to the alleged harasser.
- B. Distributing a copy of the Anti-Harassment Policy as a reminder to the individuals in the school building or office where the individual whose behavior is being questioned works or attends.
- C. If both parties agree, the Complaint Coordinator may arrange and facilitate a meeting between the member of the School District community or third

party claiming harassment and the individual accused of harassment to work out a mutual resolution.

While there are no set time limits within which an informal complaint must be resolved, the Complaint Coordinator will exercise his/her authority to attempt to resolve all informal complaints within two (2) weeks of receiving the informal complaint. Those members of the School District community or third parties who are dissatisfied with the results of the informal complaint process may proceed to file a formal complaint.

All materials generated, as part of the informal complaint process will be retained by the Complaint Coordinator in accordance with the Board's records retention policy.

Formal Complaint Procedure

If a complaint is not resolved through the informal complaint process, or if the member of the School District community or third party elects to file a formal complaint initially, the formal complaint process as described below shall be implemented.

A member of the School District community or third party who believes they have been subjected to offensive conduct/harassment hereinafter referred to as the "Complainant", may file a formal complaint, either orally or in writing with the Complaint Coordinator. If a Complainant informs any other employee of the School District, either orally or in writing, about any complaint of harassment, that employee must immediately report such information to the Complaint Coordinator, thereafter the Complaint Coordinator must contact the Complainant to determine whether the Complainant wishes to file a formal or an informal Complaint.

Throughout the course of the process as described herein, the Complaint Coordinator should keep the Complainant informed of the status of the investigation and the decision making process.

All formal complaints must include the following information to the extent it is available: the identity of the individual believed to have engaged in, or be engaging in, offensive conduct/harassment; a detailed description of the facts upon which the complaint is based; a list of potential witnesses; and, identification of the resolution which the Complainant seeks.

If the Complainant is unwilling to provide a written statement including the information set forth above, the Complaint Coordinator shall ask for such details in an oral interview. Thereafter the Complaint Coordinator will prepare a written summary of the oral interview, which will be presented to the Complainant for verification by signature.

Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Complaint Coordinator will consider whether any action should be taken in the investigatory phase to protect the Complainant from further

harassment or retaliation including but not limited to, a change of job assignment or a change of class schedule. In making such a determination, the Complaint Coordinator should consult the Complainant to assess his/her agreement to any action deemed appropriate. If the Complainant is unwilling to consent to any change which is deemed appropriate by the Complaint Coordinator, the Complaint Coordinator may still take whatever actions s/he deem appropriate in consultation with the Superintendent.

Within three (3) business days of receiving a formal complaint, the Complaint Coordinator will inform the individual alleged to have engaged in the harassing conduct, hereinafter referred to as the "Respondent", that a complaint has been received. The Respondent will be informed about the nature of the allegations and a copy of these Administrative Guidelines and the Board Anti-Harassment Policy shall be provided to the Respondent at that time. The Respondent must also be informed of the opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint within five (5) business days.

Within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint, the Complaint Coordinator or a designee will initiate a formal investigation to determine whether the Complainant has been subject to offensive conduct/harassment.

Although certain cases may require additional time, the Complaint Coordinator or a designee will attempt to complete an investigation into the allegations of harassment within twenty-one (21) calendar days of receiving the formal complaint. The investigation will include:

- A. interviews with the Complainant;
- B. interviews with the Respondent;
- C. interviews with any other witnesses who may reasonably be expected to have any information relevant to the allegations;
- D. consideration of any documentation or other evidence presented by the Complainant, Respondent, or any other witness which is reasonably believed to be relevant to the allegations.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Complaint Coordinator or the designee shall prepare and deliver a written report to the Superintendent which summarizes the evidence gathered during the investigation and provides recommendations based on the evidence and the definition of unlawful harassment as provided in Board policy and State and Federal law as to whether the Complainant has been subject to unlawful harassment. The Complaint Coordinator's recommendations must be based upon the totality of the circumstances, including the ages and maturity levels of those involved.

Absent extenuating circumstances, within ten (10) business days of receiving the report of the Complaint Coordinator or the designee, the Complaint Coordinators must either issue a final decision regarding whether or not the complaint of harassment has been substantiated or request further investigation. A copy of the Complaint Coordinators final decision will be delivered to both the Complainant and the Respondent.

If the Complaint Coordinators requests additional investigation, the Complaint Coordinators must specify the additional information that is to be gathered, and such additional investigation must be completed within ten (10) business days. At the conclusion of the additional investigation, the Complaint Coordinators must issue a final written decision as described above.

- A. The decision of the Complaint Coordinators shall be final.
- B. A Complainant or Respondent who is dissatisfied with the final decision of the Complaint Coordinators may appeal to the Board by filing a written notice of appeal with the Superintendent within ten (10) business days of the date of the Complaint Coordinators' final decision.
- C. Upon receipt of a notice of appeal of the final decision of the Complaint Coordinator, the Board shall meet in executive session at its next regularly scheduled meeting, which is scheduled to occur at least ten (10) days after the Superintendent's receipt of the appeal notice, to review the matter. Following the executive session, the Board will affirm or reject the final decision of the Complaint Coordinators. The decision of the Board will be final.

Confidentiality

The School District will make all reasonable efforts to protect the rights of the Complainant and the Respondent. The School District will respect the privacy of the Complainant, the Respondent, and all witnesses in a manner consistent with the School District's legal obligations under State and Federal law. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed however. All Complainants proceeding through the formal investigation process should be advised that their identities may be disclosed to the Respondent.

During the course of a formal investigation, the Complaint Coordinator or his/her designee will instruct all members of the School District community and third parties who are interviewed about the importance of maintaining confidentiality. Any individual who is interviewed as part of a harassment investigation is expected not to disclose any information that s/he learns or that s/he provides during the course of the investigation.

All public records created as a part of an investigation of a complaint of harassment will be maintained by the Complaint Coordinator in accordance with the Board's records retention policy. Any records which are considered student records in accordance with

the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* or under Ohio's student records law will be maintained in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Federal and State law.

Allegations Constituting Criminal Conduct: Child Abuse/Sexual Misconduct

State law requires any school teacher or school employee who knows or suspects that a child with a disability under the age of twenty-one (21) or that a child under the age of eighteen (18) has suffered or faces a threat of suffering a physical or mental wound, disability or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of a child to immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the county children's services agency. If, during the course of a harassment investigation, the Complaint Coordinator or a designee has reason to believe or suspect that the alleged conduct reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the Complainant, a report of such knowledge must be made in accordance with State law and Board Policy.

State law defines certain contact between a teacher and a student as "sexual battery." If the Complaint Coordinator or a designee has reason to believe that the Complainant has been the victim of criminal conduct as defined in Ohio's Criminal Code, such knowledge should be reported to local law enforcement.

Any reports made to a county children's services agency or to local law enforcement shall not terminate the Complaint Coordinator or a designee's obligation and responsibility to continue to investigate a complaint of harassment. While the Complaint Coordinator or a designee may work cooperatively with outside agencies to conduct concurrent investigations, in no event shall the harassment investigation be inhibited by the involvement of outside agencies without good cause after consultation with the Superintendent.