



TITLE IX COORDINATOR'S DUTIES, NOTICE, REPORTING AND GRIEVANCE POLICY

This Policy sets forth ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY's (the School's) Notice, Reporting and Grievance policy for Title IX matters and should be read in conjunction with the School's Title IX policy. This Policy only pertains to Title IX and alleged violations of Title IX. It does not apply to any other type of discrimination, harassment or bullying. Please refer to the School's other policies, including Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy, and student conduct policies when Title IX does not apply.

The School's Title IX Coordinator is:

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A. TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

The designated Title IX Coordinator shall establish training and other programs that are designed to help eliminate unlawful discrimination or harassment and foster an environment of understanding and respect for all members of the school community. Information about this policy and the related complaint procedure must be included in the training plan. The training or programs should:

- (1) provide examples of behavior that constitutes unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- (2) teach employees to identify groups that may be the target of unlawful discrimination, or harassment; and
- (3) train school employees to be alert to locations where such behavior may occur, including locations within school buildings, at school bus stops, on cell phones and on the Internet.

In addition, training of Title IX personnel, including the Title IX Coordinator, Investigator(s) and Decision-maker(s), must include training:

1. On the definition of the definitions of prohibited conduct, including sexual harassment;
1. The scope of the school's education program or activity;
2. How to conduct an investigation;
3. The grievance process including appeals, and informal resolution processes;
4. How to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias;

Board Approved:

5. Relevance, including how to apply the rape shield protections provided only for complainants.

Moreover, training for Title IX personnel, including the Coordinator, Investigator(s), Decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process, must not rely on sex stereotypes and must promote impartial investigations and adjudications of sexual harassment. The School will post materials used to train Title IX personnel on their websites for a minimum of seven (7) years after posted, if any, or make materials available for members of the public to inspect.

B. NOTICE

The designated Title IX Coordinator is responsible for providing effective notice to job applicants, student applicants, students, parents, and employees of the procedures for reporting and investigating complaints of unlawful sex/gender discrimination and harassment. This policy will be posted on the School's website, and copies of the policy are available at the front office. Notice of this policy will appear in all job applicant information, admissions information, student and employee handbooks, and in any School publication that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for students and employees.

C. TITLE IX COORDINATOR

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the overall implementation of Title IX for the SCHOOL and coordinating the institution's compliance with Title IX in all areas covered by the implementing regulations. The major responsibility is the prevention of sexual harassment and discrimination. Other major monitoring duties include, but are not limited to, the following recruitment and admissions, educational programs and activities, hiring and employment. Other areas of consideration include:

- Participating in the development and implementation of the SCHOOL's sexual harassment policy.
- Assisting faculty, counselors and administrators in complying with Title IX, and when a need arises, planning remedial actions.
- Making your presence known in the community by disseminating civil rights information or by speaking at parent-teacher group meetings, social or professional organization meetings, and other community functions.
- Serving as a resource on Title IX/gender issues.
- Monitoring and evaluating the SCHOOL's Title IX compliance efforts and making recommendations for any appropriate changes.
- Providing updated information to schools on Title IX implementation and issues.
- Identifying and disseminating information about Title IX educational resources (organizations, individuals, print, internet, and audio-visual)

D. EVALUATION

The Head of School or designee shall evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to correct or prevent unlawful sex/gender discrimination and harassment and shall share these evaluations periodically with the School's Board.

E. CONFIDENTIALITY

The recipient, whether a School employee, staff member, contractor, or the Title IX Coordinator, must keep confidential the identity of any individual who has made a report or complaint of sex discrimination, including any individual who has made a report or filed a formal complaint of sexual harassment, any complainant, any individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of sex discrimination, any respondent, and any witness, except as may be permitted by the FERPA or as required by law, or to carry out the purposes of Title IX, including the conduct of any investigation, hearing, or judicial proceeding arising thereunder. Complaints alleging retaliation may be filed according to the Title IX grievance procedures.

The Title IX Coordinator shall maintain confidential records of complaints or reports of unlawful discrimination or harassment. The records will identify the names of all individuals accused of such offenses and the resolution of such complaints or reports. The Title IX Coordinator also shall maintain records of training conducted and corrective action(s) or other steps taken by the School to provide an environment free of unlawful discrimination or harassment. The Head of School shall report to the Board all verified cases of unlawful discrimination or harassment under the School's Title IX Policy.

F. REPORTING TITLE IX VIOLATIONS

1. For Students:

- a. To report discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment/misconduct based on sex/gender, students or their parents should contact a trusted teacher or advisor, grade-level Principal, Head of School and/or Title IX coordinator immediately and file a complaint.
- b. Employees are required to report any actual or suspected violations of this policy. When anyone reports harassment and/or discrimination to a school employee, that employee shall notify the Title IX Coordinator, grade-level Principal, or Head of School, as soon as possible and within 24 hours.
- c. If the Head of School is involved in the allegation, then another administrator will immediately inform the Chair of the Board of Directors.

2. For Employees: for discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment complaints based on sex/gender, employees should contact the Title IX coordinator immediately and follow the

School's harassment and discrimination policy as well as its Title IX Reporting and Grievance policy.

3. Students, parents, volunteers, visitors or others are also strongly encouraged to report any actual or suspected incidents of discrimination or harassment based on sex/gender under this policy. Reports may be made anonymously, and all reports shall be investigated in accordance with that policy.

4. Any person may report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment (whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sex discrimination or sexual harassment), in person, by mail, by telephone, or by e-mail, using the contact information listed for the Title IX Coordinator, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's verbal or written report.

5. Reporting may be made at any time, including during non-business hours, by using the telephone number or e-mail address, or by mail to the office address, listed for the Title IX Coordinator.

G. DEFINITIONS

As used in this and all other Title IX related policies, the following definitions shall apply.

1. "Complainant" is as an individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment. This means that any third party as well as the complainant may report sexual harassment. While parents and guardians do not become complainants (or respondents), parents and guardians have a right to act on behalf of parties (including by filing formal complaints) in Title IX matters.
2. "Respondent" is as an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.
 1. "Formal complaint" is as a document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting that the school investigate the allegation of sexual harassment and state that at the time of filing a formal complaint, a complainant was participating in or attempting to participate in the education program or activity of the School with which the formal complaint is filed. A formal complaint may be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, or by electronic mail, by using the contact information required to be listed for the Title IX Coordinator, and by any additional method designated by the school.
 2. "Document filed by a complainant" means a document or electronic submission (such as by e-mail or through an online portal provided for this purpose by the school) that contains the complainant's physical or digital signature, or otherwise indicates that the

complainant is the person filing the formal complaint. Where the Title IX Coordinator signs a formal complaint, the Title IX Coordinator is not a complainant or a party during a grievance process, and must comply with requirements for Title IX personnel to be free from conflicts and bias.

3. “Supportive measures” are individualized services reasonably available that are non-punitive, non-disciplinary, and not unreasonably burdensome to the other party while designed to ensure equal educational access, protect safety, or deter sexual harassment. The School’s selection of supportive measures and remedies shall be based on what is not clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances.

H. MANDATORY RESPONSE AND PROCEDURAL OBLIGATIONS

The School is required to respond whenever any employee has notice of sexual harassment, including allegations of sexual harassment or allegations relevant to mandatory reporting laws in North Carolina. Notice to the Title IX Coordinator or to any School employee, board member, or official with authority to institute corrective measures on the School’s behalf, charges the School with actual knowledge and triggers the School’s response obligations under Title IX.

The School will respond promptly to Title IX sexual harassment or discrimination in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent, which means a response that is not clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances. The School shall also comply with the following mandates:

1. The School will offer supportive measures to the person alleged to be the victim (referred to as the “complainant”).
2. The Title IX Coordinator will promptly contact the complainant confidentially to discuss the availability of supportive measures, consider the complainant’s wishes with respect to supportive measures, inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a formal complaint, and explain to the complainant the process for filing a formal complaint.
 1. The School will follow the grievance process set forth herein before the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions or other actions that are not supportive measures, against a respondent.
 2. The School will not restrict rights protected under the U.S. Constitution, including the First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, and Fourteenth Amendment, when complying with Title IX.
 3. The School will investigate sexual harassment allegations in any formal complaint, which can be filed by a complainant, or signed by a Title IX Coordinator.
 4. A complainant’s wishes with respect to whether the school investigates should be respected unless the school determines that not pursuing an investigation would be deliberately indifferent (or that pursuing an investigation is necessary for community safety or similar reasons), in which case the Title IX Coordinator may sign complaint even if the

complainant does not file a formal complaint (doing so will not be viewed as adversarial toward the respondent).

5. If the allegations in a formal complaint do not meet the definition of sexual harassment as defined in the School's Title IX policy, or the alleged conduct did not occur in the School's education program or activity, against a person in the United States, the School must dismiss such allegations for purposes of Title IX. However, the School may still address the allegations in any manner the School deems appropriate under the School's code of conduct or other policies.

6. Treat complainants equitably by providing remedies any time a respondent is found responsible, and treat respondents equitably by not imposing disciplinary sanctions without following the grievance process set forth herein.

7. Remedies, which are required to be provided to a complainant when a respondent is found responsible, must be designed to maintain the complainant's equal access to education and may include supportive measures; however, remedies need not be non-disciplinary or non-punitive and need not avoid burdening the respondent.

8. All Title IX personnel (Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, people who facilitate any informal resolution process) shall be free from conflicts of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents.

9. There is a presumption that the respondent is not responsible for the alleged conduct until a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process.

10. The School's grievance process shall not use, rely on, or seek disclosure of information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless the person holding such privilege has waived the privilege.

11. Any provisions, rules, or practices that a school adopts as part of its grievance process for handling formal complaints of sexual harassment must apply equally to both parties (complainant and respondent).

12. The standard of evidence to determine responsibility is the preponderance of the evidence standard for all formal complaints of sexual harassment, whether the respondent is a student or an employee (including faculty member).

I. SUPPORTIVE MEASURES, REMEDIES AND DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

Supportive measures include: services, accommodations, and/or other assistance that the School puts in place for a complainant after receiving notice of alleged sexual misconduct but before any final outcomes – investigatory, disciplinary, or remedial – have been determined. The School wants students and employees to be safe, to receive appropriate medical attention, and to get the help they need to heal and to continue to access their educational opportunities. We also want students and employees to understand their reporting options and how to access available interim measures.

Upon receiving a report of sexual harassment, the School will provide the complainant, or their advocate, with a written explanation of the interim measures available at School and through local community resources [insert name of local resources] and shall ask complainants, or their advocates, what measures are sought. Some possible interim measures are listed below, and the School determines which measures are appropriate for a particular complainant on a case-by-case basis. Not all of the measures listed below will be necessary in every case to keep victims safe and ensure their equal access to educational programs and activities. If the complainant or advocate identifies an interim measure that is not already provided by the School, the School will consider whether the request can be granted. In those instances where interim measures affect both a complainant and the respondent, the School will minimize the burden on the complainant wherever appropriate while ensuring that the measures are non-disciplinary and non-punitive prior to reaching a determination regarding responsibility.

A complainant or their advocate may request the interim measures listed below. The School – after consulting with the complainant and/or their advocate – will determine which measures are appropriate to ensure the complainant’s safety and equal access to educational programs and activities:

- Academic accommodations, including change in classes, testing, or assignments;
- Medical and mental health services, including counseling;
- Modifications to extracurricular activities, field trips or on or off-campus activities;
- A “no contact” directive pending the outcome of an investigation. Such a directive serves as notice to both parties that they must not have verbal, electronic, written, or third party communication with one another;
- Providing an escort to ensure that the student can move safely between school programs and activities;
- Transportation accommodations; and
- Assistance identifying an advocate to help secure additional resources or assistance including off-campus and community advocacy, support, and services.

Remedies Include:

Depending on the specific nature of the problem, remedies for the complainant may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing an effective escort to ensure that the complainant can move safely between classes and activities;
- Ensuring the complainant and perpetrator do not share classes or extracurricular activities;
- Moving the perpetrator or complainant (if the complainant requests to be moved) to a different residence hall or, in the case of an elementary or secondary school student, to another school within the district;
- Providing comprehensive, holistic victim services including medical, counseling and academic support services, such as tutoring;

- Arranging for the complainant to have extra time to complete or re-take a class or withdraw from a class without an academic or financial penalty; and
- Reviewing any disciplinary actions taken against the complainant to see if there is a causal connection between the sexual violence and the misconduct that may have resulted in the complainant being disciplined.

When a respondent is found responsible for sexual harassment, the School will offer all remedies needed to eliminate the harm to the complainant and the school community and prevent the recurrence of sexual harassment. Simply sanctioning a respondent found responsible, in some cases, may be insufficient to eliminate a hostile environment. Rather, in addition to sanctions, the School may consider offering appropriate remedies for the broader student/staff population after the final outcome, including the following:

- Training or retraining school employees on the school's responsibilities to address allegations of sexual violence and how to conduct Title IX investigations;
- Developing materials on sexual harassment, which should be distributed to all staff and students;
- Conducting bystander intervention and sexual harassment prevention programs with students and/or staff;
- Issuing policy statements or taking other steps that clearly communicate that the school does not tolerate sexual harassment and will respond to any incidents and to any student who reports such incidents;
- Conducting, in conjunction with student leaders, a School climate check to assess the effectiveness of efforts to ensure that the school is free from sexual violence, and using that information to inform future proactive steps that the school will take;
- Targeted training for a group of students if, for example, the sexual harassment created a hostile environment (i.e., on an athletic team);
- When a school is unable to conduct a full investigation into a particular incident (i.e., when it received a general report of sexual violence without any personally identifying information), it should consider remedies for the broader student population in response.

Disciplinary sanctions include:

- For Students found responsible: verbal warning, written warning, interim suspension, restitution, suspension, required participation in appropriate training, counseling, required completion of a probationary period without additional infractions, or requiring the respondent to stay away from the complainant for a period of time.
- For Employees found responsible: sanctions for violations of Title IX vary depending on severity from formal written warning to dismissal.

J. INVESTIGATIONS

The School shall investigate the allegations in any formal complaint and send written notice to both parties (complainants and respondents) of the allegations upon receipt of a formal complaint.

The School, through the Title IX Coordinator or other authorized School official, shall designate an impartial individual to serve as the Investigator and conduct an investigation. The Investigator may be the Title IX Coordinator. However, the Investigator shall not be someone with a conflict of interest or bias. The School may choose an outside investigator, School employee or contractor to conduct the investigation. During the grievance process and when investigating, the Investigator shall comply with the following:

1. The burden of gathering evidence and burden of proof must remain on the School, not on the parties.
2. The School must provide equal opportunity for the parties to present fact and expert witnesses and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence.
3. The School must not restrict the ability of the parties to discuss the allegations or gather evidence (e.g., no “gag orders”).
4. Parties must have the same opportunity to select an advisor of the party’s choice who may be, but need not be, an attorney.
5. The School shall send a written notice to the parties (complainant and respondent) of any investigative interviews, meetings, or hearings.
6. The School shall send the parties, and their advisors, evidence directly related to the allegations, in electronic format or hard copy, with at least 10 days for the parties to inspect, review, and respond to the evidence.
7. The School shall send the parties, and their advisors, an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence, in electronic format or hard copy, with at least 10 days for the parties to respond.
8. The School shall dismiss allegations of conduct that do not meet the definition of sexual harassment set forth in the School’s Title IX policy or did not occur in a school’s education program or activity against a person in the U.S. Such dismissal is only for Title IX purposes and does not preclude the School from addressing the conduct in any manner the school deems appropriate.
9. The School may, in its discretion, dismiss a formal complaint or allegations therein if the complainant informs the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the complainant desires to withdraw the formal complaint or allegations therein, if the respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the school, or if specific circumstances prevent the school from gathering sufficient evidence to reach a determination.
10. The School shall give the parties written notice of a dismissal (mandatory or discretionary) and the reasons for the dismissal.
11. The School may, in its discretion, consolidate formal complaints where the allegations arise out of the same facts.

12. The School shall protect the privacy of a party's medical, psychological, and similar treatment records and shall not access or use such records unless the School obtains the party's voluntary, written consent to do so.

K. DECISION-MAKER

The School, through the Title IX Coordinator or other authorized School official, shall designate a Decision-maker with regard to a Title IX complaint. The Decision-maker shall not be the Title IX Coordinator or Investigator, and shall not be someone with a conflict of interest or bias. The Decision-maker shall comply with the following rules:

1. Start with the presumption that the respondent is not responsible for the alleged conduct until a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process.
2. All Complainants are afforded rape shield protections, deeming questions and evidence about a complainant's prior sexual behavior irrelevant, unless offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged misconduct or offered to prove consent.
3. Use the preponderance of the evidence standard in reaching her/his decision.
4. Require objective evaluation of all relevant evidence, inculpatory and exculpatory, and avoid credibility determinations based on a person's status as a complainant, respondent, or witness.
5. After sending the investigative report to the parties and before reaching a determination regarding responsibility, the decision-maker(s) must afford each party the opportunity to submit written, relevant questions that a party wants asked of any party or witness, provide each party with the answers, and allow for additional, limited follow-up questions from each party.
6. Issue a written determination regarding responsibility with findings of fact, conclusions about whether the alleged conduct occurred, rationale for the result as to each allegation, any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent, and whether remedies will be provided to the complainant.
7. The written determination must be sent simultaneously to the parties along with information about how to file an appeal.

L. GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Prompt Filing. The Complainant must file a formal complaint within a reasonable time, ideally within 10 days of the alleged incident. A complaint will not be disallowed solely because of the passage of time. The Title IX coordinator is charged with ensuring that all such complaints are timely, impartially, and appropriately investigated in accordance with applicable law.

Confidentiality. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of the complainant. There may be times where confidentiality may not be possible for the School to conduct a

thorough investigation. There may also be instances where the School has a legal obligation to report certain information it receives to state or local authorities or to protect the School community.

Timeline. While the timeframe for completing an investigation into individual complaints may vary depending on the circumstances, the Title IX coordinator will ensure that timeframes are reasonable and endeavor to complete any investigation, including any decision, within sixty (60) days of the filing of a complaint. The timeline may be extended where appropriate at the discretion of the School. Include reasonably prompt time frames for conclusion of the grievance process, including appeals and informal resolutions, with allowance for short-term, good cause delays or extensions of the time frames.

Investigation. The Title IX coordinator or other School official shall designate an impartial Investigator to conduct the investigation. The Investigator shall have full authority to investigate, including the authority to interview witnesses. The Investigator shall follow the guidance/mandates set forth above in this policy in conducting the investigation.

Decision-Maker. The Decision-maker shall follow the guidance/mandates set forth above in this policy and shall use the preponderance of the evidence standard in reaching her/his decision. The Decision-maker shall timely provide written notice of the outcome of the complaint to the relevant parties.

Appeal. Either party may appeal the Decision-maker's decision to the Board of Directors within 14 days after a decision is made or the School dismisses a formal complaint in a Title IX proceeding, on the following bases:

1. Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter,
2. Newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the matter, and/or
1. Title IX personnel had a conflict of interest or bias, that affected the outcome of the matter.

The Board of Directors will appoint a panel of three board members to serve as the impartial review panel. The review will be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws and the panel may, but is not required to, request information directly from the parties. The three-member review panel will make a decision and will provide written notice of the outcome of the appeal to the parties within fourteen (14) school days, unless circumstances require more time.

M. INFORMAL RESOLUTION PROCESS FOR STUDENTS

After a formal Complaint is filed, the School may, in its discretion, offer and facilitate informal resolution options, such as mediation or restorative justice, so long as both parties give voluntary, informed, written consent to attempt informal resolution. The School will not require participation in an informal process. And, at any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process and resume the grievance process with respect to the formal complaint.

The School does not require as a condition of enrollment or continuing enrollment, or employment or continuing employment, or enjoyment of any other right, waiver of the right to a formal investigation and adjudication of formal complaints of sexual harassment. Any person who facilitates an informal resolution must be well-trained. The School will not offer or facilitate an informal resolution process to resolve allegations that an employee sexually harassed a student. Finally, the School may not offer an informal resolution process unless a formal complaint is filed.

N. POLICY APPLICATION

This policy shall remain in effect as long as required by law.