

DEAR STUDENTS:

DO YOU KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AGAINST SEX-BASED HARASSMENT?

National Center
for Youth Law



Stop Sexual Assault
in Schools



**As you head back to school,
here is what you can do if you
or someone you know has experienced
sex-based harassment.**



Understanding Title IX in the Current Political Climate

created 9/2026

Whether you're starting at a new school or returning to one you know, **you have the right to learn, participate, and take part in school activities** without sex-based harassment.

But what happens if you are sexually harassed or assaulted? Who can you tell? What can you ask your school to do? And what if your school doesn't respond?

[Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#) (often referred to as "Title IX") is a federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, against students (and other people, including employees, contractors, applicants, and guests) at a school that receives federal money.

You are still protected from sex-based harassment under Title IX, but the federal government's ability to protect your rights under Title IX has been significantly weakened. That makes it especially important for students and families to know their rights, understand their options, and learn how to respond when schools fail to address sex-based harassment and violence.

Regardless of what is happening at the federal level, **you also have rights under local and state laws**—and you still have many individuals and organizations that are ready to support you.

This guide includes information that will help you know what to do if you or classmates have been harassed or have faced other sex-based discrimination. You will find links to many resources, including the [StateofStudentRights.com](https://www.stateofstudentrights.com), where you can select your state to find out: (1) what your state laws do to protect students from sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination; (2) how to file a claim with a state agency or court to protect your rights; (3) what kinds of confidentiality protections are available to students who file claims; (4) and the names and contact information for organizations that can support you during this time—regardless of whether you decide to file a claim.



What to Know: Be Prepared

In situations involving sex-based harassment, **all students** should have or know where to access the following information:

1.

YOUR SCHOOL'S AND YOUR DISTRICT'S POLICIES

PROTECTING STUDENTS FROM DISCRIMINATION:

These policies should make clear that schools are not allowed to discriminate based on sex and include a policy against sex-based harassment, as well as the steps for reporting sexual harassment.

- Student & Parent Handbooks (most common): Usually given out at the beginning of the school year or posted on each school's website under sections like "Handbook," "Policies," "Family Resources," or "Student Services."
- School District Websites: Most districts have a dedicated policy or compliance section that may include "Title IX" or "Civil Rights/Nondiscrimination."
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policies and Procedures: Some schools and districts may include information about how to report harassment and get support under "anti-bullying" information.

2.

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE TITLE IX COORDINATOR:

Your school district must have a dedicated employee called a "Title IX Coordinator" or "Compliance Officer," whose name and contact information should be on the school district's website. There may also be a Title IX Coordinator for your individual school, and their contact information may be on the school's website. If you can't find the Title IX Coordinator's information online, ask a teacher or a school administrator if they can share it with you.

3.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS TARGETED FOR DISCRIMINATION:

If you feel like you're being discriminated against (in other words, treated differently or worse) because of your sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics (like intersex traits), and pregnancy or related conditions (including termination of pregnancy), or other characteristics you may have, keep a record of incidents as they happen. This can just be notes that you write down or type up on your phone after the incident and should include dates, times, names, and locations. Your notes should also include whether you reported the incident to someone at your school, who you reported it to, and what the person you reported to said.

Write down and keep receipts for any money you have spent because of the harassment you experienced, including things like additional doctor's appointments or counseling.

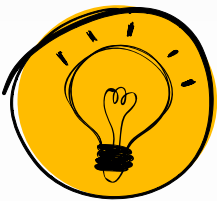
How Sex-Based Harassment May Play Out *IRL*

Here are situations students may face in real life—and some of your options if you find yourself experiencing something similar to one of these examples:

WHEN DEEPPFAKE IMAGES ARE SHARED

Maya, a high school junior, discovers that a student created sexually explicit deepfake images of her that are being shared with other students. She reports what is happening to school staff, but the bullying and harassment continue for months. Her family believes the school did not act quickly or effectively enough to stop the harassment. Maya no longer feels safe at school and leaves to finish high school elsewhere.

Sexually explicit deepfakes and nonconsensual image-sharing are forms of sex-based harassment. Students have the right to have reports of sexualized digital harassment taken seriously by schools. When responding, schools should consider the digital-image abuse, the effect on the targeted student's access to education, and the support needed to help the student remain safe and continue learning.



Learn more:

- [Let's Talk About Deepfake Harm](#)
- [Supportive Measures for Students Experiencing Sexual Harassment and Harm](#)
- [Investigating What Happens When a Student Reports Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Limits to Confidentiality When Reporting Sexual Harassment](#)

Learn about your legal options, including how to file a report under state or local law and find organizations that can help you throughout this process or provide you with additional support during this time, if you decide not to file a report, at [StateofStudentRights.com](https://www.stateofstudentrights.com).

AFRAID TO REPORT?

Rita was sexually assaulted in an unsupervised area of the school by an older student. The older student also made threats about what would happen if she reported the assault. Like many students, Rita did not report the assault because she was worried about the threats and assumed school staff would ignore her or that she would not be believed and face judgment, blame, or retaliation.

Students in Rita's situation should find out how their school receives reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault, who they can report to, whether confidential reporting is available, and what happens after making a report. They can also ask about protections against retaliation.



Learn about your school's reporting and grievance procedures in:

- [Investigating What Happens When a Student Reports Sexual Harassment](#)

Find out what the school's Title IX Coordinator does in:

- [How to Gather Information About a School District's Title IX Policies](#)

Read about confidential reporting in:

- [Limits to Confidentiality When Reporting Sexual Harassment](#)

Sexual assault is also a form of unlawful discrimination.

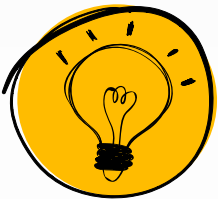
Learn about how to file a discrimination claim under state law and find organizations that can help you understand your rights and how to enforce them at the [**StateofStudentRights.com**](https://StateofStudentRights.com).

WHEN YOU'RE TARGETED FOR YOUR

SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY

Jamie identifies as a member of the LGBTQI+ community. At his high school, he faces repeated homophobic slurs, verbal threats, and physical harm because of his sexual orientation. School staff ignore the harassment, even though it happens right in front of them. Because Jamie feels unsafe, his parents decide to take him out of school.

LGBTQI+ students have the right to attend school free from harassment and discrimination. A [national survey](#) found that most LGBTQI+ students who had considered dropping out identified a hostile school climate as their reason. Schools should have policies and procedures for preventing and responding to anti-LGBTQI+ harassment and bullying, including verbal abuse, threats, and physical violence. If the school is not doing enough to stop the harassment, you can write a complaint to the principal and school district, ask for a safety plan, and keep a record of when the harassment happens.



Find out how LGBTQI+ students are impacted by sexual harassment in:

- Glisten's [The 2025 National School Climate Survey: School experiences of LGBTQ+ Youth in the U.S.](#)
- [Supporting LGBTQ+ Students](#)

Advocate for change with:

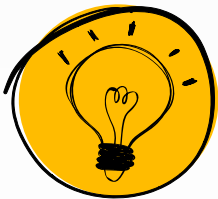
- [Supportive Measures for Students Experiencing Sexual Harassment and Harm](#)

Learn about how your state protects the civil rights of LGBTQI+ students and how to connect with organizations in your state that can help enforce their rights at the [StateofStudentRights.com](#).

WHEN SEX-BASED HARASSMENT HAPPENS OFF CAMPUS

Isabel is a high school student who was sexually assaulted in her home by a classmate. She sees the offender frequently on campus, where he makes disrespectful comments and gestures. He also harasses Isabel and her friends on social media. The school tells Isabel and her parents that because the assault occurred off campus, it will not conduct a Title IX investigation.

The fact that an assault happened off campus does not necessarily mean the school has no responsibility to respond. When harassment continues at school or affects a student's ability to participate in school, students and families can ask the school what it can and must do to address the situation.



Learn more:

- [Protecting Students When Federal Protections Fall Short](#)
- [Ten Things You Can Do When a Title IX Complaint Fails](#)

Learn about state and local laws that protect students from discrimination and the organizations that can help defend your rights at the [StateofStudentRights.com](https://www.stateofstudentrights.com).



WHEN STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Tara is a middle school student who is on the autism spectrum. A male student in Tara's math class is constantly touching her in a sexual manner without her consent. Tara has told her teacher about the touching four times. Each time, the teacher dismisses her concerns, saying, "Ignore him, he just likes you."

Students with disabilities often face barriers when they experience sexual harassment. They may have difficulty communicating what happened, reporting it, or being believed when they do report. Students with disabilities have legal protections against discrimination and sexual harassment.



Learn about the rights of students with disabilities in this toolkit:

- [Sexual Harassment and Assault of Students with Disabilities](#)

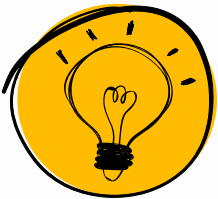
Learn about how your state protects the civil rights of students with disabilities and how to connect with organizations that can help you enforce your rights by selecting your state on the map at the

StateofStudentRights.com.

WORRIED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS AFTER REPORTING?

Rosa was sexually assaulted after school in an empty classroom by another student. She's afraid to tell anyone. She has heard that if she tells a teacher, principal, or counselor, they may have to share information with others, including child protective services or police. Rosa was born in the United States, but some of her family members are undocumented. She worries that reporting could affect her family and doesn't know where to get help.

If you're unsure about what could happen if you "disclose" (report about your own assault), ask questions before deciding on next steps. You can speak with a trusted adult, sexual assault response [provider](#), or victim advocate. Ask questions using hypotheticals like "this happened to my friend," without providing your identifying information. Before sharing details, you can ask: "What happens when my friend reports?" and "Who will be told if she shares about the assault?" You may also want to ask if the adult is a "mandated reporter," someone who is legally required to report certain instances of assault, abuse, or neglect to government agencies. Reporting laws and privacy protections vary by state, the role of the adult receiving the disclosure, and the situation.



Read more:

- [Limits to Confidentiality When Reporting Sexual Harassment](#)

Watch:

- [A student survivor talks with a victim advocate about confidentiality and mandatory reporting](#)

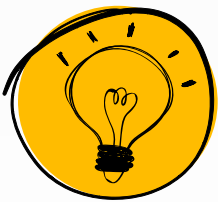
Learn about state and local laws that protect students from discrimination and the organizations that can help defend your rights at the [StateofStudentRights.com](#).



ASKING FOR SUPPORT

Alicia, a middle school student, was sexually assaulted on the school athletic field by an older student she had been seeing. The school's investigation was inadequate, and Alicia didn't want to return to school because the offender remained in one of her classes.

You don't have to wait for an investigation—or have an investigation at all—to ask your school for help. Regardless of whether there is an investigation, your school is required to provide you with “supportive measures.” Supportive measures are free, individualized services and adjustments that may help you stay safe and continue participating in school after you have experienced sex-based harassment. They can include changes designed to help you avoid contact with the person who harmed you, like rearranging that student's schedule to be in a different class.



Learn more about supportive measures in this toolkit:

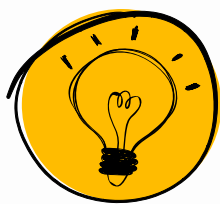
- [Supportive Measures for Students Experiencing Sexual Harassment and Harm](#)
- If your school fails to provide you with supportive measures, you may also be able to get help from state agencies that protect student civil rights.

Learn about organizations that can help you file a claim and the state laws that protect students and provide support at StateofStudentRights.com.

TARGETED FOR GENDER STEREOTYPES

Liam identifies as straight but is often teased for being “too feminine” and “not a real man.” Other students call him gay, even though he has told them he isn’t. He worries whether the school will take the harassment seriously because the students are targeting him based on what they assume about him and other gender stereotypes. The harassment becomes so frequent that Liam starts missing school.

Male students can be harassed because of what others assume about their sexual orientation or gender identity or because they don’t conform to gender stereotypes. When students are harassed based on gender stereotypes, the school should take the harassment seriously, look into what is happening, and take steps to stop it. Find out if your school has a harassment, intimidation, and bullying policy. Talk to a trusted adult at school, keep track of incidents, and save messages or screenshots of online harassment. Joining or [forming a Genders & Sexualities Alliance \(GSA\)](#), [healthy masculinity club](#), [SASH Club \(Students Against Sexual Harassment\)](#), or similar clubs can help you connect with supportive students who can raise awareness and advocate for ending gender bias.



Read:

- [Creating Safe and Respectful Schools: Addressing Misogyny and Gender Bias](#)

Find out how schools can address gender bias and how students can help create a positive school climate:

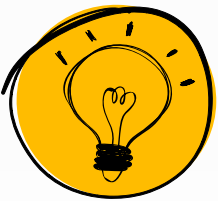
- [Misogyny and Male Supremacy: It’s Not Just a Joke](#)



WHEN A TEACHER CROSSES THE LINE

Chloe was surprised when her popular science teacher gave her his phone number. He commented that he liked the way she looked in shorts. He began texting her flirtatious messages and soon started calling her at home at night. At school, he didn't hide his interest in her. The school did nothing, despite concerns other teachers had raised to the principal.

Schools should have clear policies defining inappropriate student-staff conduct and procedures for anyone to report, including appropriate anonymous or confidential reporting options.



Read this presentation:

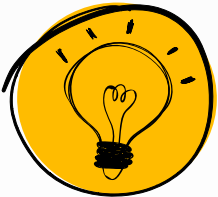
- [Sexual Misconduct by School Employees](#) to learn about school staff sexual misconduct and what to do about it. Sexual harassment and sexual assault are also forms of unlawful discrimination.

Learn about how to file a case under state law and find organizations that can help you understand your rights and how to enforce them at the [StateofStudentRights.com](https://www.stateofstudentrights.com).

SPEAKING UP ABOUT SEXISM AND SEX-BASED HARASSMENT

Every day, Noah hears boys disrespecting girls at his school. They talk over girls in class, comment on their clothing and bodies, and make crude sexual jokes. Noah isn't sure this behavior counts as sexual harassment. He wants to stand up for his friends but worries that it will embarrass someone, start an argument, or make things worse.

Students should know what sexual harassment looks like and how to report it. Teachers and staff should also be prepared to respond when they see sexual harassment, sexism, and gender bias.



Read this presentation:

- [Sexual Harassment Defined and Its Impact on Students](#)

Read these toolkits:

- [Teachers and Staff Can Protect Students From Sexual Harassment](#)
- [What to Say When You See Sexism](#)
- [How to Address Sexual Harassment and Assault with Children](#)
- [Creating Safe and Respectful Schools: Addressing Misogyny and Gender Bias](#)

Learn about organizations in your state that share a commitment to protecting girls and all students from discrimination at the [StateofStudentRights.com](#).

Additional Resources

Be proactive

- [Parents: You Can Become the Agent of Change for Title IX Policies in Your Schools](#)
- [How to Gather Information About a School District's Title IX Policies](#)
- [Investigating What Happens When a Student Reports Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Creating Safe and Respectful Schools: Addressing Misogyny and Gender Bias](#)
- [Sexual Harassment and Assault of Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Teachers and Staff Can Protect Students From Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Educate with Youth Info-Zines](#)

Reporting harassment and filing complaints

- [The State of Civil Rights for Students and Schools](#)
- [Supportive Measures for Students Experiencing Sexual Harassment and Harm](#)
- [FAQs on Title IX and Supportive Measures for K-12 Students](#)
- [Ten Things You Can Do When a Title IX Complaint Fails](#)
- [Limits to Confidentiality When Reporting Sexual Harassment](#)

Talk about it

- [How to Address Sexual Harassment and Assault with Children](#)
- [What to Say When You See Sexism](#)

Basic education for youth

- [Sexual Harassment Defined and Its Impact on Students](#)
- [Sex-Based Harassment of Students: The Basics](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct by School Employees](#)
- [Misogyny and Male Supremacy: It's Not Just a Joke](#)
- [Sexual Harassment and Assault Happen to Males Too](#)
- [Teen Dating Violence](#)
- [Title IX Basics](#)
- [Sexual Harassment and Assault of Students With Disabilities](#)
- [Sexual Harassment and Students of Color](#)
- [Can Dress Codes Harm Students?](#)
- [How to Reform or Abolish School Dress Codes](#)
- Additional resources on the Stop Sexual Assault in Schools "Toolkits" webpage: <https://stopsexualassaultinschools.org/toolkits/>

Understanding Title IX in the current political climate

- [How Schools Can Take Steps to Effectively Address Sexual Harassment While Complying with the Trump Title IX Rule](#)
- [Students Still Have Title IX Rights Even Without the 2024 Biden Title IX Rule](#)

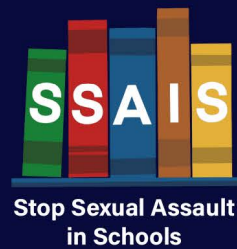
Videos

- [Sexual Harassment Not in Our School!](#)
- [Sexual Harassment: Not in Our School! Part 2: Teen Rape Victim Gets Confidential Help](#)
- [High School Rape Victim Gets Help](#)

Websites

- National Center for Youth Law ([NCYL](#))
- Stop Sexual Assault in Schools ([SSAIS](#))
- Students Against Sexual Harassment ([SASH Club](#))
- [Glisten](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)

National Center
for Youth Law



YOUTHLAW.ORG

STOPSEXUALASSAULTINSCHOOLS.ORG