

Stop Sexual Assault in Schools (SSAIS.org) asked Dr. Sue Klein, Feminist Majority Foundation's Education Equality Director, for suggestions on how families can ensure that students' Title IX rights are upheld.

- How can families advocate for proper training of the Title IX coordinator?
- How should families reach out to the Title IX coordinator when there have been Title IX violations?
- Should families demand Title IX compliance as a part of their Parent –Teacher organizations?

## **How Families Can Obtain Help from Title IX Gender Equity Coordinators in their Communities?**

### **What is Title IX?**

Title IX—the landmark federal legislation mandating gender equity in education passed by Congress in 1972—says "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 prohibits sex discrimination against students and employees in all levels of education at all institutions with education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. It covers all aspects of education from athletics to academics, and prohibits discrimination in facilities, benefits, opportunities, career guidance, school climate, sexual assault, testing, discipline, and much more.

### **Who are Title IX Gender Equity Coordinators?**

The 1975 Title IX Regulations specified that each organizational recipient of federal financial assistance is required to "designate at least one employee to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out Title IX responsibilities" and "to make the Coordinators' names and contact information public." The US Department of Education (ED) is taking more responsibility to implement this Title IX Coordinator requirement. In April 2015 its Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued guidance on Title IX Coordinators important roles and responsibilities. This guidance not only recommended that the Title IX Coordinators be adequately supported by their school but that they take a proactive role in preventing sex discrimination. They should also make sure that the Title IX Coordinators' contact information is posted on their institution's web sites.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, ED promised to provide public contact information on K-12 School District and Postsecondary Education Title IX Coordinators in 2016. Equity organizations such as FMF and

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<sup>1</sup> This OCR guidance is found in a letter to school district superintendents or college presidents <http://www.feminist.org/education/pdfs/colleague-201504-title-ix-coordinators.pdf>, a second letter to Title IX Coordinators <http://www.feminist.org/education/pdfs/dcl-title-ix-coordinators-letter-201504.pdf>, and a *Title IX Resource Guide* <http://www.feminist.org/education/pdfs/dcl-title-ix-coordinators-guide-201504.pdf>. These documents are also available on <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>.

the American Association of University Women (AAUW) are also identifying and posting information on Title IX Coordinators at the State Education Agency Level and in K-12 public schools. If each of the 97,000 public schools, 16,000 K-12 school districts, and 7,000 postsecondary institutions had a well-qualified, proactive Title IX Coordinator, there would be over 100,000 gender equity leaders. They will be increasingly effective as they are supported by a Title IX infrastructure composed of vertical and horizontal networks of other Title IX Coordinators and gender equity advocates including parents.

### **Why are gender equity organizations renewing their efforts to increase support for Title IX Coordinators?**

In their first two decades, Title IX Coordinators helped end much of the overt sex discrimination in schools. Their work was often supported by funding that created networks of Coordinators, who became gender equity leaders in their states, school districts, and postsecondary institutions. They trained teachers and, administrators and developed proactive strategies to advance gender equity. But during the next 20 years support for Title IX Coordinators was greatly diminished even though sex discrimination became increasingly subtle and complicated.

Helped by increased knowledge of what is needed to end sex discrimination in education and increased attention to Title IX and its Coordinators by ED's OCR, gender equity organizations are developing a campaign to reinvigorate and increase the support of proactive and effective Title IX Coordinators. Well trained and internally and externally supported Title IX Coordinators are essential in providing leadership to end subtle and often unintended sex discrimination and to properly implement the complicated regulations and guidance from federal and state governments to comply with Title IX and other civil rights laws.

### **How can individual parents and groups of parents help identify and support their Title IX Coordinators?**

Ideally it should be easy to find the Title IX Coordinators in your communities, but often it is not. If everyone takes the spirit of Title IX seriously, every school should have at least one designated Title IX Coordinator to ensure full compliance. If you can't find Title IX Coordinators on your schools' websites or by calls or visits, ask your school district Title IX Coordinator for help. (Some state Title IX Coordinators maintain lists of school district Title IX Coordinators on their State Education Agency websites and the US Department of Education (ED) should be making some of this contact information available soon.<sup>2</sup>)

In addition to contacting your Title IX Coordinators, parents and families with specific concerns about sex discrimination should contact gender equity organizations in their community or nationally (such as members of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education [www.ncwge.org](http://www.ncwge.org)<sup>3</sup>). This is especially important if the Title IX Coordinator is not able to be fully

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.feminist.org/education/pdfs/StateTitleIXCoordinators12-10-2015> and Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html?src=rt/>

<sup>3</sup> See Organizations and Handouts Related to Title IX: <http://feminist.org/education/pdfs/TitleIXResources12914.pdf>

responsive in addressing and correcting the sex discrimination and if the Title IX Coordinator needs long term help.

In summary, families and equity advocates should work together to help identify and support Title IX Coordinators throughout the US by:

- Making sure that your schools appoint qualified Title IX Coordinators who follow the OCR guidance. If this has not happened and the school leaders have not given assurances that it will happen, the families, in collaboration with equity advocacy organizations, should put pressure on school leaders and elected and appointed officials to hire and train their Title IX Coordinators.
- Meeting with the Title IX Coordinators and making sure that they have copies of the OCR guidance and that they develop specific accountability and action plans to identify and remediate sex discrimination in their school. They should insure the collection and analysis of accountability information disaggregated by sex, race and other pertinent characteristics needed to assure equity.
- Ensuring that all your communities' schools have contact information on their Title IX Coordinators and appropriate information on Title IX on each of their websites as well as on the school district website. This appropriate information should include information on Title IX compliance resources, complaint procedures and Title IX Coordinator decisions. Information on these decisions should include requests and resolutions related to single sex classes or extra-curricular activities, sexual harassment or assault complaints, gender disparities in athletics and much more. All this information should be posted on the relevant school and school district websites to insure transparency and accountability.
- Meeting with and inviting Title IX Coordinators to talk about their work and plans in community meetings such as PTO, City Council, and School Board meetings. Where feasible, representatives of equity organizations should be key participants.
- Forming advisory groups to meet on a regular basis with the Title IX Coordinators to address and prevent sex discrimination. The advisory groups may be established for multiple schools and should include relevant gender equity experts as well as equity advocates within the schools such as union representatives or supportive school board members.
- Ensuring that interested family members and other equity advocates participate in Title IX training sessions with the Title IX Coordinators and other educators.
- Making full use of high quality gender equity resources with special attention to websites of national gender equity organizations such as members of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education [www.ncwge.org](http://www.ncwge.org). Some of these websites such as [www.SSAIS.org](http://www.SSAIS.org) provide a wealth of information on stopping important violations of Title IX such as sexual

assault and in following up with legal or other action if the Title IX Coordinator and other decision makers need help.

- Making sure that all the school stakeholders (students, parents, educators and community members) understand their rights and responsibilities under Title IX.
- Using public media to press the schools and governmental agencies to stop all illegal sex discrimination both in and through education.

Please participate in this campaign by sharing your experiences and suggestions with Dr. Sue Klein, Education Equity Director, Feminist Majority Foundation [sklein@feminist.org](mailto:sklein@feminist.org) , 703-522-2214 and check out our web resources at [www.feminist.org/education](http://www.feminist.org/education).