

JULY 25-27  
WASHINGTON, DC



# **AFT TEACH Conference 2025**

## ***Responding to Sexual Harm in Schools: Practical Tools for Educators***

**9:00 am Sunday, July 27, 2025**



**Heidi Goldstein,**  
SSAIS Board Chair



**Manuwella Allen,**  
Director of Teacher  
Support, SSASV



**Trina English,**  
Executive Director  
& Founder, SSASV



# Welcome and About Us



**Mani Allen:** HS Ethnic Studies teacher, New Haven (CA) Unified School District and Director of Teacher Support, School Staff Against Sexual Violence ([SSASV.org](https://ssasv.org))

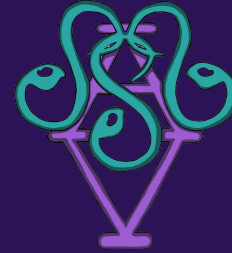
**Trina English:** MS English and History teacher, Dublin (CA) Unified School District and Executive Director & Founder, School Staff Against Sexual Violence ([SSASV.org](https://ssasv.org))

**Heidi Goldstein:** Board Chair, Stop Sexual Assault in Schools ([SSAIS.org](https://ssaais.org)), school staff, and activist since 2014



# Agenda

- I. Case Studies**
- II. Key Concepts**
- III. Prevalence Data**
- IV. Applicable Laws, Policies and Regulations**
- V. Implementation Issues**
- VI. Strategies for Harm Reduction**
- VII. Next Steps**



# Session Goals

**Goal 1:** Expand awareness of the problems and incidents occurring in K-12 classrooms including the trends that normalize sexual harassment and violence (SH/V).

**Goal 2:** Gain knowledge of specific techniques you can use in the classroom for immediate harm reduction, and develop strategies to begin to shift school culture.

**Goal 3:** Learn how to research the policies and practices your district has in place related to sexual harm/violence, and understand how these work with Federal and state laws or regulations.



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## Session Goals (cont.)

**Goal 4:** Plan and practice how to initiate the conversations with like-minded allies in your district about building positive climate and culture for gender equity.

**Goal 5:** Strategize on steps you can take to be an influencer in your school or district's social justice framework to move this work forward under the four roles of social activist reform

**Goal 6:** Access information about School Staff Against Sexual Violence, Stop Sexual Assault in Schools, and other organizations that can offer teacher-specific supports for issues of sexual harm/violence and gender equity.



# Housekeeping & Trigger Warning

- Questions or Comments during the presentation - Use the parking lot padlet for items you want to discuss at the close of the session which will include 10-15 minutes for group discussion and questions
- ***You may hear things today which shock or trigger you: take care of yourself and leave if you need to. If something feels wrong please speak up, we welcome critical feedback***
- Anecdotes shared today regarding specific child sexual abuse/sexual harm should not include names or identifying information
- Safe spaces allow for brave and innovative conversations
- Please honor intersectionality and presume positive intent





# Parking Lot Padlet



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## Getting to Know Each Other



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# 01

# Case Studies

Real stories from the field



## Case Study #1 (Elementary)

### “But No One Speaks Her Language”

- Monolingual ELL student who speaks a rare language
- 2nd grade classroom in California
- Teacher repeatedly asked the student to sit on his lap
- Classmates targeted her for further sexual harassment
- Student Teacher was stalked after reporting
- Student teacher had their credential pathways severed
- Child victim was lost in the system



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## Case Study #2 (Middle School)

### “What Happened to the Kids?”

- Middle School environment in The U.S. post covid
- Students return from lockdown, with a HUGE uptick in sexual violence
- High performing, high income district
- Teacher reporting incidents of student-on-student sexual harm dismissed repeatedly
  - In classrooms
  - Institutional indifference
- By year 3, the behaviors had become so common, that ostensibly straight boys were sexually assaulting other boys, in classrooms, as means of hazing other boys



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## Case Study #3 (High School)

### Do You See Me?

- High School, mid-size urban town
- Student fell asleep in class taught by a sub and woke up to another student's hand between her legs.
- She confronted the male student perpetrator and asked him: "What are you doing?"
- Met with both the teacher to whom she originally reported and male counselor.
- Male student tried to gaslight her, she held solid on her point with counselor support.
- Consequences were given at insistence of the counselor.



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## Case Study #4 (High School)

### “I Deserved That”

- Female student was taught through societal norms, that sex equals being liked.
- Male student let her know he wanted to have sex with her, and she refused.
- He decided that her “no” did not apply to him and raped her without a condom after the last bell.
- A teacher noticed a difference in her personality and the student confided in her about what happened.
- The student believed she deserved what happened to her because she had a reputation.
- While the male student was expelled, she was made to face him and his family in an expulsion hearing.



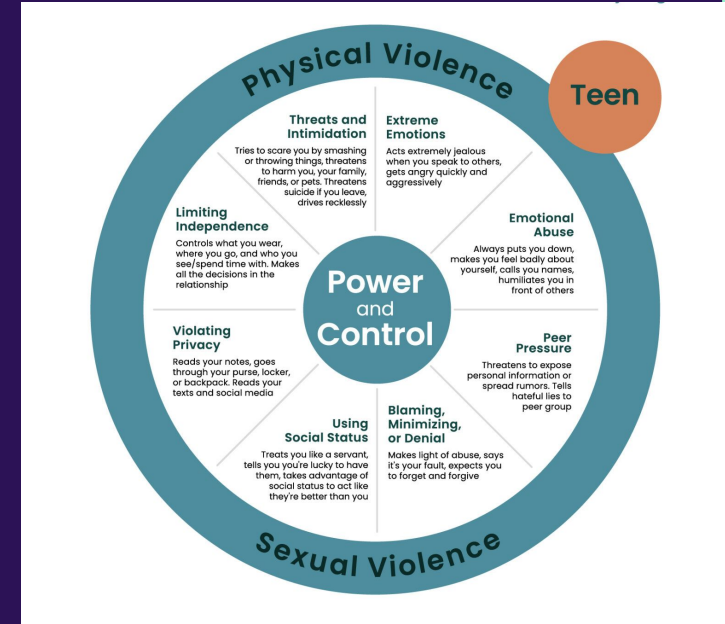
# 02

## Key Concepts

Understanding gender based violence,  
sexual harm and childhood sexual abuse

# Key Concepts–Gender Based Violence

- Gender Based Violence (GBV)
  - A broad umbrella term
  - Is rooted in power and control
    - Unequal power between two or more people
- Forms of GBV
  - Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence
    - Cycle of Violence and
    - Power and Control Wheel
  - Sexual Violence
  - Forms of sexual violence
    - Sexual Assault
    - Sexual Harassment
- Child Sexual Abuse
  - Definitions vary from state to state





# Key Concept - Sexual Harm

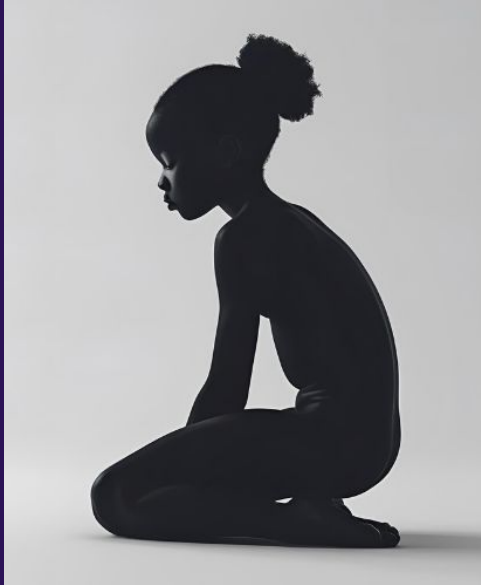
Is a broad term which encompasses many things. See the [RAINN](#) website for more information. It includes the following forms:

- **Sexual harassment:** things said, shown, or implied
  - Includes hazing
  - Regardless of intended target
- **Sexual assault:** touching, exposing, penetration (insertion into your body)
- **Child sexual abuse:** all sexual assault against children under the age of 18, and most forms of sexual harassment against a child under the age of 14—regardless of the age of the perpetrator, in any setting
- **Intimate partner violence** (domestic violence): When one person in a relationship uses power and control over another.
- **Sexual abuse online**





# Key Concept - Sexual Harassment vs. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)



- Key Factors:
  - In loco parentis for K-12 students
  - child abuse laws
- Student-on-student child sexual abuse reporting issues
  - Mandated reporter related issues
    - Intersection with Title IX reporting
    - Home vs. School Jurisdiction Issues:
      - CPS/CFS/DCFS vs. Law Enforcement reporting
      - Law Enforcement/LEA lack coordinated, compliant systems and protocols



# 03 Prevalence Data

Incidents of sexual harm are pervasive and  
under-reported

# Prevalence Data

The prevalence of CSA is difficult to determine because it is often not reported; experts agree that the incidence is far greater than what is reported to authorities.

- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN):
  - Childhood sexual assault occurs in the United States every 9 minutes
  - 66% are aged 12-17; 34% are under age 12
  - 89% of all victims under the age of 18 are female
- National Center for Victims of Crime:
  - Most vulnerable populations are children between the ages of 7 to 13
    - 1 in 5 girls; 1 in 20 boys
- US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC):
  - 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience rape, physical violence, and or stalking by an intimate partner
    - 16.6 percent of women are stalked; 5.3 percent of men
    - Usually by someone they know



# 04

# Applicable Laws, Policies and Regulations

Federal, state and local school district  
regulations provide protections

# Title IX is a Federal Civil Rights Law

- Applies to private and public K-12 and higher education institutions that receive federal funds and includes students, staff, faculty and anyone on campus or at a school sponsored event, on or off school property
- The Title IX Standard: sex-based discrimination, harassment or violence that interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from school
- Changes Under Trump Administration have limited protections
  - 152 Executive Orders, 39 memoranda and 52 proclamations as of late May) impact student rights - :2024 Biden regulations vacated by court - 2020 regulations enforce
    - redefines the term "sex" and excludes transgender people
    - rescinds protections based on gender identity and sexual orientation
    - shrinks civil rights enforcement capacity at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and US Dept of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

220 lawsuits filed in response to these changes since January 2025



# Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Guidance

1. Regular (often yearly) trainings for students and staff on topics including:
  - Identifying forms of sexual violence
  - How to report an incident
  - Due Process
  - Identifies the Title IX Coordinator and relevant institutional policies pertaining to sexual harassment
2. Title IX Coordinator Role:
  - Must have independence and authority to conduct their investigations
  - Responsible for ensuring compliance
  - Must be well known and readily accessible to the entire school community – guidance suggests one per site
  - Must be free of a conflict of interest – Administrators who also oversee student discipline have a clear conflict of interest



# Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Guidance (cont.)

## 3. Due Process (aspirational)

- Trauma Informed, clearly delineated process for investigating complaints
- Supportive measures must be made available
  - “Stay away orders”
  - Support people of the victim’s choosing and are kept informed regarding the steps of the investigation process
- Is not handled like or as a student disciplinary issue

4. Widely promulgated policies such that everyone in the school community knows who their coordinator is and the policies that are enforce to address incidents

## 5. Records Keeping

- Requires LEAs (Local Education Agencies-aka school districts) to maintain records of all reports, investigations, and outcomes
  - Are a public record which may be requested by any party at a later time



# State Laws and Codes Apply...

- State educational codes and related laws can complement or exceed Title IX regulations:
  - Broader definitions of sexual harassment
  - Specific timelines for investigations
  - Stronger enforcement
  - Allow for civil lawsuits
- Resources to learn more about state level protections for filing complaints/investigations and enforcement:
  - [State Civil Rights Agencies](#)
  - [The Movement Advancement Project](#)
    - [Safe Schools Laws](#)
  - RAINN compendium of [state laws](#)
  - Find contacts for your [State Department of Education](#)





# Local School District Policies/Regulations Apply...

- Your district's codes, board policies and administrative regulations may be based on model rules compliant with OCR guidance
  - Must have policies on sexual harassment, non-discrimination, and reporting and investigating complaints
  - Where to find these:
    - District websites - sometimes embedded several clicks from landing page
    - Student-Parent Handbooks - policies and conduct sections
    - Employee Handbooks - code of conduct section
- Know your Title IX Coordinator/Compliance Officer and how to connect with them
- Learn about your District's complaint/reporting Processes and timelines
  - How to appeal a decision or get help if a decision is unduly delayed or improperly dismissed
  - What to do if there is not a clear reporting process



# 05 Implementation Issues

K-12 Protections are inferior to those  
for Higher Education

# Implementation Issues In K-12

Why haven't we heard about this?

- Lack of Scholarship in K-12 Higher Education
  - No publications in Masters/PhD programs of Educational Leadership
  - Institutional Review Board impediments to research
  - Administrator Preparation Programs
  - Antagonistic or ambivalence stance on gender equity work
- Institutional culture of risk management with focus on lawsuit mitigation and reputation over addressing and resolving incidents
- Points of Confusion
  - The 2020 regulations' impact on LGBTQIA+ students
  - Nuanced, robust, intersectional conversations are lacking
  - The original regulations were never fully implemented
  - Children bear the collateral damage of regulation volatility



# Implementation Issues In K-12 (cont.)

- K-12 vs. Collegiate Setting
  - Survivor-led advocacy model is ageist towards minor children; self-advocacy work in this field can be traumatic
    - Age appropriate levels of involvement
    - MeToo/Time's UP did not lift up K-12
- Exclusionary DEI frameworks continue to center male privilege-Gender equity work is not a part of DEI frameworks in K-12
- Cultural Taboos discussing children & sexuality
- K-12 Governance is counter-intuitive
  - Impenetrable to outside advocacy agencies
  - Tenured teachers are missing from the big decisions and important conversations



# 06

## Strategies for Harm Reduction

And taking care of yourself in the process!

# Techniques You Can Use Now

- All Efforts Carry Risk

- Self care is Essential
- Be aware of vicarious trauma
  - Attend to yourself first!
  - Special considerations for new, untenured/right-to-work state school staff
  - Create solid boundaries around the work
  - Seek help-**Do not carry this alone**



- Classroom Strategies

- Protocols/Classroom Management Strategies
  - Sexual harm proliferates in poorly controlled and monitored places
  - Entry Clean up/Pack Uptimes
    - Silent Entry Protocols
    - Do not stand outside your door greeting your students as they enter
  - Classroom Signage
  - Community Building & Courageous conversations - Ask for support from counselors and keep administrators in the loop



# Additional Short-term Strategies

- Harm Reduction Work
  - Safety Planning with victims and perpetrators
- Talk about it
  - Talking to other school staff organically
    - During mandated reporter trainings
    - Ask for school/district policies
    - Join any committee that intersects with the work
      - Equity, School-wide behavioral management, SEL etc.
- Start Reporting Title IX and Child Sexual Abuse Reports
  - Use email communication if necessary
  - When in doubt, report
- Proceed slowly and carefully
  - Expect resistance
  - Presume positive intent
  - Be cautious, and communicative with all parties

## Personal Safety Plan at School

What is a safety plan? A safety plan is a document that you can create to plan ahead to prepare for harassment or abuse. It allows you to consider the people and resources you have which you can use to help you should you ever feel unsafe or become the victim of harassment or abuse.

You will be directed to complete this plan in class today as you view the slides presentation video.

### 1. Identifying your support people

Directions: Identify people who you trust who are around during the times listed below, and record their names in the table. Later, you can devise a way to communicate that you need their help without having to confront a person who may be abusing or harassing you. Be sure to communicate this to your support people.

	Support People	Special code words, looks, or gestures which they will know to look out for
Getting to and from School		
Zero Period:		
First Period:		
Second Period:		
Third Period:		
Fourth Period:		
Lunch/break:		
Fifth Period		
Sixth Period		



# Long Term Strategies (Culture Shifting)

- Start a feminist club/union
- Begin a yearly women's history month celebration
- Adopt a non-sexist dress code
- Audit books taught in ELA
- Join committees/task forces which intersect with this work
  - DEI/Equity, SEL, School wide behavioral intervention work
- Begin a Period Equity Campaign
- Annotate your District policies and Regulations
  - Request a meeting with leadership to share findings or concerns
- Organize parents, staff, and students but *Do not organize student walkouts*
- Speak at school board meetings about implementation issues
  - Request an Implementation Task Force to address gaps





# 07

## Next Steps

Where do you go from here?

# Where do YOU fit in this work?

Determine what is the most pressing issue(s) for you? School policies? Student support? Classroom tactics? Something else??

Understand where you fit in the work to improve culture, policy and practices around sexual harassment and violence at your institution:

- Short- versus long-game considerations
  - How much fight and heart you can put toward the work
- Clarity on professional risk connected to your level of activism
  - Tenure, state employment law and union protections
- Strategies for demanding accountability without career impacts
  - Retaliation is prohibited...but happens



# Identifying your allies

**Identify** the colleagues and staff at your district that best match to your level of risk for reputation, career aspiration, psyche and activism in service to your values and ethics

**Share** resources that will help others understand and build awareness around the signs and behaviors that signal sexual harassment or violence, misogyny and gender based violence; and what they can do to redirect or disrupt before incidents occur, or actions they can take to protect students if/when incidents occur.

Key resource: American University PERIL Lab [guide](#)

**Demonstrate** allyship: classroom posters, assemblies, after school or affinity groups, professional development learning circles

**Support or Lead** long-term organizing or coalition building efforts to secure union, staff and parent support, participation and activism



# Thank You!

Does anyone have any questions? Please contact us at:

[trinaenglish@schoolstaffasv.org](mailto:trinaenglish@schoolstaffasv.org)

[maniallen@schoolstaffasv.org](mailto:maniallen@schoolstaffasv.org)

[hbgoldstein94707@gmail.com](mailto:hbgoldstein94707@gmail.com) or [info@stopsexualassaultinschools.org](mailto:info@stopsexualassaultinschools.org)

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## Feedback Survey

**We value your  
thoughts, and want  
to improve for next  
time. Please  
complete by July  
31st**



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# Annotated Presentation



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# Outside Resources and Articles



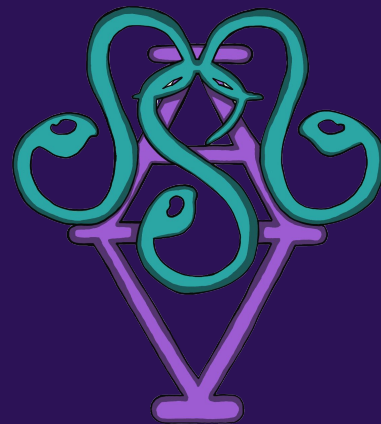
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# School Staff Against Sexual Violence Free Support

- Find other teachers all working on these issues
  - Using proven strategies
- Monthly Live virtual Support Sessions
  - You are NOT alone!
- Free Resources/Materials
  - Safety plans
  - downloadable lessons: women's history month, and period equity
  - non-sexist dress code



[ssasv.org](https://ssasv.org)



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