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Compassion +Compliance: Empathy Led Practices

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About Us

OUR MISSION

To provide the best Care and Support for our clients, Community Partners, employees, contractors, collaborators, vendors, and all others who encounter our company.

GOAL

To assist schools and districts in providing a safe and healthy learning and working environment for students, faculty and staff.

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Compliance + Compassion

Title IX compliance is ineffective without compassion. Every decision you make should begin with compassion.

- **Impact is greater than intent**

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Empathy + the Desire to Act/Action= Compassion



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First Impressions Matter

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FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, OR FAWN OR ALL FOUR...

OR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...









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Meeting and Process Goal

Every connection or meeting leaves an individual feeling heard and cared for, even if they do not agree with the outcome.



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Wrap Around Support



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Hypothetical Scenario: Parking Lot Incident

A staff member, Jordan, submits a report to the Title IX Coordinator after witnessing a concerning interaction in a campus or school parking lot.

Jordan shares that while walking to their car, they overheard Sam yelling at his girlfriend, Meghan. Sam appeared visibly angry and was raising his voice. During the interaction, Jordan observed Sam grab Meghan firmly by the arm while Meghan attempted to pull away. Meghan appeared upset but did not respond loudly.

Jordan did not intervene at the time but reports the incident the following day, stating:
“I’m not sure if this is something that falls under Title IX, but it didn’t feel right, and I’m worried about Meghan.”

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Step 1: Connection



- Email, phone call, or both
  - Support focused
  - Informative
    - Action items
    - Next steps
    - Participation requirements
    - Expectations
  - Safety Steps
  - Agency and autonomy considered

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Example Email to Complainant

Subject: Checking in and Offering Support

Hi Meghan,

My name is Betsy Smith, and I'm reaching out in my role as the Title IX Coordinator because I received a report about a situation that may have involved you. I want to be clear that you are not in any trouble, and you are not required to respond to this message.

My goal is to make sure you are aware of the support and resources available to you, explain the investigation process, and to offer you an opportunity to share anything you would like, if you choose. If you're open to it, I would be glad to meet with you to talk through what happened, explain your options, and answer any questions you may have. This conversation can focus on your needs and what support would be most helpful to you.

You are in control of how much or how little you'd like to engage. Speaking with me does not mean you are committing to any kind of formal complaint or process. We can also discuss supportive measures that may be available to you regardless of whether you choose to move forward with an investigation.
If you would like to meet, please let me know a time that works for you, or you can use the following link to schedule directly: [insert scheduling link].

If you would prefer not to meet, that is completely okay as well, but it is my ask that you please respond to this email either way so that I know you are safe. If I have not heard from you by [insert date], I will follow back up with you via email and/or phone call.

If you have any immediate concerns about your safety or need urgent assistance, please contact [campus/school security or local resources]. Additionally, [campus/school security or local resources] can explain your rights and resources in the criminal process.
I'm here as a resource for you, and I'm happy to support you in whatever way feels right.

Take care,
[Name]
Title IX Coordinator
Institution/District Name
[Contact Information]

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Example of a NON COMPASSIONATE Email to Complainant

Subject: Title IX Required Meeting

Meghan,

This email is to inform you that the Title IX Office received a report involving you related to a recent incident on campus/school property. Based on this information, we need to meet with you to discuss what occurred.

Please respond within 24 hours to schedule a meeting. Your participation is important so that we can determine next steps and whether a policy violation has occurred. Failure to respond may result in the institution proceeding based on the information currently available.

During the meeting, you will be expected to provide details about the incident. The Title IX Office will then evaluate the situation and decide how to proceed. If you have immediate safety concerns, contact campus/school security.

[Name]
Title IX Coordinator
Institution/District Name
[Contact Information]

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Step 2: Meeting

- Composed and Prepared
  - Comfortable
  - Available to listen
  - Attentive
  - Compassionate - empathy + action
  - Process?

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Trauma Informed Meeting Necessities

THE 4- C'S



Comfortable



Clear



Consistent



Convenient

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Hypothetical: Intake

- The Title IX Coordinator sends an outreach email to Meghan offering a meeting and resources.
- Meghan does not respond to the email.

What are your next steps?

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Hypothetical: Intake Meeting with Complainant Continued

- Two days later, Meghan arrives unannounced at the Title IX office and asks to speak with the Coordinator. When she enters the office, she appears visibly frazzled—her hair is disheveled, she seems anxious, and her hands are shaking slightly. She avoids eye contact at first and appears unsure about being there.
    - When the Coordinator greets her, Meghan says: “I got your email… I didn’t know what to say. I’m not sure I should be here.” She sits down but remains on edge, glancing at the door.
    - When asked how she’s doing, she responds: “I’m fine. It wasn’t a big deal. We just had an argument.”
    - If gently asked about the incident, Meghan minimizes: “He just grabbed my arm for a second. It’s not like he hurt me or anything. I don’t want this to turn into something.”
    - She then adds: “Is he going to find out I’m here?”

What are your next steps?

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Considerations about this Meeting:

- Meghan presents with visible distress but verbally minimizes the incident
- She demonstrates ambivalence about participating
- She expresses concern about privacy/retaliation
- She self-initiated contact after not responding to outreach
- There may be potential safety concerns, though not explicitly stated

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Intake Discussion



1. **Opening the Meeting**
   - How should the Coordinator begin this conversation to set a safe, non-threatening tone?
   - What should be said (or avoided) in the first few minutes?
2. **Empathy Led/ Trauma Informed Engagement**
   - How should the Coordinator respond when someone says “I’m fine” but presents as distressed?
   - What are effective ways to validate without pressuring?
3. **Explaining Role and Options**
   - How should the Coordinator explain:
     - Their role.
     - The difference between supportive measures vs. formal complaint
     - Meghan’s control over participation.
     - How do you avoid overwhelming her with information?
4. **Addressing Minimization**
   - How should the Coordinator respond to: “It wasn’t a big deal.”
   - What language keeps the door open without contradicting or dismissing her perspective?

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Intake Discussion Continued:

5. **Safety and Privacy**
   - How should the Coordinator respond to: “Is he going to find out I’m here?”
   - What should be explained about:
     - Privacy vs. confidentiality
     - When information may need to be shared
   - What gentle safety assessment questions might be appropriate?
6. **Supportive Measures**
   - What supportive measures could be offered in this moment?
   - How do you offer them in a way that feels accessible and not overwhelming?
7. **When the Participant Hesitates**
   - If Meghan says: “I don’t want to get him in trouble.”
   - How do you respond without shutting down the conversation?

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Intake Discussion Continued:

- This scenario highlights ambivalence + minimization, which are common in intake settings
- The goal is not to “get disclosure,” but to:
  - Build trust
  - Provide clear information
  - Offer support
- Watch for participants who:
  - Move too quickly into investigation mode
  - Overcorrect by being overly passive and unclear
- Emphasize the balance: clear, compliant, and compassionate

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Hypothetical: More Information

Later that same day, after Meghan's intake meeting, the Title IX Coordinator receives an anonymous email through the institution's reporting system.

The report states:
"You should be aware that Sam posted something concerning on social media. It said 'you are messing with the wrong guy and included a picture of a gun. I don't know who it was directed at, but given what happened earlier, I thought someone should know."

No additional identifying information about the reporter is provided. The email includes a screenshot of the post, but it is unclear when exactly it was posted or whether it is still active.

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Formal Complaint? Are you going to sign?

The anonymous report introduces new, significant risk factors:

- Threatening language: “you are messing with the wrong guy”
- Weapon imagery (gun)
- Proximity in time to the incident
- Potential target ambiguity (could be Meghan or others)

This shifts the analysis from:
“Is this a past incident Meghan wants to pursue?”
to:
“Is there an ongoing safety risk the institution must address?”

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Discussion with Meghan about Initiating the Formal Complaint

- Transparency (no surprises)
- Autonomy-centered language (even when autonomy is limited)
- Ownership by Coordinator
- Non-blaming, non-alarmist tone
- Clear explanation of “why” (safety, not punishment)
- Ongoing support regardless of process

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Language: Meeting with Complainant Re: Formal Complaint

1. **Care + Check in**
   - Acknowledge her presence and emotional state
   - Avoid jumping straight into process
     - “I’m really glad you came in today. Before we talk about anything else, I want to check in—how are you doing right now?”
2. **Heads Up**
   - Signal that you need to share something important
     - “I want to talk with you about something that impacts your options and how we move forward. I’ll walk you through it, and we can take it one step at a time.”
3. **Share**
   - Be factual
     - “We received additional information that raised some safety concerns. Specifically, there was a report about a social media post that included a statement that could be interpreted as a threat and an image of a weapon. We don’t yet know all the details or what it means, but I want to be transparent with you.”

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Language: Meeting with Complainant Re: Formal Complaint Continued

4. **Explain Coordinator's Role and Obligations**
    - Emphasize responsibility for safety—not punishment
        - "Part of my role is not only to support you, but also to assess situations where there may be a risk of harm to you or others. When we receive information that suggests there could be an ongoing safety concern, I need to take additional steps to address that."
5. **Initiating Complaint**
    - Clear and gentle language
        - "Because of what we now know, I need to move forward with initiating a formal complaint. I want to explain what that means, and also talk with you about your thoughts, your concerns, and what support you need."
6. **Reaffirm Voice Still Matters**
    - Maintain trust
        - "Even though I am moving forward, your voice still matters a lot in this process. You are not required to participate, and we can talk through what level of involvement—if any—feels right for you."

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Language: Meeting with Complainant Re: Formal Complaint Continued

7. **Address Fear of Retaliation**
    - Connect with earlier safety concerns
        - "You asked earlier whether Sam would find out you came here. I want to talk through that with you honestly—what information may be shared, what protections are in place, and how we can support your safety."
8. **Pause and Invite Response/Reaction**
    - Give back control
    - Allow silence
        - "I know that's a lot of information. What questions or concerns are coming up for you right now?"
9. **Re-Offer Supportive Measures**
    - Support that is grounded in her needs
        - "Let's focus on you and what would help you feel safer or more supported right now—whether or not you want to be involved in any process."

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Pitfalls!

- “We have to move forward no matter what you want.”
- “This is serious, so we’re opening an investigation.” (too abrupt/alarmist)
- Overloading with policy/legal language.
- Minimizing her earlier statements (“even though you said it wasn’t a big deal…”)
- Implying blame or responsibility.

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Supportive Measures

- Non-disciplinary
- With or without Formal Complaint
- Individualized & flexible
- Proactive

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Possible Supportive Measures for Meghan

- No Contact
- Schedule or modificaitons to locations
- Safety plan
  - To and from class
  - Support person with her
- Counseling and/or mental health referral
- Academic flexibility
- Extra curriculars
- Increased monitoring/presence
- Assistance with police and/or protective order
- Community resources
- Check in meetings

Also need to consider Emergency Removal in this scenario

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Balancing Act: Autonomy with Safety

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Talk with Faculty Early and Often about Supportive Measures

- **“At some point, you may receive a notice that supportive measures are being implement through the Title IX Office.”**
  - These measures are designed to:
    - Maintain access to education or work
    - Promote safety
    - Reduce barriers caused by a reported incident
    - You are a critical partner in helping these measures work effectively.
- **Faculty/Staff Role:**
  - If you are notified of a supportive measure, you may be asked to:
  - Adjust deadlines or attendance expectations
  - Modify seating, grouping, or participation structures
  - Help maintain separation between individuals
  - Provide flexibility while maintaining course or job integrity
  - You are not expected to investigate, question, or verify the situation

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Faculty and Staff Expectation Re: Supportive Measures

1. **Respect Privacy**
   - Only share information with those who need to know
   - Avoid discussing the situation with colleagues or others
   - Do not ask the individual for details about what happened
2. **Implement**
   - Follow the guidance provided by the Title IX Office
   - If something is unclear, ask the Coordinator—not the student/employee
3. **Remain Neutral/Supportive**
   - Do not assume responsibility, fault, or outcomes
   - Avoid statements like:
     - "What happened?"
     - "Why do you need this?"
   - Instead:
     - "Let me know how I can support you within these parameters."
4. **Act Promptly**
   - Delays can impact safety and access
   - Implement measures as soon as reasonably possible

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Hypothetical: Post Notice of Allegations

Following the decision to initiate a formal complaint, the Title IX Coordinator sends a Notice of Allegations to both Meghan and Sam

Within hours of receiving the notice, Sam contacts the Title IX Office multiple times:

- Leaves two voicemails marked “urgent.”
- Sends several emails in quick succession.

Sam then arrives in person at the office without an appointment. He appears visibly distressed—pacing, speaking quickly, and struggling to focus.

When he meets with staff, he says:
“I can’t believe this is happening. I didn’t do anything wrong. This is being blown way out of proportion.”
“Is this going on my record? Am I going to get kicked out or fired? I need to know right now.”

His tone shifts between anxious and defensive:
“She’s the one who started it. Are you even going to listen to me? Or is this already decided?”
At one point, he adds:
“I feel like my whole life is about to be ruined over this.”

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Missed Opportunity & Potential Safety Concern

- What should have been done?

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Considerations about Sam

- High emotional distress (panic/anxiety)
- Defensiveness and minimization
- Fear of consequences (discipline, reputation, removal)
- Perceived lack of fairness/bias
- Urgency and pressure for immediate answers

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Response to Sam

1. **Immediate response and de-escalation**
   - How should staff respond to Sam's panic and urgency?
   - What techniques help slow the conversation down without dismissing his concerns?
2. **Empathy drive/trauma informed response**
   - How do we apply compassion principles to someone in the respondent role?
   - What does it look like to be supportive without validating harmful behavior?
3. **Explain process clearly**
   - How should the Coordinator explain:
     - What a Notice of Allegations means (and does NOT mean)
     - That there has been no finding yet.
   - What language helps reduce panic while maintaining accuracy?
4. **Managing Defensiveness**
   - How do you respond to:
     - "I didn't do anything wrong."
     - "She started it."
   - Neutrality and avoidance of argument or investigation.



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Response to Sam Continued

4. **Addressing fear of outcomes**
    - How do you respond to
        - Am I going to be kicked out?
    - What should/should not be shared about outcomes?
5. **Fairness and bias concerns**
    - How do you respond to:
        - “Is this already decided?”
    - What reassurances can be given about:
        - Impartiality.
        - Opportunity to be heard.
6. **Boundaries and process integrity**
    - What should staff avoid doing in this moment?
        - (e.g., taking a full statement, debating facts, making promises)
    - How do you redirect to:
        - Scheduled meetings.
        - Advisors.
        - Formal process steps.



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Response to Sam Continued

“I feel like my life is about to be ruined”

a. Acknowledge emotion
b. Avoid agreeing with the conclusion
c. Redirect to process and support



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Possible Supportive Measures for Sam

- No Contact
- Schedule or modificaitons to locations
- Safety plan
  - Concern about physical well being
- Counseling and/or mental health referral
- Academic flexibility
- Extra curriculars
- Increased monitoring/presence
- Assistance with police and/or protective order
- Community resources
- Check in meetings
- Help call parents/other supportive person

Also need to consider Emergency Removal in this scenario.

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Stability



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Check Ins

1. **Grades**
   - Increasing?
   - Decreasing?
2. **Athetics or Extracurriculars**
   - Has involvment or attendance changed?
3. **Class Schedule**
   - Overlap with the other party?
4. **Retaliation**
   - Any concerns?
5. **Additional Supportive Measures**
   - Changes, additions or modifications?
6. **Hello**
   - Literally, just to say “Hi, how are things?”

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Don’t Forget



Reminders about Process

Communication about date/ time/ location

Follow up after Determination

Excuses from class

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Challenges

1. **Working with Complainant's vs. Respondents**
   - Imperative that you learn to work with both
2. **Dislike**
   - You may just plain dislike the party you are working with
3. **Untruthful**
   - You think (or know) they are being untruthful
4. **Pushback**
   - The resources are not willing or able to provide the necessary assistance
5. **Case Load**
   - There is simply not enough time to adequately do the work
6. **Never Enough**
   - You cannot "fix" everything

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Big Reminders

1. **Prioritize**
   - Which connection or support is most critical.
2. **Be Creative**
   - This is not one size fits all. Think outside the box.
3. **Do the Heavy Lifting**
   - Don't put the burden on the party. Take care of what you can on their behalf. (Class changes, grade requests, etc.)
4. **Leave the Door Open**
   - While the burden is on YOU, the door should be open for the party to let you know if they need something or if something isn't going well!
5. **Lifeline**
   - You are often the lifeline between the party and their access.

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Help Us Help YOU!

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YOU'VE GOT THIS!



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