

GCVS Civil Rights & Title IX Framework

Notice of Non-Discrimination: GCVS File: AC - Nondiscrimination

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools have the responsibility to overcome, insofar as possible, any barriers that prevent children from achieving their potential. The Greater Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS) will do its part. This commitment to the community is affirmed by the following statements that the Board of Trustees intends to:

1. Promote the rights and responsibilities of all individuals as set forth in the State and Federal Constitutions, pertinent legislation, and applicable judicial interpretations.
2. Encourage positive experiences in human values for children, youth and adults, all of whom have differing personal and family characteristics and who come from various socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups.
3. Work toward a more integrated society and to enlist the support of individuals as well as groups and agencies, both private and governmental, in such an effort.
4. Use all appropriate communication and action techniques to air and reduce the grievances of individuals and groups.
5. Carefully consider, in all the decisions made within the school, the potential benefits or adverse consequences that those decisions might have on the human relations aspects of all segments of society.
6. Initiate a process of reviewing policies and practices of the school in order to achieve to the greatest extent possible the objectives of this statement.

The Board's policy of nondiscrimination will extend to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom it does business. No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected class. If someone has a complaint or feels that they have been discriminated against because of their race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected class, their complaint should be registered with the Title IX compliance officer.

Compliance Officer Directory

- **GCVS 504 Manager:** Director of Student Services, Ms. Jennifer Paine (jpaine@gcvs.org)
- **Title IX and Civil Rights Coordinator:** Director of Accountability, Dr. Sarah Jordan (sjordan@gcvs.org)

If you wish to file a formal complaint or inquiry outside of the GCVS framework, you may contact the following state and federal oversight agencies:

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Boston Office

5 Post Office Square, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109-3921
Customer Service Hotline: (617) 289-0111 | Fax: (617) 289-0150
Email: ocr.boston@ed.gov | Website: <https://www.ed.gov/ocr>

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) Boston Headquarters

1 Ashburton Place, Suite 601, Boston, MA 02108
Main Telephone: (617) 994-6000 | Fax: (617) 994-6024
Email: mcad@mass.gov | Website: <https://www.mass.gov/mcad>

Official Title IX Grievance Procedure

Effective Date: Updated June 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

GCVS is committed to maintaining an educational and working environment free from sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation. This grievance procedure provides a prompt, equitable, and impartial track for resolving formal complaints of sexual harassment as defined under federal Title IX regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106). This procedure applies to all students, employees, and participants in the district's education programs, activities, and school-sponsored events.

2. Definition of Sexual Harassment Under Title IX

For the purposes of this specific Title IX process, sexual harassment includes conduct on the basis of sex that occurs within the district's geographic or operational jurisdiction, and satisfies one or more of the following:

- **Quid Pro Quo:** A district employee conditioning an educational benefit, advancement, or service on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
- **Hostile Environment:** Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the district's education program or activity.
- **Federal Crime Categories:** Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined by the Clery Act and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

3. The Five-Step Grievance Process

Step 1: Report and Initial Response

- **Reporting:** Any person may report sex discrimination or sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator at any time (by mail, telephone, or email).
- **Mandatory Reporting:** All school district employees are mandatory reporters. If any employee witnesses or receives information regarding potential sexual harassment, they must notify the Title IX Coordinator within one (1) school day.
- **Initial Outreach:** Within two (2) school days of receiving a report, the Title IX Coordinator or Administrative designee will confidentially contact the Complainant (alleged victim) to:
 1. Discuss and implement free, non-punitive Supportive Measures (e.g., counseling,

- schedule modifications, mutual online no-contact orders).
2. Explain the process, requirements, and rights involved in filing a Formal Complaint.

Step 2: The Formal Complaint and Notice

- **Initiation:** To launch an official investigation, a Complainant, the Title IX Coordinator or Administrative designee must sign a "Formal Complaint" form.
- **Notice of Allegations:** Upon receipt of a Formal Complaint, the Coordinator or Administrative designee will issue a written "Notice of Allegations" to both the Complainant and the Respondent (the accused) simultaneously. This notice includes:
 1. A detailed description of the allegations (identities, dates, locations, and nature of the conduct).
 2. A statement that the Respondent is presumed innocent/not responsible until a final determination is made.
 3. Notice that both parties have the right to an advisor of their choice (who may be an attorney) at any meeting or interview.

Step 3: The Compliant Investigation

The district will assign an independent, trained investigator/administrator who is free from bias or conflicts of interest.

- **Burden of Proof:** The district bears the burden of gathering sufficient evidence; the parties are not required to build the case.
- **Interviews and Notice:** The Investigator will interview the Complainant, the Respondent, and any relevant witnesses. Parties will be given at least forty-eight (48) hours advance written notice of any interview.
- **Inspection of Evidence:** Prior to completing the investigation report, the Investigator will send all evidence directly related to the allegations to each party and their advisor in an electronic format. The parties have ten (10) calendar days to submit a written response to the evidence.
- **Final Report:** The Investigator will write an Investigative Report that fairly summarizes the relevant evidence and send it to both parties at least ten (10) calendar days before a final decision is made.

Step 4: The Decision and Determination

The district will assign a separate, independent Decision-Maker (e.g., the Head of School or an objective third-party administrator) who cannot be the Coordinator or the Investigator.

- **Written Questions:** Before a decision is finalized, each party may submit written, relevant questions to the Decision-Maker to be asked of any party or witness. Answers and limited follow-up questions will be exchanged between both sides.
- **Standard of Evidence:** The district applies the preponderance of the evidence standard to determine responsibility.
- **Written Determination:** The Decision-Maker will issue a simultaneous, detailed written determination to both parties within sixty (60) calendar days of the formal complaint filing. The notice will detail:
 1. The specific allegations and policies evaluated.
 2. Findings of fact and the rationale supporting the conclusion.

3. Disciplinary sanctions (up to suspension/expulsion for students, or termination for employees) and remedies designed to restore equal educational access.

Step 5: The Appeals Track

Either party may appeal the final determination or a dismissal of a complaint. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Title IX Coordinator within five (5) school days of receiving the decision, strictly based on:

1. Procedural irregularities that affected the ultimate outcome.