

Q&A:

Do You Know How to File a Formal Sexual Harassment Complaint With Your College or University?

What is a formal complaint?

A formal complaint is the document that a person can file with their Title IX office that describes the sexual harassment incident(s) and asks that the school start a "grievance process." This process looks different from school to school, but overall consists of the filing of the complaint, followed by an investigation of sexual harassment and a hearing to decide the outcome of the case.

Who can file a formal complaint?

If you are a student and experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner or dating violence, or stalking* by a fellow student, faculty member, or member of your school's staff, you can file a formal complaint with your school's Title IX Coordinator. Note: a Title IX Coordinator may file a formal complaint if the school has actual knowledge of a pattern of alleged harassment by either one of its students or an employee, even if the alleged victim is not a student at the school.

*Under Title IX, all of these offenses are considered different types of sexual harassment.



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What's the difference between a formal complaint and a report to the Title IX Office?

There are a few big differences between making a "report" and a "formal complaint." Anyone, including a student-survivor, a friend, a professor, or a parent, can report sexual harassment to the Title IX Office. A report just lets the Title IX Office know about the sexual harassment, but does not start a grievance process.

Once the Title IX Office receives a report of sexual harassment, they must tell the survivor about options available for supportive measures (such as changes in class schedules or housing) as well as what a grievance process looks like. **A survivor can get supportive measures without filing a formal complaint.**



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What does a formal complaint look like?

The Department of Education requires that a formal complaint be a document that:

- (1) alleges sexual harassment (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, or stalking) against a respondent;
- (2) requests that the school investigate the sexual harassment;
- (3) is signed by the survivor (or the Title IX Coordinator); and
- (4) is given to the Title IX Coordinator either in person, by mail, or by email.

Anyone considering filing a formal complaint should review their school's Title IX Policy (sometimes called a Sexual Harassment Policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy, or something similar) to see if their school has additional requirements.

Schools may vary in the amount of detail they require in a formal complaint, whether the signature needs to be done by hand or can be done electronically, or they may provide additional ways to submit a complaint.



Q&A: Do You Know How to File a Title IX Complaint With Your College or University?

If you are a DC college or university student considering filing a formal complaint with your school's Title IX Office and you would like to know more about your options, you can speak to an attorney at NVRDC for free by calling 202-742-1727.

You can email info@nvrdc.org or visit our website to learn more!

www.nvrdc.org/tix-resources



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