

Howard County Public School System's Policy Statement on Sexual Harassment

The Board of Education of Howard County is committed to providing an educational and work environment that is free from sexual harassment. To that end, the Board of Education prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in its educational program, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and in the workplace, as required by law.

Employees and third parties share responsibility for the health, safety and general welfare of students; for contributing to a school environment free from sexual harassment; and for maintaining appropriate relationships with students. Employees, students, and third parties may be subject to disciplinary action or consequences for inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature, even when the behavior does not rise to the level of sexual harassment as defined by prevailing federal and state laws.

Ignoring sexual harassment is not an effective way to stop it.

Any student, employee or third party with a complaint of sexual harassment is encouraged to report the incident on the sexual harassment complaint form. All complaints of sexual harassment will be confidentially investigated and promptly resolved.

Remember that while the majority of reported incidents of sexual harassment involve a male harassing a female, harassment can also involve female to male, male to male or female to female behaviors. Harassment may be student to student, employee to student, student to employee, and employee to employee. The HCPSS policy also prohibits sexually harassing behaviors by a third party (e.g. visitor, volunteer).



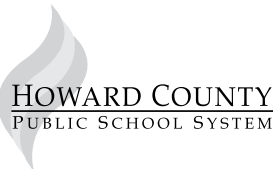
For additional information or assistance, contact:

Equity Assurance Coordinator
Howard County Public Schools
410.313.6654

Howard County Government
Office of Human Rights
410.313.6430

Maryland State Department of Education
Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch
1.410.767.0425

The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For more information, contact the Equity Assurance Office of the Howard County Public School System at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042 or call 410-313-6654.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature; it can be committed by a student, employee, or third party. Sexual harassment can take place under any of the following circumstances:

- When the unwelcome conduct interferes with a student's ability to learn, study, work, achieve or participate in school activities;
- When the unwelcome conduct interferes with an employee's/third party's term, condition, or privilege of employment/relationship with the school system.
- When the unwelcome conduct by a student, employee or third party has the effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work or educational performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

What are some examples of behavior that may be considered sexual harassment?

- Offensive language (epithets, dirty jokes, derogatory comments, or slurs of a sexual nature) communicated verbally or in writing, including electronic formats
- Visual harassment such as derogatory posters, photography, cartoons, drawings, clothing or gestures
- Offensive touching, including inappropriate patting or pinching, or impeding or blocking a person's physical movement
- Making unwelcome sexual advances
- Engaging in unwelcome sexual contact
- Spreading rumors about or evaluating someone for their sexual behavior
- Taunting or ridiculing someone because of perceived or actual sexual orientation
- Pressuring someone for sexual activity

What should I do if I believe I am being sexually harassed?

Whenever possible, tell the harasser to stop.

A student who believes that he or she has been sexually harassed should report sexual harassment promptly to a teacher, school counselor, school-based administrator, or the Equity Assurance Coordinator. Such reports may be made orally or in writing. Students are encouraged to use the Student Sexual Harassment Complaint Form.

An employee or third party who believes that he or she has been sexually harassed should report such conduct promptly to the Equity Assurance Coordinator. Use of the Employee/Third Party Sexual Harassment Complaint Form is encouraged.

Support and assistance will be provided through available resources.

What are my responsibilities and rights related to sexual harassment?

Students have a right to participate in all school and school-sponsored activities in an atmosphere free from sexual harassment. Students have a responsibility not to engage in sexual behaviors that are unwelcome or offensive to others.

Employees have the right to work in an atmosphere free from sexual harassment. Employees and third parties share responsibility for the health, safety and general welfare of students; for contributing to a school environment free from sexual harassment; and for maintaining appropriate relationships with students.

Students, staff and third parties are legally protected against sexual harassment by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and 1975 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Federal law prohibits schools from discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual assault and abuse are also covered under the Criminal Code of Maryland.

What are the consequences if it is determined that I have sexually harassed another individual?

Disciplinary action against a student, if warranted, will be administered in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and Policy 9200, Discipline. Disciplinary action against school system employees will be administered in accordance with Policy 7030, Employee Discipline. Action against third parties will be taken in accordance with relevant school system policies and other applicable state and federal laws.

A student who violates this policy may also be required to participate in an appropriate education intervention and/or counseling designated by the school administrator and designed to increase his or her understanding of the offense and its impact on others.

An employee who violates this policy may, as a condition of continued employment, be required to participate in counseling and/or other interventions designed to assist in the recognition and correction of unwelcome sexual conduct.

Am I being harassed? Am I harassing someone?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the behavior of a sexual nature?
- Is the behavior unwelcome by anyone involved?
- Does the behavior make you or any other person feel uncomfortable?
- Does the behavior interfere with anyone's ability to learn or work in the school or office environment or at school-related activities?
- Is the behavior part of a pattern of repeated behavior?
- Would you want this behavior directed toward a friend or member of your family?

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature; it can be committed by a student, employee, or third party.