

## What is Sexual Harassment?

**Sexual Harassment** is any unwelcome sexual behavior or requests for sexual favors making a student feel uncomfortable. Sexual harassment can be verbal, physical, digital or visual.

**Verbal.** Using crude or sexually inappropriate language, jokes, comments, greetings, verbal teasing or inappropriate name calling. Verbal harassment can also include spreading sexual rumors or calling someone homophobic names.

**Physical.** Physical harassment includes any touching that is uncomfortable, embarrassing or offensive.

**Digital.** Digital or online harassment includes harassing online comments or texts or posting inappropriate photos.



**Visual.** Writing sexual graffiti on walls or creating/distributing photographic/video pornography.

## What Should I Do if My Child Discloses Sexual Harassment?

- Provide support and assure your child what happened was not their fault.
- Report the incident to school officials. If your child feels uncomfortable, accompany them when reporting the incident(s).
- Speak to the school's Title IX officer, ask for a copy of the school's policy on sexual harassment. Ask the Title IX officer how to file a complaint and what the investigative process entails.
- Encourage your child to write down what happened, when it happened and who else may have seen/heard the harassment.
- If nothing changes after talking with school officials, you can file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, US Department of Education Office at 1800.421.3481. You must file a complaint within 180 days of an act of harassment.

# Parent Note: How to Respond to Sexual Harassment at School





## Statistics Regarding Sexual Harassment

In a study of 1,965 middle school students conducted in 2011:

- Forty-eight percent of students experienced some type of sexual harassment during the school year (56% girls vs. 40% boys).
- Eighty-seven percent of students stated the sexual harassment had a negative effect on them.
- Thirty percent of students experienced sexual harassment online.
- Only 12% of girls and 5% of boys reported the incident to a counselor, teacher or other adult at school.
- Twenty-seven percent talked to family members (including siblings).
- Twenty-three percent talked to friends.
- Fifty percent of those sexually harassed told no one.

## Who Can Sexually Harass Children in School?

**Other Students.** Students of any age can sexually harass other students. Students may be the same or opposite genders. Harassment by other students includes spreading sexual rumors about another student, one student calling another student a homophobic name or one student touching another inappropriately.

**School Officials or Employees.** Students can be sexually harassed by adults in the school system as well:

- ***Quid Pro Quo***—A person in a position of power may request sexual favors in return for a higher grade, access to popular club, or starting position on a school team.
- ***Hostile Environment Harassment***—When any sexual touching, comments or gestures interfere with the student's schoolwork, makes them feel unsafe at school or prevents them from participating or benefiting from a school program or activity.

## How Can I Tell if My Child is Being Sexually Harassed?

Many students who experience sexual harassment are fearful, intimidated, manipulated and overpowered. Many times self-blame is involved and they feel embarrassed, depressed, helpless, and anxious. They may try to avoid where the harassment occurred and have somatic complaints in order to avoid school or extracurricular activities.

School grades may decline and absenteeism can increase. They may quit extracurricular activities or avoid places where the harassment tends to occur. Your child may suffer from depression, anxiety or thoughts of suicide.

If your child requires counseling or other assistance, you may contact us at (573) 332-1900.



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