

# Ending K-12 Sexual Harassment: A Toolkit for Parents and Allies



**Stop Sexual Assault in Schools**

# Ending K-12 Sexual Harassment: A Toolkit for Parents and Allies

## Getting Started

\*Click on hyperlinks in blue



[Watch the PSA "Sexual Harassment is Happening in My School?!"](#)

This toolkit is for both public and private school parents, guardians, and interested adults who want to create safe schools free from sexual harassment and assault. It's designed by two parents who never imagined their child could be sexually assaulted on a school fieldtrip. After this devastating [experience](#), they founded the nonprofit Stop Sexual Assault in Schools ([SSAIS](#)) and launched the [#MeTooK12](#) movement. SSAIS has created some of the best resources to help address sexual harassment and assault K-12 schools.



Families go to great effort to help students succeed academically, but a student's education, career aspirations, and emotional health can be shattered by sexual harassment and sexual assault. In many cases the trauma can last a lifetime.

The time it takes to review and use the toolkit could be the best gift you give a child.

## Basics

All public and private schools that receive federal funding must follow a federal civil rights law called [Title IX](#). It protects students from the negative impact of sexual harassment and assault on their education. All education programs, like those in museums and science centers, which receive federal funds from any source (such as the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, etc.), must also comply with Title IX.

## Private schools



Learn about the many ways private schools receive federal money and **when Title IX applies**. Important: if a school is one of several within an organization or diocese and only one school accepts federal money, Title IX applies to all schools in the organization or diocese. **Learn more**.

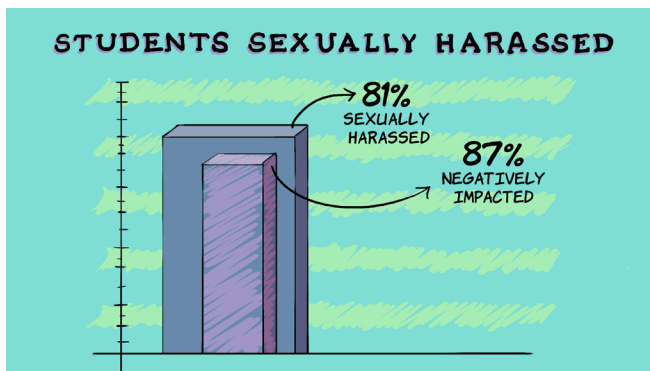
Even if your private school doesn't receive federal funds, you can adapt this toolkit to fight sexual harassment at school. And because many students in private schools move on to schools and colleges that do receive public funding, families should know about Title IX and sexual harassment far before college.



**Visit** the SSAIS webpage for private school families.

## Why should I care about sexual harassment in K-12 schools? Isn't it just a normal part of going to school?

Sexual harassment and assault cause real emotional and economic damage to students and can derail or destroy a student's education. Many parents are shocked to learn that the harassing behaviors begin as early as kindergarten.



Sexual harassment and assault aren't other families' problems; they bleed into all our lives. Sexual harassment and assault impact students of all genders.



**Watch** a parent and civil rights attorney explain why these are community problems, why we must address sexual harassment before it's too late, and how adults can protect students from the impact of sexual harassment and assault.

## What is Title IX and why is it important?



**Watch** students talking with a national expert about Title IX, the federal civil rights law that protects students from all forms of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment.



**Watch** **What is Title IX?** narrated by teens.



**Read** the fact sheet **Title IX Requires Schools to Address Sexual Violence**.



**Read** the **Know Your Rights** webpage at [ssais.org](http://ssais.org).

## How do I know if my school is following Title IX?



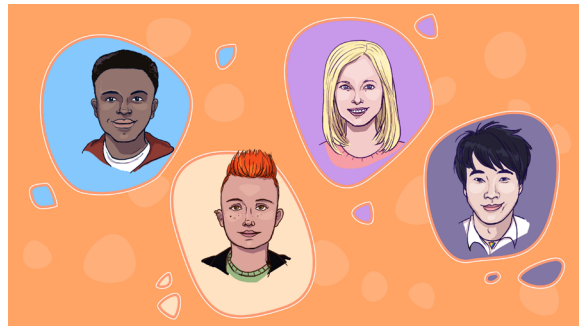
Use the [SSAIS Title IX Checklist](#) to interview school staff and the Title IX Coordinator. Ask:

- What does the district do to promote gender equity in the classroom and in school activities?
- Does the school educate students about gender stereotypes and sex discrimination?
- Does the school educate staff on how to compassionately treat students who report sexual harassment?
- Does the school educate staff on how to handle sexual assault complaints and how to address retaliation if it occurs?

## My school district lacks a trained Title IX Coordinator and isn't following Title IX. What can I do?



**Read** the blogpost **Parents: You Can Become the Agent of Change for Title IX Policies in Your Schools**



**Watch** a parent talk about the sexual harassment of her children with an expert Title IX Coordinator. Share this clip with other families and your school. Encourage your school to train its Title IX Coordinator. It's the law!



Share these fact sheets with your school:

- [Gender-Based Violence & Harassment: Your School, Your Rights](#)
- [Title IX Requires Schools to Address Sexual Violence](#)
- [Cyberbullying and Sexual Harassment: FAQs About Cyberbullying and Title IX](#)
- SSAIS fact sheets: [Know Your Rights](#) and [Video page](#)

## What should the school do if my student experiences sexual harassment, sexual assault, cyber sexual harassment, or dating violence?



The school has clear responsibilities to create a safe environment for the student who reports the harassment, even if there are no criminal charges.



**Watch** students asking a national expert about real situations and learn what K-12 schools must do to protect victims.



**Read How to Protect Students from Sexual Harassment: A Primer for Schools.** Share it with other families and your school.



**Read Title IX Requires Schools to Address Sexual Violence.**



Share these resources with your friends and school!

## How should I make a complaint if my student is sexually harassed or assaulted?

Schools should provide clear descriptions of the complaint pathway. Complaints can be made at the school, district, state, and federal level.



**Read How to File a Title IX Complaint in K12 Schools – A Guide for Parents and Guardians**



**Read How to File a Title IX Sexual Harassment or Assault Complaint with the U.S. Department of Education**



**Read Filing Complaints** on the SSAIS website.

## I've heard that girls of color are disproportionately punished and even blamed for their own sexual assaults. Is this true?

Yes, it is. You can learn more about this serious problem by visiting the [Let Her Learn webpage](#) on the National Women's Law Center website. There you'll find [resources](#) and videos that will help you correct this problem in your school.



**Find out** if your school district overly-punishes girls of color.



Check out the Alliance for Girls **Meeting the Needs of Girls Toolkit** and visit the website of [Girls for Gender Equity](#).



## I've heard that boys are also sexually assaulted, by teachers or peers in the bathroom or locker rooms. How common is this?

Although most students don't report sexual harassment and assault, we know that boys even in kindergarten are assaulted by other boys in the bathroom, on school busses, on the playground, and in other unsupervised or gendered areas. Boys are also the victim of sexual harassment and abuse by male and female teachers. Familiarize yourself with organizations online devoted to male survivors of childhood sexual assault.

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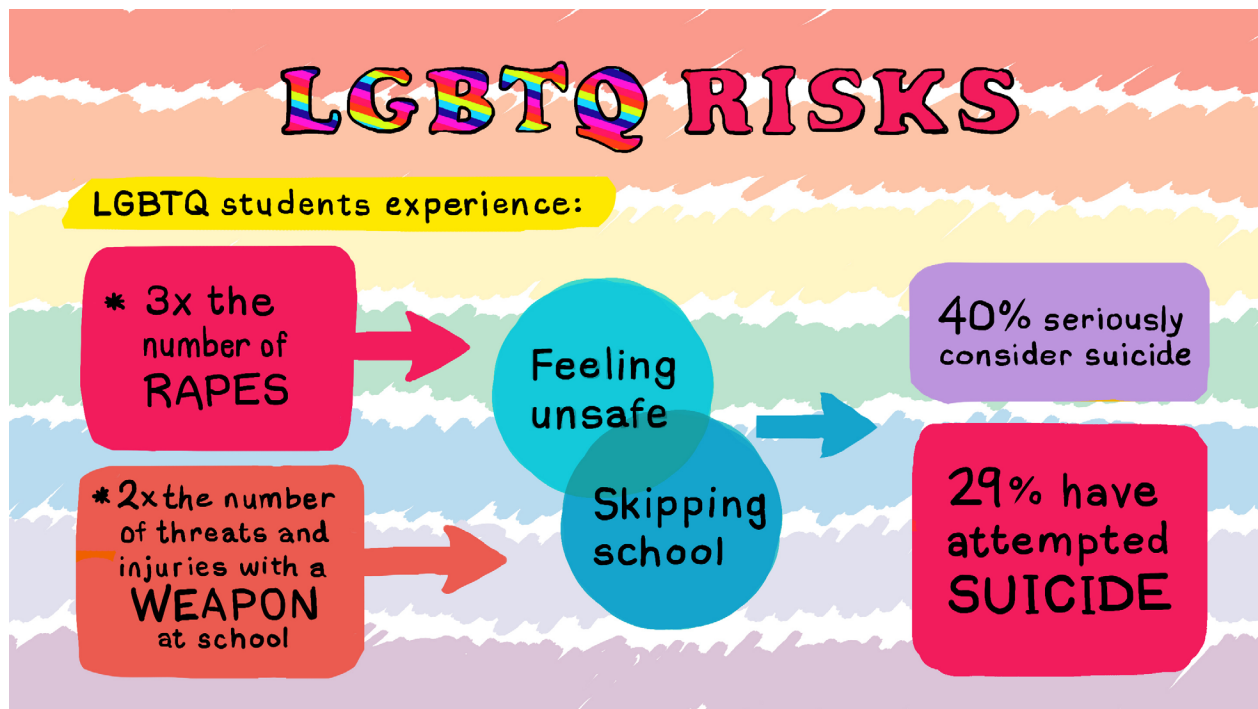
Seek professional help for all students who are suffering the emotional fallout from sexual harassment or assault.

## What about LGBTQ students?

LGBTQ students are at greatest risk for sexual harassment, assault, and suicide.



Reach out to LGBTQ students, sharing information, creating gay straight alliances (or similarly named clubs) at school, and working with existing school clubs to create a safer environment for LGBTQ students.



Here are some fact sheets and a video clip to get you started:

- [FAQs for LGBT or Gender Nonconforming Students and Their Families](#)
- [Transgender Students' Rights](#)
- [Teen Dating Violence Among LGBTQ](#)
- [Watch What Are LGBTQ Students' Rights?](#)

## How can I make our school free from sexual harassment and assault?



**Read Parents: You Can Become the Agent of Change for Title IX Policies in Your Schools**



Find out what the school is doing proactively about sexual harassment. For example, does it make information about sexual harassment readily available to students and parents, are there posters in the halls about sexual harassment, does the school provide anti-sexual harassment campaigns? Does the school train staff to compassionately and effectively take reports of sexual harassment?



Compare your school's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies with [this](#) model policy. Remember that although a school might have good policies, it may not follow them!



Use this helpful [checklist](#) to ask your school what actions it takes when it learns of sexual harassment or discrimination.



Provide your schools with Title IX fact sheets listed in this toolkit to make certain the school understands its responsibilities.



Make sure your school has a trained Title IX coordinator and their contact information is easy to find.



Contact the Title IX Coordinator to make a presentation to your parent teacher organization or community organization. Ask questions from the [checklist](#). Be vigilant throughout every school year.



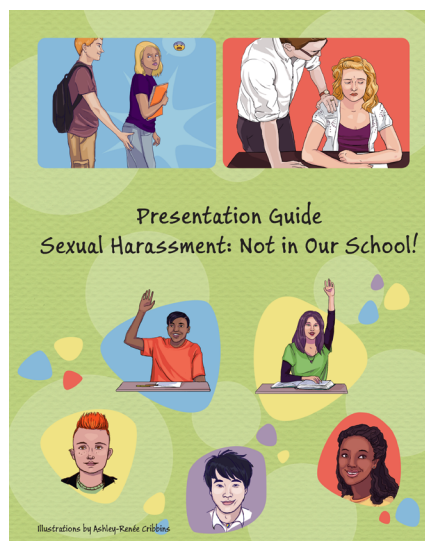
**Watch** the free video **Sexual Harassment: Not in Our School!** Share it with parents (even if their child is in elementary school), middle and high school students, clubs, your parent teacher organization, and community groups. Ask your school district to post it on their website.



There's an accompanying **Presentation Guide**, discussion questions, **Action Guide**, and more.



Ask your school to implement some of the **Action Guide** activities, such as a poster campaign to inform students of their rights and resources.



## What else can I do?



**Learn** about the ways K-12 students experience sexual harassment beginning in kindergarten including comments about not acting like a stereotypical girl or boy, sexual gestures, sounds, verbal statements, graffiti, cyber sexual harassment, inappropriate touching, to actual sexual assault.



**Read *How to Stop Sexual Harassment*** from the organization Girls for Gender Equity. Invite experts to speak on these topics to your parent teacher organization.



Talk with your student about sexual harassment, boundaries, consent, healthy relationships, cyber sexual harassment, and dating violence from a young age, and often. Let them know that sexual harassment at school is illegal and that you stand with them to address it.



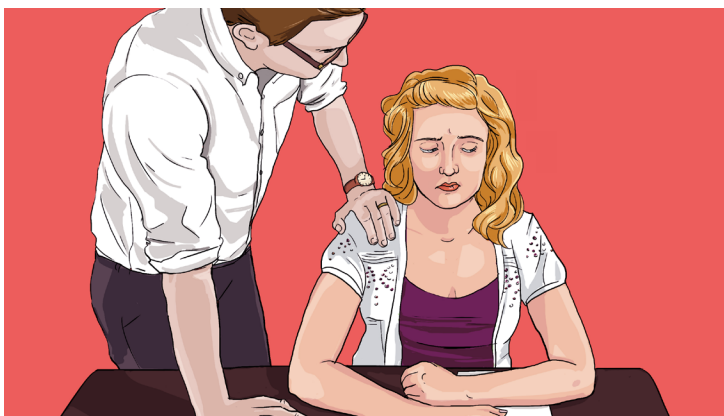
**Learn** how bullying leads to sexual harassment, and how harassment can lead to suicide. Work with anti-bullying and suicide prevention clubs to include the dangers associated with sexual harassment and assault.



Start a gender equity club in your middle or high school using ***Campus Activism: How to Become a NOW Activist in High School***.



**Learn** about grooming and discuss the threat of teacher or staff sexual harassment and abuse. At least 10% of students are sexually harassed or abused by school employees.



Learn more at websites like **Stop Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct & Exploitation** and **Talk About Abuse to Liberate Kids (TAALK)**.



Work with your school to implement campaigns and activities to eliminate sexual harassment using the SSAIS **Action Guide**.



Explain to schools that won't admit that their students experience sexual harassment, or don't want to talk about "sex," that your intention is to create a healthy and respectful school climate.



Tell the school that anti-harassment activities for students are necessary because students are likely to witness or experience sexual harassment in college and the workplace.



Use the **Action Guide** outside the classroom to help you avoid the process of getting the SSAIS education approved for the classroom. The recommended activities can go a long way to create a sustainable climate of respect in the school, especially when they are implemented repeatedly over the long term.

If your school refuses to implement campaigns, work outside the school with small groups of students, parents, and allies.



Involve youth serving organizations, faith groups, sexual assault crisis centers, and gender equity groups to educate students and families about the real dangers associated with sexual harassment and assault.

Many schools discourage students from reporting or fail to take a written report. Schools often mislabel sexual harassment as bullying, so if a school has no reports of sexual harassment, something is likely wrong.



Find out the number of reports of sexual harassment over the last few years and other information by making a public information request using these [helpful forms](#). Schools must collect **certain data** regarding incidents of sexual harassment.



Dive into reports like [Stopping School Pushout for Girls Who have Suffered Sexual Harassment and Violence](#), explore the resources [on the National Women’s Law Center website](#), watch free [awareness videos](#), and visit [SSAIS.org/video](#), the SSAIS.org #MeTooK12 movement [page](#), and the SSAIS.org [library](#).

**Sexual harassment and assault occur in all kinds of schools, regardless of location. Remember that students have come to endure sexual harassment as a normal part of their school experience, even though it interferes with their learning and takes an emotional toll. Most parents aren’t aware of the risks that all children face.**



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