



Comprehensive Title IX, Harassment, and Anti-Discrimination Policy			
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I. PURPOSE

Acero Schools is committed to providing a safe and secure work and learning environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct which can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive. Acero Schools strives to provide a place of work and study free of sexual harassment, intimidation, exploitation, and retaliation. It is expected that students, faculty, staff and other individuals covered by this Policy will treat one another with respect.

A. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972:

1. As a general matter, Acero provides equal educational opportunity for all students and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex. No student shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity operated by the school on the basis of sex.

It will be a violation of this policy for any student or Acero employee to discriminate against a student or Acero employee based on their gender. For purposes of this policy, an Acero employee includes members of the Board of Directors, school employees, agents, volunteers, contractors or other people subject to the supervision and control of Acero.

B. Harassment:

1. Acero Schools’ long-standing policy has been to offer fair and equal opportunity to every person regardless of race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship status, veteran status, ancestry, mental or physical disability, pregnancy, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws. The harassment of an individual on any of these bases is illegal and will not be tolerated by Acero Schools.

C. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

Acero Schools does not discriminate in its educational programs or activities on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, religion or

religious creed, disability or handicap, sex or gender, gender identity and/or expression (including a transgender identity), sexual orientation, military or veteran status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Unlawful discrimination has no place at Acero Schools. All Acero Schools employees and students are expected to join with and uphold this commitment.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Discrimination and Gender Discrimination: Unjust or prejudicial treatment, including harassment and sexual misconduct, towards individuals due to the person's real or implied membership in one or more of the Protected Categories, as defined below that interferes or limits the ability of any student to participate in, enjoy or benefit from Acero Schools programs, whether physical, verbal, graphic, written or otherwise.
- B. Harassment (including Sexual Harassment): Unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, visual, and/or physical conduct where the purpose or effect of the behavior is to create an offensive, hostile, or intimidating environment. Sexual Harassment shall include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual behaviors, sexually-motivated physical contact or other verbal or physical contact, conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:
1. Submission to that contact, conduct, or communication is made a term or condition, either explicitly or implicitly, of receiving a benefit,
 2. Submission to or rejection of that contact, conduct, or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment or education; or
 3. The contact, conduct, or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's employment or education or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive workplace or educational environment.

Unwelcome conduct may include, but is not limited to, bullying intimidation, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, assaults or threats, touching or sexually-motivated physical contact, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, requests for sexual favors, offensive sexual flirtation, graphic or degrading sexual comments, sexually oriented "kidding" or "teasing," unwanted continued physical touching, display of sexually suggestive printed or visual material, objects or pictures, obscene or harassing use of telecommunications or other technologies, and/or any other persistent, pervasive or severe conduct that interferes with work performance or a student's access to or participation in education, athletic, or extracurricular activities.

- C. Protected Categories: Actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy childbirth, breastfeeding, and pregnancy related medical conditions), race or ethnicity, ethnic group identification, ancestry, nationality, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, age (40 and above), immigration status, marital status, registered domestic partner status, genetic information, political belief or affiliation (not union related), military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, ordinance, or regulation.
- D. Retaliation: Adverse employment action or adverse change in academic status,

such as discipline or denial of or access to a service or benefit, against any person for having made a complaint or report of Discrimination, Harassment, or Sexual Misconduct, whether made internally, or externally with a federal, state, or local agency; or participating or aiding in an investigation of Discrimination, Harassment, or Sexual Misconduct, whether internal, or external with a federal, state, or local agency is strictly prohibited.

- E. **Sexual Violence**: Also known as “gender-based violence” shall include any unwanted or inappropriate sexual contact with a student or employee, including consensual sexual relations between an adult and a student. Such violence includes acts of aggression or force or threat thereof that involves the touching of another’s intimate parts or forced touching of one’s own or another’s intimate parts, including the genital area, groin, inner thigh, buttocks or breast, or clothing covering those areas.
- F. **Covered Individuals**: Employee, student, contractor, consultant, vendor, volunteer, or board member.

III. GENERAL POLICY

- A. **Working and Learning Environment**: It is the policy of Acero Schools to maintain a safe and secure work and learning environment in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Each employee, student, and all other Covered Individuals, shall enjoy the right to work and learn in an environment that is free of Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Retaliation. No person shall be required to endure Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Retaliation as a condition of employment or in pursuit of academic endeavors.
- B. **Conduct Prohibited**: Acero Schools prohibits Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation, intimidation, and/or bullying based on any Protected Categories, in any of its programs or activities.
- C. **Covered Individuals**: No Covered Individuals shall be subjected to or engage in any Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Retaliation, as these terms are defined in Section II of this Policy, against another while employed, working for, attending school, or participating in Acero Schools programs and activities.
- D. **Scope**: This Policy covers all phases of employment and academic status, including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, evaluations, upgrading, rates of pay, the selection for training, promotions, demotions, transfers, layoffs, employment non-renewals, termination, benefits, discipline, expulsions, admissions, educational testing, extracurricular programs, and athletics.
- E. **Limitations**: Nothing in this Policy is intended nor shall be construed to create a private right of action against Acero Schools or any of its employees. Furthermore, no part of this Policy shall be construed to create contractual or other rights or expectations. Nothing herein is intended to affect the right of any person to file a charge or complaint of Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Retaliation with any agency with jurisdiction over such charge or complaint.

IV. DESIGNATION OF TITLE IX OFFICERS

- A. The General Counsel/Designee is designated as Acero’s Title IX Coordinator and is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- B. At each campus, the School Principal is designated as the Title IX Campus

Representative and shall assist the General Counsel/Designee in enforcing this policy.

V. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND INVESTIGATIONS

The intent of the reporting and investigatory procedures established under this policy is to ensure that Acero Schools promptly addresses and responds to allegations of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual violence, bullying or retaliation.

Acero Schools employees should refrain from conducting an investigation until they have been instructed to do so by the CPS Office of Student Protections and Title IX (OSP) or the CPS Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

The report of any investigatory or law enforcement agency shall not relieve Acero Schools from the responsibilities under Title IX, Harassment, or Discrimination reporting and investigating as described below.

A. Reporting Requirements for Allegations of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence:

1. For instances of sexual harassment/violence under this policy that involve **only students or students and adults who are not affiliated with Acero Schools**, employees must:
 - i. Call 911 if it is an emergency.
 - ii. Call DCFS at 1-800-252-2873.
 - iii. Call the CPS Office of Student Protections and Title IX at 773-535-4400.
2. For instances of sexual harassment/violence under this policy that involve **students and Acero Schools-affiliated adults**:
 - i. Call 911 if it is an emergency.
 - ii. Call DCFS at 1-800-252-2873
 - iii. Call the CPS Office of the Inspector General at 833-835-5277.
3. For instances of sexual harassment/violence under this policy that involve **only Acero Schools-affiliated adults**:
 - i. Call 911 if it is an emergency.
 - ii. Report the complaint to the Title IX Coordinator in writing within 24 hours.
 - iii. Any reports made to the Human Capital team should be forwarded directly to the Title IX Coordinator.

B. Reporting Requirements for Allegations of Discrimination, Gender Discrimination, Harassment or Retaliation:

1. For instances of misconduct under this policy that involve **only students**, employees must:
 - i. Report the complaint to the Title IX Coordinator in writing within 24 hours.
 - ii.
2. For instances of misconduct under this policy that involve **students and**

Acero Schools-affiliated adults, employees must:

- i. Report the complaint to the Title IX Coordinator in writing within 24 hours.
- ii. Any reports made to the Human Capital team should be forwarded directly to the Title IX Coordinator.

3. For instances of misconduct under this policy that involve **only Acero Schools-affiliated adults**:

- i. Report the complaint to the Title IX Coordinator in writing within 24 hours.
- ii. Any reports made to the Human Capital team should be forwarded directly to the Title IX Coordinator.

C. Investigation Responsibility for Allegations of Sexual Misconduct or Sexual Violence:

1. Instances of sexual harassment/violence involving **only students or students and adults who are not affiliated with Acero Schools** will be investigated by the CPS Office of Student Protection.
2. Instances of sexual harassment/violence involving **students and Acero Schools-affiliated adults** will be investigated by the CPS Office of the Inspector General and Office of Student Protection.
3. Instances of sexual harassment/violence involving **only Acero Schools-affiliated adults** will be investigated by the Title IX Coordinator.

When an investigation by the Office of Student Protections and Title IX or Office of the Inspector General is ongoing and additional information is communicated to Acero Schools employees, they must contact the office conducting the investigation immediately.

D. Investigation Responsibility for Allegations of Discrimination, Gender Discrimination, Harassment or Retaliation:

1. Instances of misconduct under this policy that involve **only students** will be primarily investigated by Title IX Campus Representatives.
2. Instances of misconduct under this policy that involve **students and Acero Schools-affiliated adults** will be primarily investigated by Title IX Coordinator and Title IX Campus Representatives.
3. Instances of misconduct under this policy that involve **only Acero Schools-affiliated adults** will be primarily investigated by the Title IX Coordinator and the Office of Human Capital.

VI. VIOLATIONS

It is a violation of this Policy for:

- A. Any covered individuals to engage in Discrimination, Gender Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Violence, and/or Retaliation;
- B. Any employee, contractor, consultant or vendor to intentionally ignore

Discrimination, Gender Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Violence, and/or Retaliation by a Covered Individual that occurs in their presence, by failing to report that conduct, regardless of whether or not the Covered Individual complains about the conduct;

- C. Any employee, contractor, consultant or vendor to fail to fulfill their duties and responsibilities as described in Section V above;
- D. Any employee, contractor, consultant or vendor to refuse to participate and/or provide truthful information in an investigation conduct by the OSP, OIG, Acero Schools, or Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services; and
- E. Any Covered Individual to intentionally bring allegations in bad faith, and which the OSP, OIG, Acero Schools, or ODLSS finds to be false.

VII. ENCLOSURES (FORMS)

[Title IX Complaint Resolution Report and Recommendations Form](#)
[OSP Sexual Misconduct Categories](#)

VIII. APPLICABILITY

This Policy is applicable to all Acero Schools employees. Failure to comply with this Policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.