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Title IX Final Regulations: Training for Implementation

Pennoyer School District 79
Union Ridge School District 86
July 29, 2021



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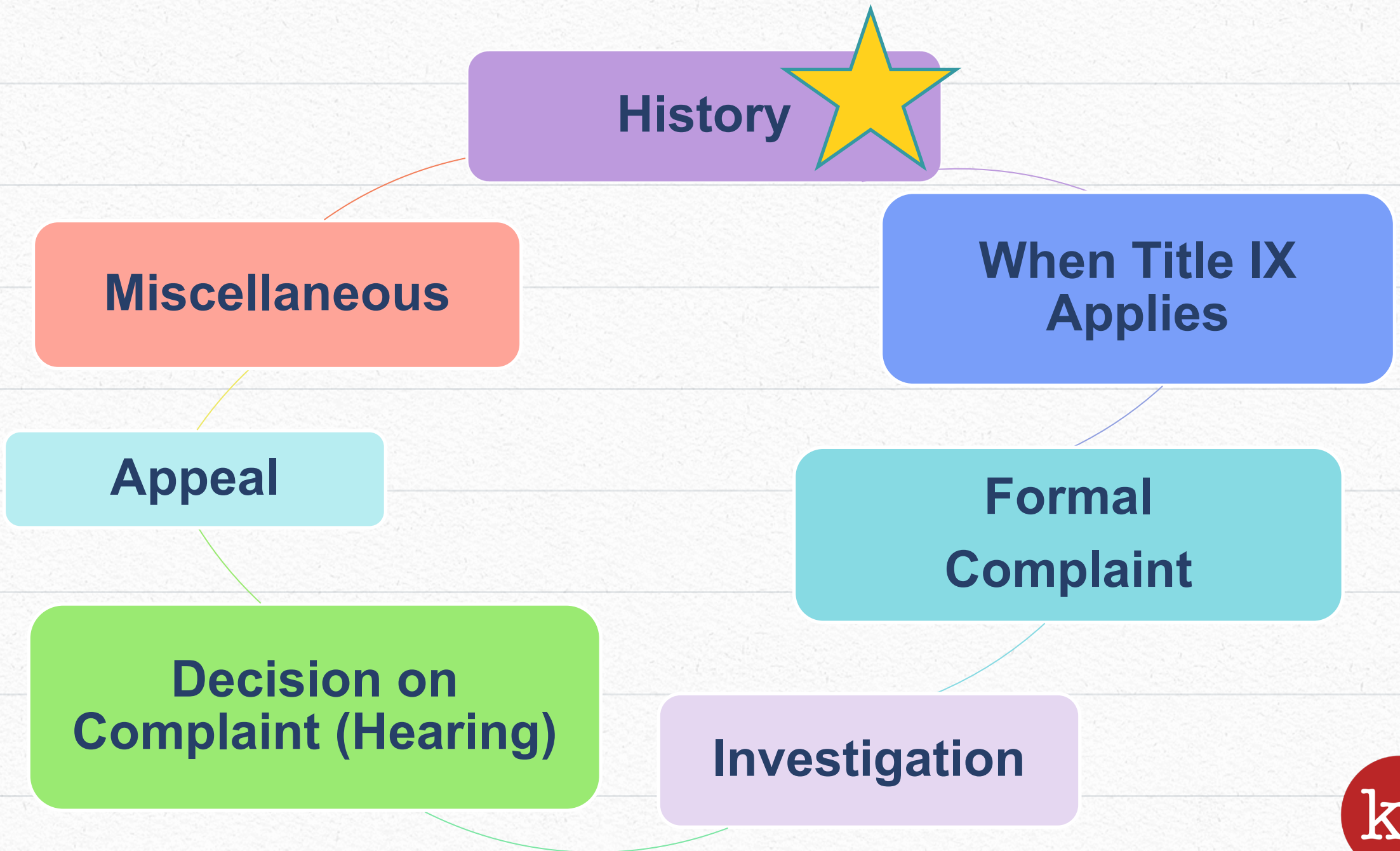
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History



Miscellaneous

When Title IX Applies

Appeal

Formal Complaint

Decision on Complaint (Hearing)

Investigation



“No person in the United States shall, **on the basis of sex**, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

20 U.S.C. §1681(a)





**Title IX of the Education
Amendments Act of
1972**

20 U.S.C. §1681
Signed on June 23, 1972



1972 → 2020

- **In 1972**, Congress was primarily concerned with equal access for men and women to school admission, school-related activities (like sports), and employment in schools.
- **In the 1980's**, courts universally held that sex-based discrimination also includes actions based on sex, including sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual violence.
- **Today**, Title IX's protective reach has even extended to transgender and LGBTQ individuals.



Transgender Students and Staff

The *Illinois Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination based on the following in Illinois public schools [775 ILCS 5/1-102(A)]:

Race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or unfavorable discharge from military service someone's actual or perceived sexual orientation, which is defined to include heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality and gender-related identity.

On June 30, 2019, Governor J.B. Pritzker signed an executive order that protects the rights of transgender students attending public schools.



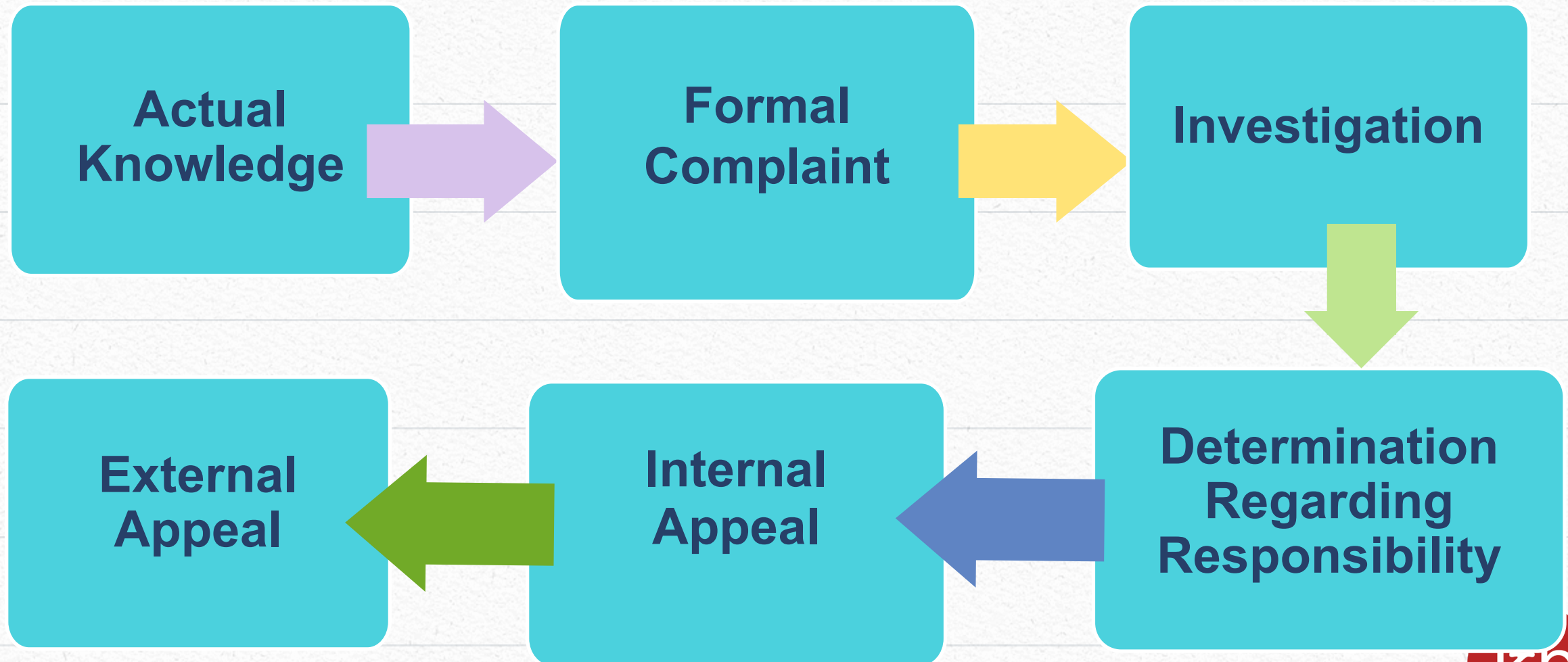


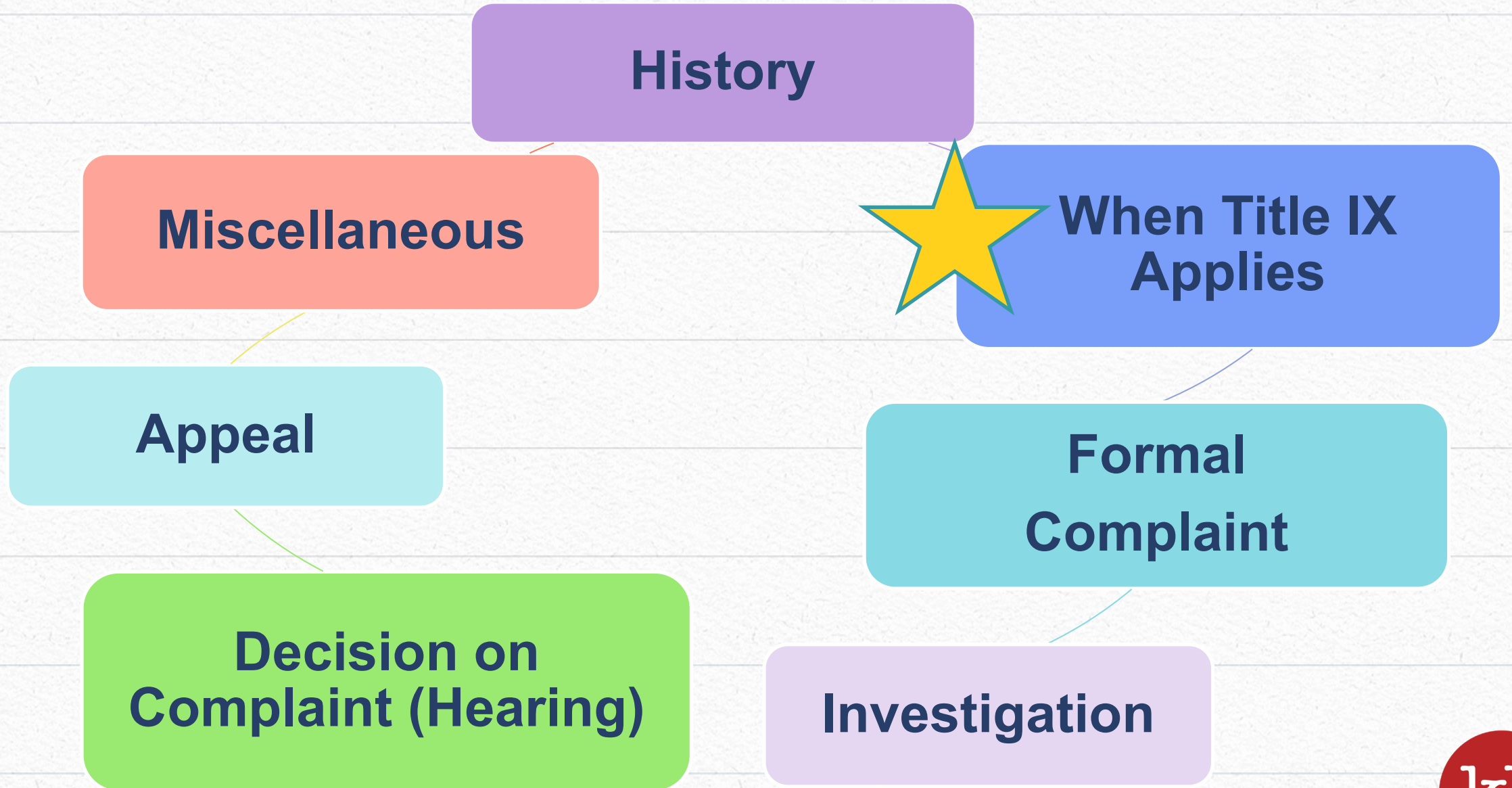
Colleges and Universities



K-12 Schools

6 Phases of the Title IX Process





Title IX Applies to Diverse Situations

1. Gender discrimination in an activity, athletics, program, office or classroom
2. Unequal athletic facilities, locker rooms, playing/practice fields, musical instruments/facilities, etc., for either gender
3. General prohibition against single sex programs or services, with limited exceptions, such as:
 - x Chorus (vocal range)
 - x Sex ed classes
 - x Certain academic courses when a specific need is identified (STEM classes for girls only)



Title IX Misconduct Based on Sex

1. **Quid pro quo offer based on sex:** employee (not student) offers some kind of aid-benefit-service in exchange for unwelcome sexual conduct
2. **Violence based on sex:** sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and/or stalking, as defined in the *Clery Act* and the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)*
3. **Sexual harassment:**
 - Unwelcome sexual conduct (or conduct based on sex)
 - So severe AND pervasive AND objectively offensive
 - That it effectively denies a person equal access to educational programs or activities



Actual Knowledge is Required

- Title IX applies when school personnel have actual knowledge either informally through a verbal or written report (including anonymous reports) of sexual harassment or allegations of misconduct based on sex.
- In K-12 school systems, “any employee” can have actual knowledge.



Location of the Misconduct

- Title IX only applies to conduct that occurs during educational programs or activities, both on-campus and off-campus.
- This includes locations, events or circumstances over which the school exercises substantial control over the respondent (perpetrator) and the context in which the misconduct occurs.
- A school district may address sexual harassment affecting its students or employees that falls outside Title IX's jurisdiction in any manner the school district chooses, including providing supportive measures and/or pursuing discipline.



In the United States

- The facts underlying a Title IX complaint must arise in the United States. Misconduct that occurs abroad does not fall under the purview of Title IX (although it could still be subject to the school's disciplinary code of conduct).



Complainant's Enrollment

- At the time of filing a Title IX complaint, the Complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in the school's educational program or activities.



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Formal Title IX Complaint

- A formal Title IX process is (generally speaking) not necessary in situations where the building administration and families reach consensus on how to move forward under the circumstances.
- Many situations involving misconduct based on sex are resolved at the building level without the filing of a formal Title IX complaint.
- Remember that the filing of a Title IX complaint is always the decision of the complainant and his/her parents. Complainants should never be dissuaded or discouraged from filing a Title IX complaint.
- When a formal Title IX complaint is filed, the school must respond by following the grievance procedures contained in board policy 2:265.
- A Title IX complaint may be withdrawn by the complainant at any time.



Formal Title IX Complaint

- School personnel must respond *promptly* and in a manner that is *not deliberately indifferent*.
- Must treat complainants and respondents *equitably*
- Must offer *supportive measures* to both complainants and respondents

Promptly: without unnecessary delay under the circumstances

Deliberately indifferent: clearly unreasonable in light of known circumstances

Equitably: equal, fair and impartial

Supportive measures: non-punitive individualized services offered free of charge as appropriate in order to restore equal access.

Formal Complaint Signed by School Staff

There are some circumstances under which the school district's Title IX coordinator "signs" a formal complaint instead of the complainant

When would this be necessary?

- X If the complainant is not willing or eligible (e.g., has graduated)
- X A potential safety risk continues for other students/employees
- X A staff member is accused of committing sexual misconduct against a student

Examples:

- X The school has actual knowledge of a pattern of alleged sexual harassment by a perpetrator in a position of authority
- X The school wishes to investigate allegations in order to determine whether it has probable cause to find that an employee is engaging in sexual misconduct
- X A Title IX coordinator receives multiple reports of sexual harassment against the same respondent



Informal Resolution is (Sometimes) an Option

- After a formal complaint is filed, the parties may agree to engage in informal resolution of the complaint
- Requirements for informal resolution:
 - ✗ Can never be compelled; parties must mutually agree
 - ✗ May be facilitated at any time before a determination regarding responsibility is reached
 - ✗ Parties must provide written consent to participate in the informal resolution process
 - ✗ Before conclusion of the informal resolution process, either party has the right to withdraw their consent and return to the grievance/complaint procedure
- Keep in mind that school districts are not allowed to use informal resolution for allegations of an employee's sexual misconduct against a student



Impartiality (slide #1)

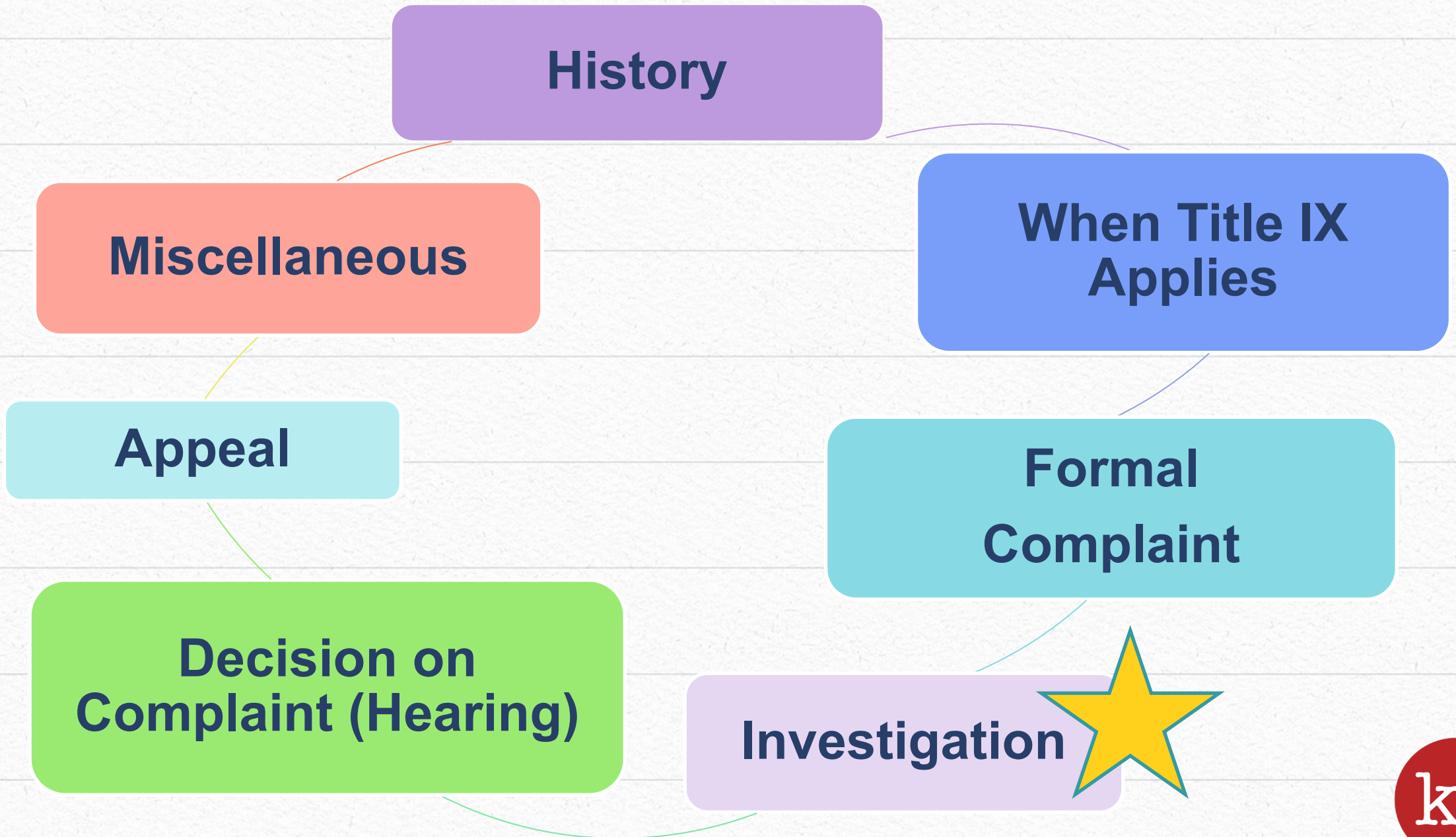
- We all have biases, whether conscious or unconscious
 - X <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
 - X <https://trustandjustice.org/resources/intervention/implicit-bias>
- Resist the urge to categorize people or situations
- Reflect critically on your own identity and experience
- Recognize when your identity and experience may affect your judgment
- Hold yourself accountable and seek opportunities for continuous improvement



Impartiality (slide #2)

- Being impartial means setting aside preconceived beliefs and the urge to judge.
- Being impartial means listening equally to all sides and perspectives and focusing on understanding the viewpoints of all involved.
 - X Listening impartially to others takes **time**
 - X Listening impartially requires **awareness** of one's own biases
 - X Listening impartially means **asking questions that open up dialogue**, rather than close it down
- Strategies for demonstrating impartiality include summarizing what you have heard and reflecting back. This can help you avoid bias and ensure that you are correctly understanding what the person has to say.
- Acknowledge where differences between accounts/perspectives exist; rather than seek to smooth over differences (which is human nature), seek more details.
- Take care that your words, tone of voice and body language are neutral and open.





Allow Other Investigations to Run Their Course*



*Usually -
Check with legal counsel



Trauma-Informed Responses to Title IX Investigations

- Understand the impact of trauma on a neurobiological, physical and emotional level
- Promote safety and support
- Implement positive/supportive measures to avoid re-traumatization
- Provide choice with the goal of empowerment



Investigations — Tips and Strategies

- Plan investigation scope and timeline
- Identify and interview all involved parties and witnesses
 - X Interview the complainant and the respondent (separately) about what happened; additional interviews may be needed as evidence is uncovered
 - X Ask open-ended questions about the incident(s) in the complaint
 - Pre-script standardized, open-ended questions
 - Use neutral language
 - Allow time for follow-up questions
 - Refrain from using judgmental or projecting language
 - X Ask each person for the names of potential witnesses for additional interviews
 - X Understand and implement trauma-informed interviews



Investigations — Evidence to be Reviewed


- Gather any other relevant documentation available, such as documents, files, audio and video recordings, security camera footage, entry/exit logs, text messages, emails, social media posts, physical evidence, police reports, diary entries, etc.
 - X Privileged information, such as medical records, educational records or correspondence between a party and their lawyer is generally off limits, but a person may voluntarily offer this information
 - X Think about what evidence could potentially corroborate (support) the statements made in the interviews
 - X If a search is necessary, remember it must comply with the Fourth Amendment
- Once compiled, send all evidence to complainant and respondent (and their advisors) with plenty of time (at least 10 days) to meaningfully respond
- Refrain at this step the credibility of the parties or their statements, but document details that *do* and/or *do not* align with other parties' accounts and other relevant evidence



Investigation — The Written Report

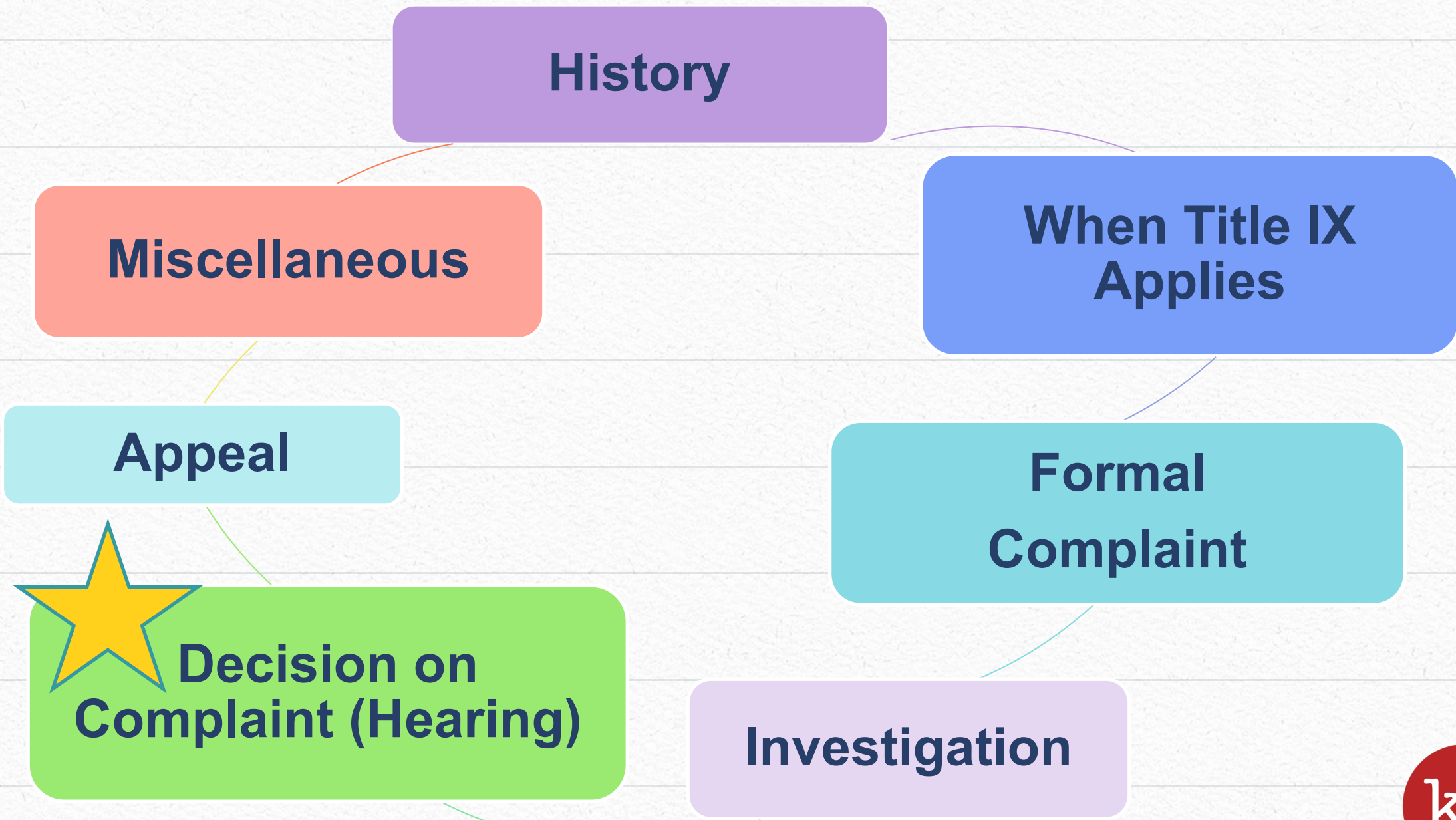
- The investigator prepares a final written investigation report that fairly summarizes all the relevant evidence, without making a determination of responsibility or deciding 'fault'
- The investigator does not determine the credibility of parties, witnesses or evidence
- The investigator gathers all relevant evidence and turns everything over to the decision-maker to weigh credibility and make a decision (this happens during the next phase)
- The final written investigation report must be sent to each party
- Keep in mind that the complainant has the right to withdraw the complaint at any time
- The parties may also mutually agree to participate in the informal resolution process at any time



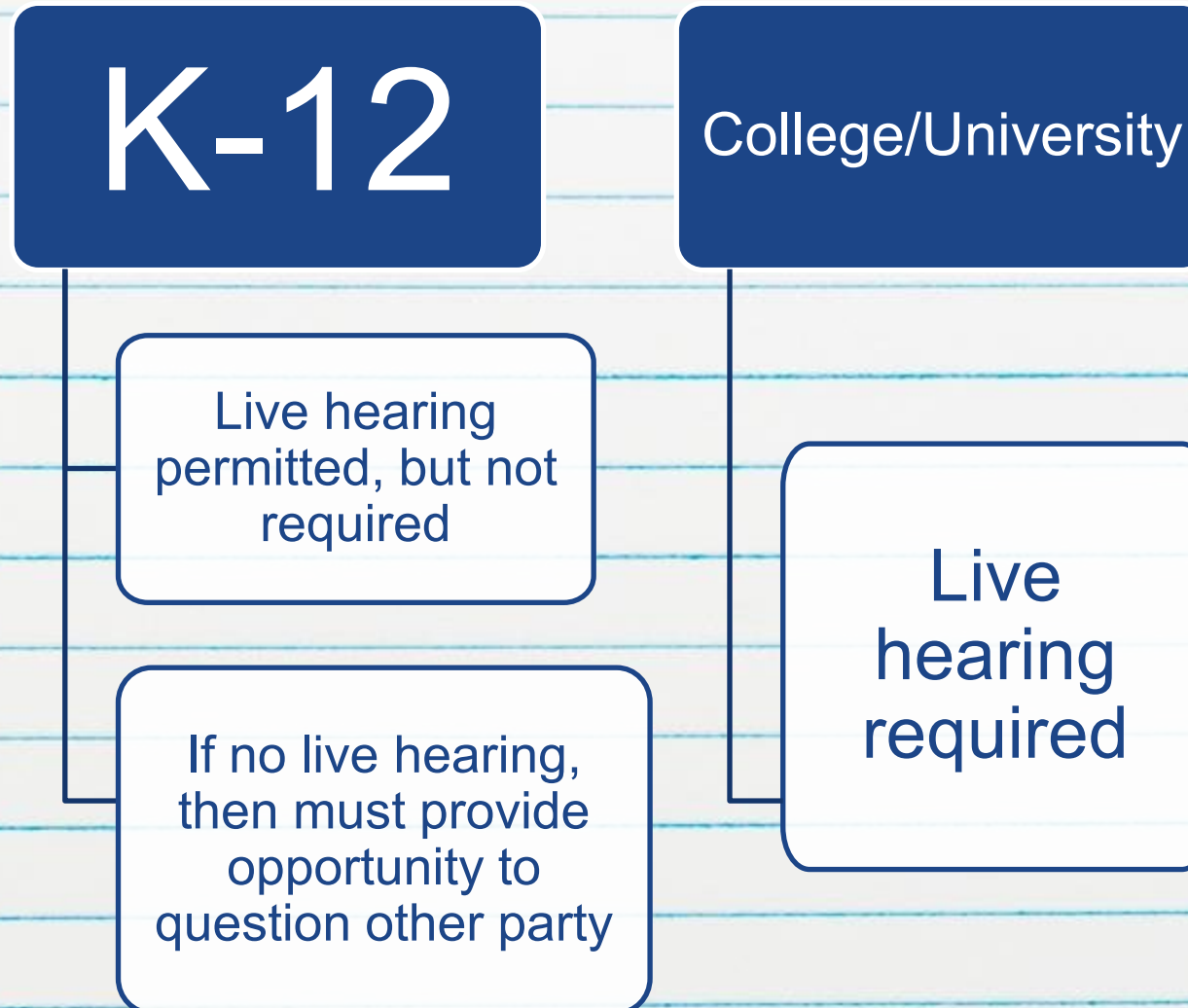


Corey's Law and Student Interviews

- Corey's Law requires notice to parents before a student is interviewed by law enforcement, an SRO, or school security personnel
- Must make reasonable efforts to allow parents to be present during the interview if held on school grounds
- 105 ILCS 5/22-85



Hearing / Opportunity to Question



Opportunity to Question

- Parties may only be asked *relevant* questions
 - Does it tend to make a fact more or less probable than without that information?
 - Is it likely to prove or disprove a fact or an allegation?
- Same standard for live hearing and for written opportunity to question
- Decision-maker must determine relevance of questions as they are asked and before they are answered
- What will be unique in this process is the ‘back and forth’ nature of the questions between the parties, with the decision-maker determining the relevance of all questions posed in writing



Opportunity to Question

Parties may only be asked *relevant* questions

- Legally privileged information cannot be used
- Treatment records may not be used without voluntary written consent
- Questions about a party's "prior sexual behavior or predisposition" are not considered relevant and must be excluded, unless offered either
 - 1) to prove someone else committed the alleged conduct, or
 - 2) to prove consent, because it has to do with past sexual behavior between complainant and respondent



Opportunity to Question

For K-12 schools only, when no live hearing is held, then the school district must provide an opportunity for each side to ask each other written questions. These written questions are 'funneled' through the decision-maker.

- After the investigative report is sent to each party, each party must have the opportunity to submit written, relevant questions that it wants from any other involved party or witness
- School must facilitate this written back-and-forth between the parties:
 - Each party must provide the answers to all the questions requested
 - The decision-maker must allow for additional, limited follow-up questions from each party, as he/she determines relevant



Standard of Review

The decision-maker applies the school district's chosen standard of evidence for Title IX investigations:

- **Option 1:** “preponderance of the evidence” standard
- **Option 2:** “clear and convincing” standard

Each school district must choose one of these standards for ALL sexual harassment investigations (those involving just students, just employees, and both students and employees)



The Written Decision

- The decision-maker issues a written determination regarding responsibility that includes:
 - Identification of allegations of sexual harassment that meet Title IX definition
 - Description of all procedural steps
 - Findings of fact supporting the determination
 - Conclusions regarding application of school's disciplinary code to the facts
 - Rationale for the decision regarding *each* allegation and determination regarding responsibility
 - Any disciplinary sanctions imposed upon a party
 - Any other remedies and supportive measures recommended or warranted
 - Procedures and permissible bases for appeal
- School must provide written determination to parties simultaneously
- Title IX Coordinator implements remedies / coordinates disciplinary consequences



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Appeals

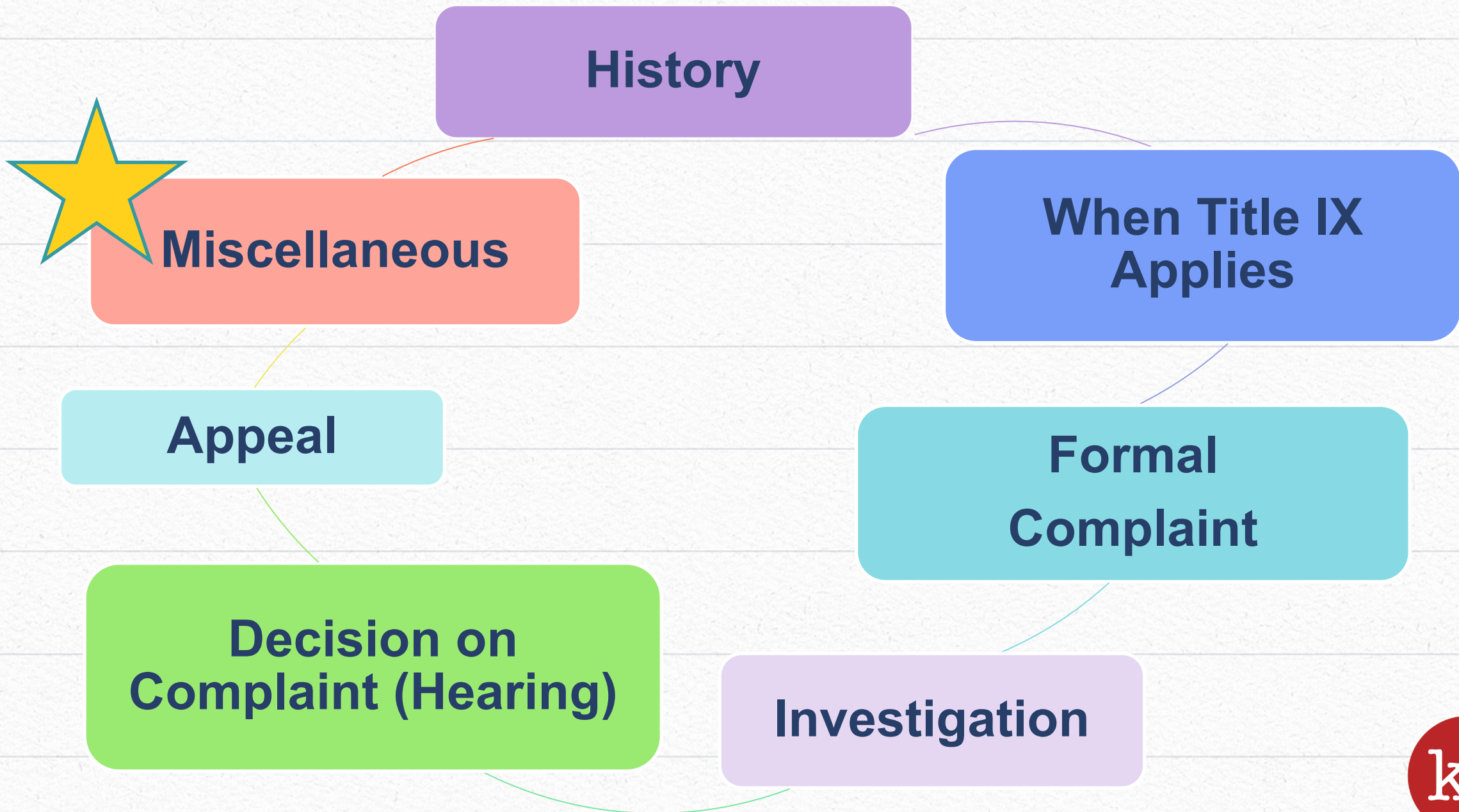
- Parties can appeal:
 - The determination of responsibility, OR
 - School's decision to dismiss complaint
- Bases for appeal:
 - Procedural irregularity that *affected the outcome*
 - New evidence not reasonably available previously that *could affect outcome*
 - That Title IX Coordinator OR Investigator(s) OR Decision-maker(s) had a bias or conflict of interest that *affected the outcome*
 - Generally, either for or against complainants or respondents, OR
 - Specifically, either for or against an involved party
 - Another basis for appeal allowed by the school, as long as it is equally available to either party



Appeals

- School must do following for an appeal:
 - Notify the other party in writing when an appeal is filed and on what basis
 - Implement appeals procedure equitably
 - The appeals decision-maker must not have been involved in the Title IX complaint process thus far
 - The appeal decision-maker must be trained and is neutral/impartial
 - Give both parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement about the outcome of the investigation phase
 - Issue a written decision describing the result (final decision) and rationale
 - Provide decision simultaneously to all parties
- Can a Title IX matter be appealed any farther? Presumably yes, in a court of local jurisdiction and potentially also to OCR





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Recordkeeping

The Title IX Coordinator must keep written records for 7 years of all of the following:

- Title IX complaints, including:
 - Supportive measures provided
 - If no supportive measures provided, document why not warranted
 - Basis for school's conclusion that its response was not deliberately indifferent
 - Documentation of measures designed to restore or preserve equal access for the complainant
- Investigation reports and records
- Recordings/transcripts of hearings (if any)
- Written determinations regarding responsibility
- Disciplinary consequences (if any)
- Appeals
- Informal Resolutions



Training

All training materials used to train

- Title IX coordinator
- Investigator(s)
- Decision-maker(s)
- Appeals decision-maker(s)

Training must include:

- Title IX regulations
- How to use technology
- How to avoid prejudice
- How to serve impartially
- How to determine issues of relevance of questions or evidence

Training materials must be kept for seven years AND posted publicly to school's website for public review



Retaliation is Prohibited

- Retaliation is prohibited against anyone involved in a Title IX complaint, investigation, or grievance procedure
- The exercise of rights protected under the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation that is prohibited
- School can charge someone with a disciplinary violation for making a “materially false statement in bad faith” during grievance proceeding



School Board Policy Integration

Policy Revisions to Align with Title IX Regulations

- Section 2:260 – Uniform Grievance Procedure
- Section 2:265 – Title IX Policy
- Section 7:10 – Equal Educational Opportunities
- Section 7:20 – Harassment of Students Prohibited



