ADVANCED TITLE IX COORDINATOR TRAINING

A Practical and Experiential Approach to Navigating Complex Challenges

Jessica Ward

June 25 & 26, 2026

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ABOUT US

Vision

We exist to create safe and equitable work and educational environments.

Mission

To bring systemic change to how school districts and institutions of higher education address their Clery Act & Title IX obligations.

Core Values

- Responsive Partnership
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Transformation
- Integrity

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MEET YOUR FACILITATOR

Coordinator & Director Services

Jessica Ward, PhD

Jessica Ward is a Senior Solutions Specialist at Grand River Solutions. Most of Jessica's career has been spent working in Title IX, student conduct, residence life, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion education.

Prior to joining Grand River Solutions, Jessica was the Associate Vice President/Dean of Students/Title IX Coordinator at the University of Indianapolis. In this role Jessica was responsible for all Title IX training and compliance for students, faculty, and staff; led the Behavioral Intervention Team as the Chief Conduct Officer; facilitated student conduct and Title IX hearings; was responsible for all aspects of the residence life program and worked closely with retention efforts. Prior to this, Jessica served as the Assistant Director for the Office of Student Standards at Eastern Illinois University where she was responsible for training hearing panel members, conducting organizational/hazing investigations, and providing alcohol, drug, and bystander education. At the same time, she also served as the Coordinator for Gender and Sexual Diversity, where she overhauled the Safe Zone training program and created a Trans and Differing Abilities inclusive Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity.

Jessica earned her Doctor of Philosophy from Indiana State University in Leadership in Higher education. Jessica earned a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from the University of Kansas and a Bachelor's degree in Rhetoric and Political Science from Georgia College and State University.

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AGENDA

- Trauma Informed Practices
- Access, culture, and community
- Managing Difficult Parties
  Re-building Trust
- Pushback from Faculty
- Pregnancy or Related Conditions
- Climate Survey
- Prevention
- Burnout

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Framing Today's Conversation

- Be mindful
- Honor privacy
- Assume positive intent
- Any suggestions?

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GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Name
2. Pronouns
3. Institution
4. Role
5. How long you have been doing Title IX work?
6. Favorite Summer Activity?

Let's Chat!

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BREAKOUT ROOMS

- What is an area/aspect of Title IX you feel confident about (writing notices, being trauma-informed, etc.)?
- What is your biggest challenge in doing Title IX work?

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THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF TRAUMA

01

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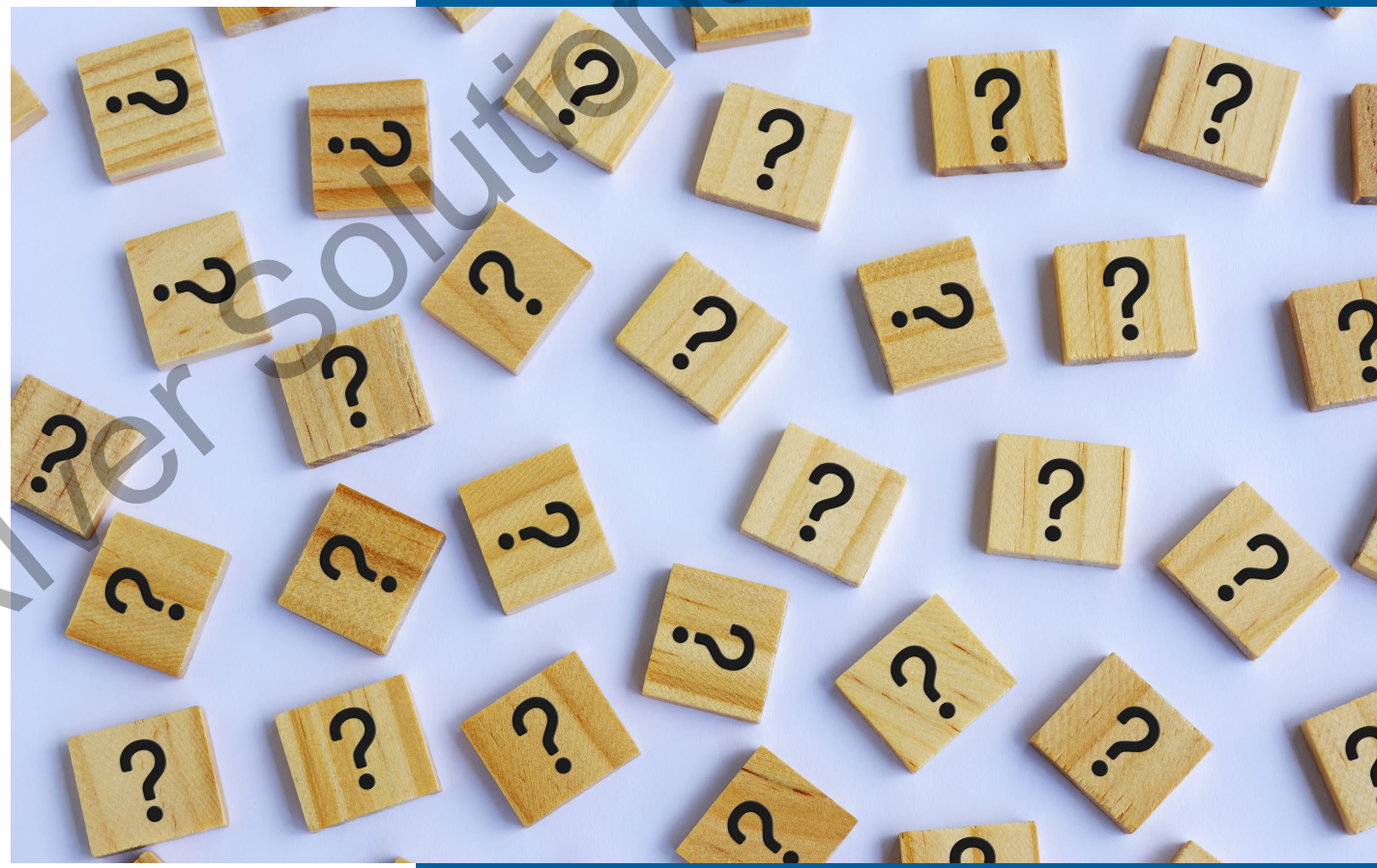
What is trauma?



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TRAUMA

An event that is experienced as terrifying, horrifying, or life-threatening and that is coupled with an actual or perceived lack of control.

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What is an example of an event that might cause a traumatic response?

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EXAMPLES OF EVENTS THAT MIGHT TRIGGER A TRAUMATIC RESPONSE

- Sexual assault
- Physical assault by a stranger
- Physical assault by an intimate partner
- A car accident
- Accident that causes serious injury or death
- Robbery
- Significant medical event

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COGNITIVE IMPACT

When trauma occurs, there are very real changes in brain functioning that **<u>may</u>** impact a person's ability to form memories and to recount their experience.

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COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCLOSURES FROM A TRAUMA-IMPACTED BRAIN

- Inconsistent
- Non-linear
- Fragmented
- Lacking in detail
- New information added
- Affect is unexpected

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TRAUMA AFFECT=LACK OF CREDIBILITY?

Historically, the seemingly inconsistent behaviors that frequently accompany disclosures of sexual assault and interpersonal violence resulted in the belief that the victim was being dishonest.

Inconsistencies
Lack of Detail
Non-Linear
Fragmented
New Information

→

Viewed as
Not Credible;
Case Closed

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WHEN PRACTITIONERS DEVELOP "TRAUMA-INFORMED" SYSTEMS, THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO:

- Make incorrect assumptions about credibility
- Ask questions or make decisions founded in bias for either party or witnesses
- Cause additional harm
- Jeopardize future reporting

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TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES PROVIDE TOOLS & TECHNIQUES FOR INTERVIEWING AND ENGAGING WITH THE COMPLAINANT, RESPONDENT, AND WITNESSES.

- Format/Structure of the Interview
- Format of Questions
- Approach to Clarification

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TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES ARE DESIGNED TO:

- Encourage thorough and complete intakes
- Assist with recollection
- Assist with recounting
- Reduce potential for false information
- Minimize unnecessary re-traumatization
- Reduce bias

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ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

Trauma-informed systems ask the question *"What has happened to you?"* rather than *"What is wrong with you?"*

(ACHA, 2020)

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED SUPPORT

- Safety
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Trustworthiness
- Empowerment

Adapted from The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (2015)

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IMPACT OF TRAUMA EXPOSURE FOR TITLE IX COORDINATORS

- Trauma exposure also impacts each of us in our work as Title IX Coordinators
- Exposure to trauma may have both a negative and positive impact on each of us, including:
  - Negative - Secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization
  - Positive - Compassion satisfaction, resilience, and engagement
- Protective factors to prevent experiencing a negative impact may include:
  - Having a strong support system
  - Setting clear boundaries in your work
  - Developing a peer network to share about your experiences

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TRAUMA-INFORMED TAKEAWAYS

01

Trauma-informed systems are accessible for all parties

02

The impact of trauma exposure can negatively impact Title IX Coordinators

03

Burnout and trauma exposure can be related; it is important to develop protective factors

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ACCESS, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

2

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BIAS

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CONSEQUENCES OF BIAS

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BIAS MITIGATION STRATEGIES

As Title IX Coordinators, we are responsible for considering the ways that bias might impact our campus processes, to ensure a fair, equitable outcome.

What bias mitigation strategies do you utilize on your campus in consideration of this requirement?

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What is cultural humility?

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CULTURAL HUMILITY

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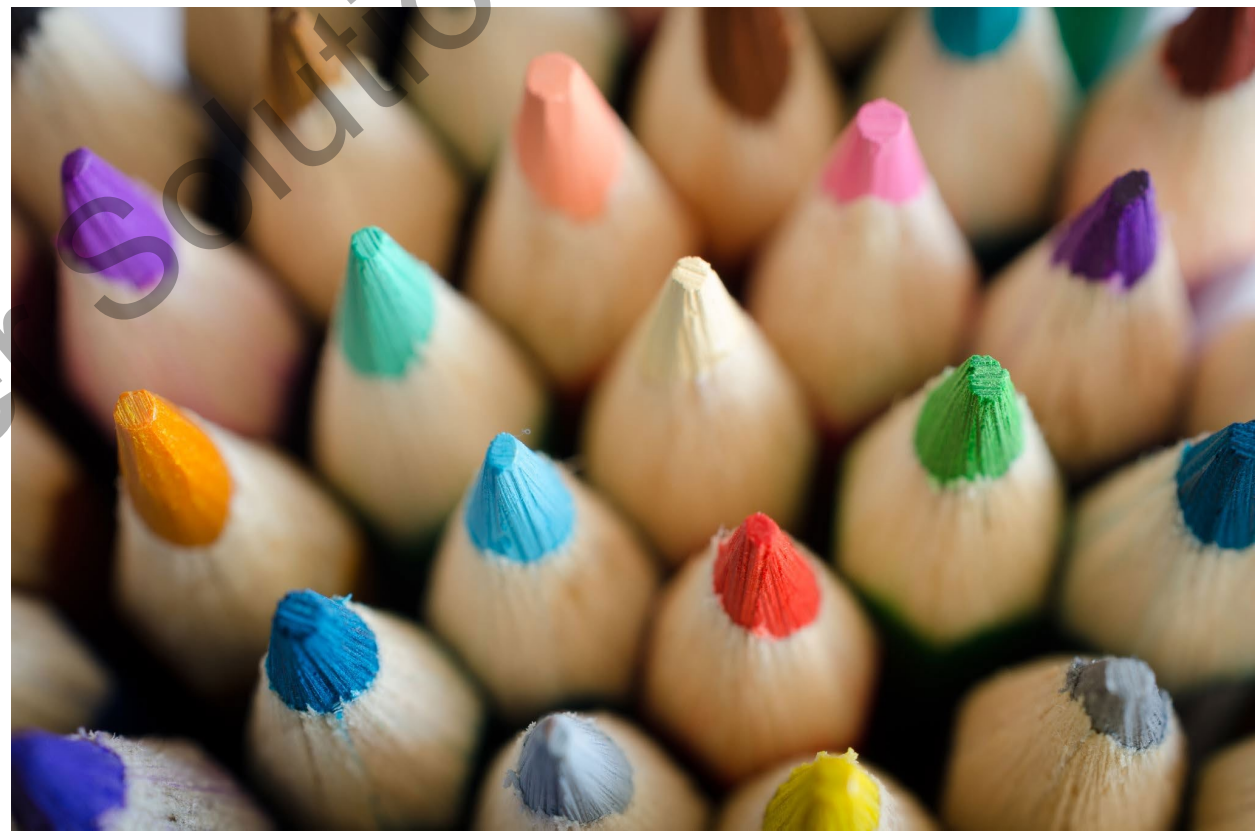
Inclusion



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WHAT DOES INCLUSION LOOK LIKE IN YOUR TITLE IX PROCESS?

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WHY INCLUSION MATTERS

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PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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NAVIGATING SENSITIVE CONVERSATIONS

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HOW DO YOU RESPOND?

You are meeting with a Complainant, Jessica, who is very quiet, reserved, and tearful. She is very reluctant to speak with you.

You discover later in the conversation that she has been sexually assaulted by another student. When she disclosed this to her family, they immediately told her she was at fault because, "premarital sex is against our religion." Jessica said this conversation happened over a year ago and she hasn't spoken about it since.

Jessica is requesting academic support because she has been struggling focusing and attending classes. She is adamant that she does not want counseling because she doesn't want her parents to find out she is receiving support.

- What are ways we can encourage conversation?
- What are some elements to be mindful of?
- How can we maintain a balance of wanting to shift the blame Jessica feels while not infringing on her religious beliefs?

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MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Angry parties

4a

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DAY 2

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YOU RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM YOUR INSTITUTION'S ONLINE REPORTING FORM:

-What are your next steps?

-What are some specific conversation points you will want to share with Complainant?

-Drawing from your own experiences, what are some concerns to be mindful of?

"Good morning. My name is Sammy. I was raped last night in Grand River Hall by Taylor who is on the basketball team here. Taylor gave me a bunch of white claws at a party and then attacked me in their residence hall room.

I want them expelled immediately. This is supposed to be a safe campus. Please text me once Taylor has been expelled so I know my friends and I can be safe again."

You conduct outreach to Complainant and they are Unresponsive, stating they won't meet with you until you've expelled Taylor.

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MANAGING EXPECTATIONS:

Campus Community

The following screenshots are sent to your campus Title IX Email.

- What are some considerations and next steps?
- What is the campus response, if any?
- How can you rebuild trust with your campus community?
- Have you had similar experiences on your campus?

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CampusSurvivorsGRC · Follow
Grand River City, NY

1,209 likes

CampusSurvivorsGRC PROTEST ON FRIDAY! The Title IX Office supports rapists and refuses to keep our campus safe! Join us to ... more

View all 83 comment

Sammy2005XOXO · Follow
Grand River City, NY

261 likes

Sammy2005XOXO Taylor Anderson Raped me on-campus. I told the Title IX Coordinator and she did nothing about it. Grand River College protects rapists. GRC cares more about the basketball team than the safety of its students. Come Protest ... more

View all 47 comment

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PUSHBACK FROM FACULTY

Complainant and Respondent – Mutual Class

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SCENARIO: PROFESSOR SMITH

Professor Smith has both Complainant Alex and Respondent Stevie in their Psychology class.

Professor Smith leaves a voicemail for the Title IX Coordinator wanting to know updates about a Title IX investigation. Professor Smith also mentions that they removed Stevie from their Psychology class.

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YOU RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING VOICEMAIL

Good morning. This is Doctor Smith from the Psychology department. I am calling because I have not yet received any updates on the investigation you are doing with students Alex and Stevie. I know it's been over a week since Alex met with your office. Since I have both of them in my class, I'm outraged that I have not received more updates about the progress of the investigation. I deserve to know because this impacts my ability to teach these students. Since I haven't heard back, I told Stevie they are not permitted to attend my class. I won't have dangerous students in my class endangering others. Please call me back immediately.

- What can you share/not share in your conversation with Professor Smith?
- What are you documenting?
- Who else are you working with to address these concerns?

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PUSHBACK FROM FACULTY-CONTINUED

Supportive Measures – Academics

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You receive the following email from a faculty member who does not want to offer academic support.

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SCENARIO: SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

Dear Title IX Coordinator,

Thank you for your email. My apologies for the delayed response, but as you know, faculty members are extremely busy and overburdened here on this campus.

I must say, the email you titled, "Academic Supportive Measures" was not only completely absurd, but borderline offensive. While I am sorry to hear that student Ash has been struggling to manage her emotions due to recent experiences, I'm not sure what can be done. Missed classes aren't really an option in the Chemistry department, as all labs and assignments must be completed in succession. Honestly, I think she is just looking for excuses.

My syllabus clearly states that students are permitted to miss no more than 3 classes, which is beyond generous. Missing 4 classes is absolutely unacceptable, even if there was a "hearing" organized by your office.

Furthermore, the only accommodations I permit are ones mandated to me by Disability Services, and it doesn't seem like Ash has a disability, she just has some emotional issues.

Lastly, in your email, you kept referring to Ash as they, which is grammatically incorrect. I only use proper grammar in my classroom and he or she pronouns, as God intended. Entertaining pronouns is a violation of my religious beliefs.

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EMPLOYEE CONCERNS

4c

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YOU RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING EMAIL FROM A UNION REPRESENTATIVE:

Good afternoon,

I am writing on behalf of Gerri Jones, who, as you already know, has been accused of sexual harassment by their coworker, Dylan. Gerri has never made any jokes of sexual nature, so these allegations are just ludicrous. As you know, Gerri is the only white person in their department and is often experiencing discrimination.

Due to the hostile environment you've created by conducting an unnecessary investigation, Gerri no longer feels safe working with their colleagues. Attending department meetings has become detrimental to their wellbeing.

Under Code 528.03 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which you are intentionally violating, employees have the right to safety in their work environment and the ability to request support as needed. **I am hereby requesting that Gerri be excused from all campus meetings.**

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PREGNANCY OR RELATED CONDITIONS

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TITLE IX & PREGNANCY

Cannot exclude or treat students (or employees or applicants) differently based on pregnancy or related conditions.

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PREGNANCY OR RELATED CONDITIONS

- Since1975, "pregnancy **and** related conditions" includes “pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy or recovery therefrom[.]”

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TITLE IX OBLIGATIONS

Summary of the obligations relating to support for students who are pregnant or experiencing related conditions:

- Allow them to make up any missed work without penalty
- Treat them similarly to students with a temporary disability.
- They must be allowed to return to the same academic and extracurricular status as before their medical leave began.
- Must provide reasonable adjustments, like a larger desk, elevator access, or allowing frequent trips to the restroom

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DO YOU HAVE A STUDENT LEAVE POLICY? DOES THIS STUDENT QUALIFY?

Treat pregnancy like a justification for a leave of absence for so long a period of time as deemed medically necessary by the student's doctor.

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HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

You receive the following email from the chair of the Nursing department regarding a pregnant student.

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SCENARIO: PREGNANCY

Dear Title IX Coordinator,

I'm not really sure who I should reach out to, because I'm not sure pregnancy really falls within the scope of your office, but maybe you can redirect me.

I have a student in the nursing program who just informed two of her professors that she will need to miss a month, or maybe even more, of her courses towards the end of the semester because she is pregnant.

I suggested one of her professors, who I know she is close with, encourage her to take a leave of absence because there is no way a student can miss that much class and lab time. This isn't my requirement, this is ACEN and our state licensure requirements. We cannot compromise curriculum for one student.

Sincerely,
Nicole
Department Chair—Nursing

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CLIMATE SURVEY

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ANTICIPATED CLIMATE SURVEY REQUIREMENTS

A national climate survey asking students about their experiences with domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking, and overseeing the administration of this survey every two years to students at all colleges and universities that accept federal funds.

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TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CLIMATE SURVEY

- Design survey questions thoughtfully: What information do you want to know?
- Actively encourage participation from all campus constituents.
- Share and apply your data in thoughtful, careful ways.

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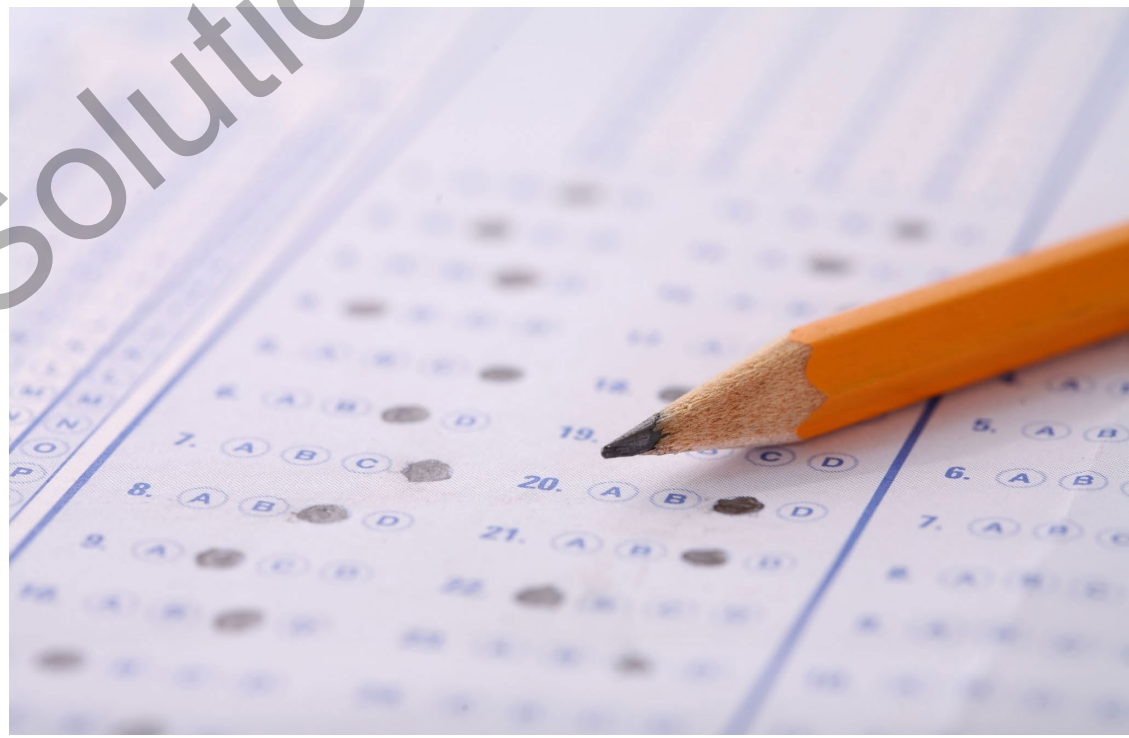
SURVEY DESIGN

- How are you designing your survey?
  - In-House vs External
  - If In-House, who is creating and building the survey? And who will do the survey analysis?
- What types of questions will you include?
  - What feedback is important to receive?
  - What will you do with the information you receive?



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How can we encourage survey participation?

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Encouraging survey participation:

- Thoughtfully offer incentives for completion
- Speak about the survey widely
- Promote the survey on social media and through other communication channels
- Prepare the campus prior to the survey's launch
- Rely on campus partners to help spread the word

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USING CLIMATE SURVEY DATA: ETHICS AND CARE IN SHARING INFORMATION

- Celebrate positive changes and information
- Use areas for improvement to help drive your training topics and prevention efforts
- Create visual reports that are easy for the campus community to understand and not misinterpret

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FUNDING

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FUNDING SCENARIO

You are working as a Title IX Coordinator at a mid-sized institution with 8,000 students. You have a part-time investigator who also works in the First Year Experiences Department.

Your operating budget was reduced to $1,000 (not including costs for your case management system).

What are ways you can work creatively to maximize resources?

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PREVENTION

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PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

- Who facilitates your training and prevention programming?
- What are examples of prevention programs, activities, or trainings that have worked well?
- How do you ensure campus compliance and prevention best practices?

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MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES AND PREVENTING BURNOUT

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WHAT IS BURNOUT?

- A form of exhaustion and feeling overwhelmed
- A result of prolonged emotional, physical, and/or mental stress
- More likely to occur in those who work in helping professions, put other's needs first, and work long hours
- Can be especially present for those who are continuously exposed to direct and indirect trauma through their work

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SCENARIO: PREVENTING BURNOUT

This is the 3rd time this month that you have received a text message after 7:00pm from a Vice President, asking to chat about an ongoing Title IX Investigation.

Earlier today, you conducted 5 Title IX Intakes with Complainants and 1 required an emergency removal. You are exhausted.

- How can you navigate this?
- How can we establish boundaries?
- How can we prevent burnout?
- Where do YOU go for support?

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QUESTIONS?

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THE RIVER CONNECT

THE RIVER CONNECT is a virtual community of experts and colleagues gathered together to help each other process the complexities of the work.

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Let Our Team Support The Good Work You And Your Team Are Doing.

- Delegated Roles
- Investigations
- Hearings & Appeals
- Alternative Resolutions
- Program Review
- Policy & Procedures
- Consulting & Coaching

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RESOLUTION SERVICES

Resolution Services

We work to resolve employee, faculty, and student cases at companies and educational institutions.

Our experienced practitioners are available to serve as facilitators of alternative resolutions, investigators, decision-makers, hearing officers, chairs, panel members, or appellate officers for all equity and discrimination cases.

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DELEGATED ROLES

Gap in staffing? We can help.

Interim or Long-Term Needs

- Title IX Coordinators and Staff
- Title VI Coordinators and Staff
- EO Director
- Equity Director
- ADA/504 Coordinators and Staff

Delegated Roles

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ADA/504

ADA/504 Coordinator
Policy Development & Review
Training
Accessibility & Compliance Assessment
Investigations

Digital Accessibility

Policy Development & Review
Training
Consulting
Investigations

ADA/504 Services

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CASE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Designed for you, by people like you

We are experts and practitioners working in response and resolution for discrimination, harassment, & equity concerns.

Case Tracker allows you to:

- track and manage your cases
- communicate with campus stakeholders without compromising case privacy, and
- provide parties with the ability to follow the status of their case

Schedule a Demo

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