

# Title IX Decision-Maker Training for Community College Districts

**Long Beach Community  
College District  
Title IX Decision-Maker Training  
June 17, 2021**

***SESSION TWO***

**PRESENTED BY:  
*Eve P. Fichtner, Partner***



## Agenda

- Discuss Preponderance of the Evidence Standard
- Determination of Responsibility
- Written Determination
- Table of Contents for Written Determination
- Review Homework: Factual Finding & Rationale



## Preponderance of the Evidence Standard

### Evidentiary Standard

- The evidence is reviewed, compared and analyzed under a “preponderance of the evidence” standard to determine whether the allegations were with or without merit.
  - “Preponderance of the evidence” means that evidence on one side outweighs, or is more than, the evidence on the other side.
  - More likely than not; over 50%; more than 50%
  - There is a greater than 50% chance that the allegations are accurate
  - This is a qualitative, not quantitative, standard
    - Qualitative evidence includes interviews with Complainant, Respondent, or witnesses; data or information that is expressed in terms of the meaning of acts or events

## Determination of Responsibility

### **Decision-Maker Determines Responsibility per §106.45(b)(7)**

- Decision-maker must issue a written determination regarding responsibility
- Decision-maker must understand the “preponderance of the evidence” or “clear and convincing evidence” standard
- *Reminder.* The Title IX Coordinator or investigator cannot determine responsibility

## Determination of Responsibility

### **Written Determination must include:**

- Identification of the allegations potentially constituting sexual harassment as defined under Title IX
- A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the formal complaint through the determination, including any notifications to the Parties, interviews with Parties and Witnesses, site visits, methods used to gather other evidence, and hearings held, (if any)
- Findings of fact supporting the determination
- Conclusions regarding the application of the District’s code of conduct (or policy) to the facts

## Determination of Responsibility

### Written Determination must include, continued:

- A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation, including a determination regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions the recipient imposes on the Respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the recipient's education program or activity will be provided by the recipient to the Complainant
- The District's procedures and permissible bases for the Complainant and Respondent to appeal

## Determination of Responsibility

### Written Determination must include, continued:

- The written determination must be provided to the Parties simultaneously
- The determination regarding responsibility becomes final either on the date the District provides the Parties with the written determination of the result of an appeal, if an appeal is filed, or if an appeal is not filed, the date on which an appeal would no longer be considered timely.

## Table of Contents for Written Determination

- Brief Introduction
- Investigative and Decision-Making Background
- Factual Findings
  - **Nature of Parties' Relationship Prior to August 21, 2020**
    - Factual Finding: I find by a preponderance of the evidence that, between August 5-19, 2020, Complainant and Respondent interacted with each other in a [friendly/flirty] way when [describe actions]. These actions were [welcome/unwelcome] to Complainant.
    - Rationale for factual findings: I made these findings because I found [Complainant/Respondent] version of events to be more credible based on [explain your objective reasons why you believed one person over the other]

## Table of Contents for Written Determination

- Factual Findings, Continued
  - **Tutoring Session on August 20, 2020**
    - Factual Finding: I find by a preponderance of the evidence that on August 20, 2020, the Parties engaged in a 20 minute tutoring session in the Library right after school, and they reviewed Chapter 1 of the Algebra class by following the Algebra Review Sheet. By all accounts, the Parties did not engage in any unwelcome or inappropriate behaviors with each other on this day, and they agreed to hold another tutoring session the next day, August 21, 2020.
    - Rationale for factual findings: I made these findings because the Parties did not dispute what occurred during their tutoring session in the library on August 20, 2020.

## Table of Contents for Written Determination

- Factual Findings, Continued
  - **Tutoring Session on August 21, 2020**
    - Factual Findings. I find by a preponderance of the evidence that, on August 21, 2020, in the library after school, Respondent [did/did not] touch Complainant's private genital area with Respondent's left hand. Respondent touched Complainant's private genital area [accidentally/purposefully] and [with/without] Complainant's permission. While touching Complainant, Respondent [made/did not make] a comment like, "We should smash," which the Complainant [reasonably/unreasonably] interpreted as a sexual comment. Respondent touched Complainant's private groin area based on [non-sexual reasons/sexual gratification]
    - Rationale for factual findings: I made these findings because....

## Table of Contents for Written Determination

- Conclusions about Sexual Fondling
  - Conclusion: I find by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent's actions [do/do not] rise to the level of sexual fondling as defined by [code of conduct/policy].
  - Rationale: I reach this conclusion because Respondent [did/did not] touch a private area of Complainant when placing a hand on Complainant's genital area [with/without] permission. The facts further demonstrated that Respondent touched Complainant [accidentally/for the purposes of sexual gratification].

## Table of Contents for Written Determination

- Conclusions about Sexual Harassment
  - Conclusion: I find by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent's actions [do/do not] rise to the level of sexual harassment as defined by [code of conduct/policy].
  - Rationale: I reach this conclusion because Respondent [did/did not] engage in unwelcome physical and verbal conduct based on sex towards Complainant, which as determined by a reasonable person, was severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive
- Responsibility
  - Based on a thorough review of the evidence, I find by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent [is/is not] responsible for [sexual fondling and/or sexual harassment.]

## Table of Contents for Written Determination

- Sanctions (if responsibility)
  - [The panel or I] recommend the following sanctions for Respondent [List all that apply to the specific findings and conclusions]
- Remedies (if responsibility)
  - [The panel or I] recommend the following remedies for Complainant [List all that apply to the specific findings and conclusions]
- Appeal Rights Available for Both Parties
- Closing Statement

## Discussion of Homework

### **Hypothetical** Investigative Report

- Review the definition of sexual harassment and sexual fondling (pg. 4 of Report)
- Review the evidence in the Investigative Report related to touching the Complainant's groin, crotch, or private parts (paragraph 4 of complaint)
- Weigh the evidence and determine by a preponderance of the evidence whether Respondent touched Complainant's groin area
- If you find that Respondent touched Complainant's groin, determine what kind of physical touch **and** if Complainant permitted **and** touch was for sexual gratification
- Write a factual finding (who, what, where, when, why & how of the allegation)
- Explain why you made that finding; what was your rationale
- **GOAL:** We may disagree, but did you adequately explain your rationale?

Question  
&  
Answer  
Session

## Disclaimer

This AALRR presentation is intended for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon in reaching a conclusion in a particular area of law. Applicability of the legal principles discussed may differ substantially in individual situations. Receipt of this or any other AALRR presentation/publication does not create an attorney-client relationship. The firm is not responsible for inadvertent errors that may occur in the publishing process.



© 2021 Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo

# Thank You

For questions or comments, please contact:

Eve P. Fichtner  
(916) 923-1200  
EPeekFichtner@aalrr.com

**aalrr**

Atkinson, Andelson  
Loya, Ruud & Romo  
A Professional Law Corporation