



## **Title IX Sexual Harassment Guidelines & Grievance Process: Advisor Guidelines**

*Advisor* means a person chosen by a party or appointed by the institution to accompany the party to meetings related to the resolution process, to advise the party on that process, and to conduct cross-examination for the party at the hearing, if any.

### **Right to an Advisor**

The parties may each have an Advisor<sup>1</sup> of their choice present with them for all meetings and interviews within the resolution process, if they so choose. The parties may select whoever they wish to serve as their Advisor as long as the Advisor is eligible and available.<sup>2</sup>

Choosing an Advisor who is also a witness in the process creates potential for bias and conflict-of-interest. A party who chooses an Advisor who is also a witness can anticipate that issues of potential bias will be explored by the hearing Decision-maker(s).

The Recipient may permit parties to have more than one Advisor upon special request to the Title IX Coordinator. The decision to grant this request is at the sole discretion of the Title IX Coordinator and will be granted equitably to all parties.

#### **a. Who Can Serve as an Advisor**

The Advisor may be a friend, mentor, family member, attorney, or any other individual a party chooses to advise, support, and/or consult with them throughout the resolution process. The parties may choose Advisors from inside or outside of the Hagerstown Community College (HCC) community.

The Title IX Coordinator will also offer to assign a trained Advisor for any party if the party so chooses. If the parties choose an Advisor from the pool available from HCC, the Advisor will be trained by HCC and be familiar with HCC's resolution process.

If the parties choose an Advisor from outside the pool of those identified by HCC, the Advisor may not have been trained by HCC and may not be familiar with HCC guidelines and processes.

Parties also have the right to choose not to have an Advisor in the initial stages of the resolution process, prior to a hearing.

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<sup>1</sup> This could include an attorney, advocate, or support person. The law permits one Advisor for each party (witnesses are not entitled to Advisors within the process, though they can be advised externally), but some Recipients do permit more than one. If the Recipient allows more than one Advisor for one party, they should do so for all parties.

<sup>2</sup> "Available" means the party cannot insist on an Advisor who simply doesn't have inclination, time, or availability. Also, the Advisor cannot have institutionally conflicting roles, such as being a Title IX administrator who has an active role in the matter, or a supervisor who must monitor and implement sanctions.

## **b. Advisors in Hearings/Hagerstown Community College-Appointed Advisor**

Under U.S. Department of Education regulations applicable to Title IX, cross-examination is required during the hearing, but must be conducted by the parties' Advisors. The parties are not permitted to directly cross-examine each other or any witnesses. If a party does not have an Advisor for a hearing, HCC will appoint a trained Advisor for the limited purpose of conducting any cross-examination.

A party may reject this appointment and choose their own Advisor, but they may not proceed without an Advisor. If the party's Advisor will not conduct cross-examination, HCC will appoint an Advisor who will do so thoroughly, regardless of the participation or non-participation of the advised party in the hearing itself. Extensive questioning of the parties and witnesses will also be conducted by the Decision-maker(s) during the hearing.

## **c. Advisor's Role**

The parties may be accompanied by their Advisor in all meetings and interviews at which the party is entitled to be present, including intake and interviews. Advisors should help the parties prepare for each meeting and are expected to advise ethically, with integrity, and in good faith.

Hagerstown Community College cannot guarantee equal Advisory rights, meaning that if one party selects an Advisor who is an attorney, but the other party does not or cannot afford an attorney, HCC is not obligated to provide an attorney.

## **d. Pre-Interview Meetings**

Advisors may request to meet with the administrative officials conducting interviews/meetings in advance of these interviews or meetings. This pre-meeting allows Advisors to clarify and understand their role and Hagerstown Community College's guidelines and process.

## **e. Advisor Violations of Hagerstown Community College's Title IX Sexual Harassment Advisor Policy**

All Advisors are subject to the same HCC policies and procedures, whether they are attorneys or not. Advisors are expected to advise their advisees without disrupting proceedings. Advisors should not address HCC officials in a meeting or interview unless invited to (e.g., asking procedural questions). The Advisor may not make a presentation or represent their advisee<sup>3</sup> during any meeting or proceeding and may not speak on behalf of the advisee to the Investigator(s) or other Decision-maker(s) except during a hearing proceeding, during cross-examination.

The parties are expected to ask and respond to questions on their own behalf throughout the investigation phase of the resolution process. Although the Advisor generally may not speak on behalf of their advisee, the Advisor may consult with their advisee, either privately as needed, or by conferring or passing notes during any resolution process meeting or interview. For longer or more involved discussions, the parties and their Advisors should ask for breaks to allow for private consultation.

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<sup>3</sup> Subject to the state law provisions or Hagerstown Community College guidelines and processes above.

Any Advisor who oversteps their role as defined by this policy will be warned only once. If the Advisor continues to disrupt or otherwise fails to respect the limits of the Advisor role, the meeting will be ended, or other appropriate measures implemented. Subsequently, the Title IX Coordinator will determine how to address the Advisor's non-compliance and future role.

#### **f. Sharing Information with the Advisor**

Hagerstown Community College (HCC) expects that the parties may wish to have HCC share documentation and evidence related to the allegations with their Advisors. Parties may share this information directly with their Advisor or other individuals if they wish. Doing so may help the parties participate more meaningfully in the resolution process.

HCC also provides a consent form that authorizes HCC to share such information directly with their Advisor. The parties must either complete and submit this form to the Title IX Coordinator for Students or provide similar documentation demonstrating consent to a release of information to the Advisor before HCC is able to share records with an Advisor.

If a party requests that all communication be made through their attorney Advisor, the Recipient will not comply with that request.

#### **g. Privacy of Records Shared with Advisor**

Advisors are expected to maintain the privacy of the records shared with them. These records may not be shared with third parties, disclosed publicly, or used for purposes not explicitly authorized by HCC. Recipient may seek to restrict the role of any Advisor who does not respect the sensitive nature of the process or who fails to abide by the HCC's privacy expectations.]

#### **h. Expectations of an Advisor**

Hagerstown Community College (HCC) generally expects an Advisor to adjust their schedule to allow them to attend HCC meetings when planned but may change scheduled meetings to accommodate an Advisor's inability to attend, if doing so does not cause an unreasonable delay.

HCC may also make reasonable provisions to allow an Advisor who cannot attend in person to attend a meeting by telephone, video conferencing, or other similar technologies as may be convenient and available.

#### **i. Expectations of the Parties with Respect to Advisors**

A party may elect to change Advisors during the process and is not obligated to use the same Advisor throughout. The parties are expected to inform the Investigator(s) of the identity of their Advisor at least two (2) business days before the date of their first meeting with Investigators (or as soon as possible if a more expeditious meeting is necessary or desired).

The parties are expected to provide timely notice to the Title IX Coordinator if they change Advisors at any time. It is assumed that if a party changes Advisors, consent to share information with the previous Advisor is terminated, and a release for the new Advisor must be secured. Parties are expected to inform the Title IX Coordinator of the identity of their hearing Advisor at least two (2) business days before the hearing.

As a public entity, Hagerstown Community College fully respects and accords the Weingarten rights of employees. For parties who are entitled to union representation, HCC will allow the unionized employee to have their union representative (if requested by the party) as well as an Advisor of their choice present for all resolution-related meetings and interviews. To uphold the principles of equity, the other party (regardless of union membership) will also be permitted to have two Advisors. Witnesses are/are not permitted to have union representation or Advisors in grievance process interviews or meetings.

#### **j. Assistance in Securing an Advisor**

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) maintains a list of attorneys and legal service programs who are willing to represent current or prior student Complainants and Respondents in Title IX campus proceedings on a pro bono basis or for reduced legal fees; information is available on the MHEC website at <https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/Title-IX-Campus-Sexual-Assault-Proceedings--Attorney-List.aspx> . Students using MHEC-approved attorneys may be reimbursed attorney fees directly through MHEC. Details, including information on reimbursement procedures, can be found at the above link to the MHEC website.

For representation, Respondents may wish to contact organizations such as:

- FACE (<http://www.facecampusequality.org>)
- SAVE (<http://www.saveservices.org>).

Complainants may wish to contact organizations such as:

- The Victim Rights Law Center (<http://www.victimrights.org>),
- The National Center for Victims of Crime (<http://www.victimsofcrime.org>), which maintains the Crime Victim's Bar Association.]
- The Time's Up Legal Defense Fund: <https://nwlc.org/times-up-legal-defense-fund/> ]

**Hagerstown Community College's Title IX Sexual Harassment Guidelines & Grievance Process is available online**  
<https://www.hagerstowncc.edu/student-affairs/sexual-misconduct-procedures>

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