

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE – STUDENTS**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a learning environment for students that is free from sexual harassment, or other improper or inappropriate behavior that may constitute harassment as defined below.

Sexual harassment is against the law and is against school board policy. Any form of sexual harassment is strictly prohibited.

It is a violation of this policy for any student to harass another student through conduct or communication of a sexual nature as defined by this policy.

The Laconia School District will investigate all complaints, formal or informal, verbal or written, of sexual harassment or sexual violence and will discipline any student who sexually harasses or is sexually violent toward another student.

### **II. SEXUAL HARASSMENT/SEXUAL VIOLENCE DEFINED**

Sexual harassment of students shall include, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. The conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of demanding sexual favors in exchange for benefits;
2. Submission to or rejection of the conduct or communication is used as the basis for educational decisions affecting a student;
3. The conduct or communication is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a student's educational performance or opportunities; or creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile educational environment.

Relevant factors to be considered will include, but not be limited to: did the student view the environment as hostile; was it reasonable to view the environment as hostile; the nature of the conduct; how often the conduct occurred and how long it continued; age and sex of the complainant; whether the alleged harasser was in a position of power over the student subjected to the harassment; number of individuals involved; age of the alleged harasser; where the harassment occurred; and other incidents of sexual harassment at the school involving the same or other students.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE – STUDENTS**

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but not be limited to: physical touching or graffiti of a sexual nature; displaying or distributing of sexually explicit drawings; pictures and written materials; sexual gestures or obscene jokes; touching oneself sexually or talking about one's sexuality in front of others; or spreading rumors about or rating other students or others as to appearance, sexual activity or performance.

#### **III. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

1. The Superintendent or his/her written designee is responsible for implementing all procedures of his policy. Additionally, the Superintendent may develop and implement additional administrative regulations in furtherance of this policy.
2. Any student who believes he or she has been the victim of sexual harassment should report the alleged act(s) immediately to any Laconia School District employee or the building Principal. If a student initially reports the alleged act to a Laconia School District employee, that employee shall immediately notify the building Principal, who shall then immediately notify the Superintendent.
3. The Board encourages all students and staff members to use the Report Form available from the Principal or Superintendent.
4. In each building, the Principal is the person responsible for receiving oral or written reports of sexual harassment. Upon receipt of a report, the Principal will notify the Superintendent immediately without screening or investigating the report. If the report was given verbally, the Principal shall reduce it to written form within 24 hours and forward it to the Superintendent. Failure to forward any sexual harassment report or complaint as provided herein will result in disciplinary action. If the complaint involves the building Principal, the complaint shall be filed directly with the Superintendent.
5. The Board designates the Superintendent as the District Human Rights Officer to receive any report or complaint of sexual harassment. If the complaint involves the Superintendent, the complaint shall be filed directly with the School Board.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE – STUDENTS**

6. Submission of a complaint or report of sexual harassment will not affect the student's standing in school, grades, work assignment, eligibility for extra-curricular activities or any other aspect of the student's educational program.
7. The use of formal reporting forms provided by the Laconia School District is voluntary. The Laconia School District will respect the confidentiality of the complainant and the person(s) against whom the complaint is filed as much as possible, consistent with the School District's legal obligations and the necessity to investigate allegations of sexual harassment and sexual violence and take disciplinary action when the conduct has occurred.

### **IV. INVESTIGATION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Human Rights officer will authorize an investigation upon receipt of a report or complaint alleging sexual harassment. This investigation may be conducted by Laconia School District officials or by a third-party designated by the School Board.

If Laconia School District officials conduct the investigation, the investigation should consider the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the sexual advances, the relationship between the parties and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. Whether a particular action or incident constitutes sexual harassment requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances.

The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident(s) or circumstances giving rise to the complaint. The investigation may also consist of any other methods and documents deemed pertinent by the investigator. Students who are interviewed may have a parent or other representative present.

In addition, the Laconia School District may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the complainant, students and employees pending completion of an investigation of alleged sexual harassment.

If the Board determines that a third-party designee should conduct the investigation, the Laconia School District agrees to assent to that party's methods of investigation.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE – STUDENTS**

Upon completion of an investigation conducted by either Laconia School District officials or a third-party, the Board and the Superintendent will be provided with a written factual report and recommended action.

### **V. SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTION**

If investigating party determines that the alleged conduct constituted sexual harassment, the Superintendent or Principal may discipline the offending student. Such discipline may include, but is not limited to, detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion. Discipline will be in accord with other applicable Board policies. Due to FERPA and other privacy-related laws, the victim will not be informed of what discipline was imposed.

If the investigating party determines that the alleged conduct did not constitute sexual harassment, both the complaining party and the accused will be informed of such. No disciplinary action will be taken.

Conduct which does not rise to the level of sexual harassment as defined by the policy, but is nonetheless inappropriate or in violation of other related Board policies, will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the Superintendent or Principal, who may still impose discipline or order the offending student to engage in some remedial action.

### **VI. REPRISAL**

The Laconia School District will discipline any student who retaliates against any other student who reports alleged sexual harassment or who retaliates against any person who testifies, assists or participates in an investigation, proceeding or hearing relating to a sexual harassment or sexual violence complaint. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, threats, reprisal or harassment.

### **VII. RIGHT TO ALTERNATIVE COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

These procedures do not deny the right of any student to pursue other avenues of recourse, which may include filing charges with the Commissioner of Education, initiating civil action or seeking redress under state criminal statutes and/or federal law.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE – STUDENTS**

### **VIII. SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS SEXUAL ABUSE**

Under certain circumstances, sexual harassment or sexual violence may constitute sexual abuse under New Hampshire law. In such situations, the Laconia School District shall comply with all pertinent laws.

Nothing in this policy will prohibit the Laconia School District from taking immediate action to protect victims of alleged sexual harassment.

### **IX. AGE-APPROPRIATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

Per the requirements of Ed 303.01(j), the School Board is required to establish a policy on sexual harassment, written in age appropriate language and published and available in written form to all students. This policy is intended to apply to middle-school and high-school aged students.

The Superintendent and building Principal(s) are charged with establishing policies, rules, protocols and other necessary age-appropriate information or materials for the Laconia School District's elementary schools.

### **X. BY-PASS OF POLICY**

Any individual with a sexual harassment complaint may choose to bypass this policy and accompanying regulation and proceed directly to:

NH Commission on Human Rights    OR  
2 Chenelle Drive  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-271-2767

US Department of Health & Human  
Services  
Office of Civil Rights – Region 1  
FK Building, Room 1875  
Boston, MA 02203  
617-565-1340

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