

What to Do If You Are Accused of a Title IX Violation in College

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Being accused of sexual misconduct in college is a deeply serious and often overwhelming situation. Title IX investigations can move swiftly, and the stakes are extraordinarily high in terms of academic, professional, and personal consequences. Even if you believe the accusation is clearly false or easily refuted, it is critical not to underestimate how complicated and potentially one-sided the campus disciplinary process can be. Taking the proper steps in the earliest moments after an accusation can make a significant difference in the outcome of your case.

Here are the immediate steps you should take if you are accused:

- Call your parents and call an attorney experienced in college Title IX cases immediately. Even if you are embarrassed, even if the accusation against you is baseless, even if you have evidence proving the accusation is false, and even if you think you can easily explain why you are not at fault, it is critical that you do not attempt to deal with this alone.

Why?

- The college procedures regarding the investigation and adjudication of sexual misconduct cases are stacked against the accused. Unfortunately, mere truth and common sense are usually insufficient to protect you; you need someone experienced to help you navigate the process.
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The sooner you get an attorney experienced in these cases, the better. Clients have sometimes come late in the process, believing they could manage the investigation or hearing without an attorney, only to face a negative outcome. It is far better to avoid pitfalls from the outset than to attempt to correct mistakes after they occur.

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You should have an attorney at the first interview with the Title IX investigator and have an opportunity to prepare with the attorney beforehand.

- Immediately save all texts, emails, social media, and other communications with the accuser to a thumb drive or another safe place. If you can't readily access the content of your texts, there is software available to help retrieve and save them.
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Take screenshots of the accuser's social media postings before and after the alleged incident. If you are blocked or unable to access the accuser's social media, ask someone else if they can take screenshots.

- Do NOT contact the accuser, and do not ask your friends to contact the accuser. Most colleges will impose a No Contact Order between you and the accuser, and you do not want to violate that. Even if there is no order, you do not want to be accused of harassment.
- Do NOT ridicule or speak negatively about the accuser on social media or to others. Refrain from posting about the matter and exercise caution when discussing it with others on campus.
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Create a chronological outline of relevant events leading up to and after the alleged incident, including your communications with the accuser. Be as thorough and detailed as possible. Include names of witnesses, times, dates, and locations wherever possible.

- Make a list of individuals who have relevant information and collect their contact information.
- Keep a log of all communications with the school and Title IX office and save every email and written communication.
- Download and save your college's policy and procedures on sexual misconduct that were in effect at the time of the alleged incident, and those in effect currently (policies may have changed.)

Final Thoughts

College students facing a Title IX investigation often feel shocked, confused, and isolated. But you are not alone, and your future is worth protecting. Seeking qualified legal guidance right away and following these practical steps can help you assert your rights and prepare your defense effectively. What you do within the first few hours and days can have a long-lasting impact. Ensure those steps are the correct ones.