

CWEALF Publications

Title IX

This brochure contains basic information about Title IX and how it relates to gender equity in sports. For the purposes of this brochure, females will be named as the underrepresented sex. However, these rules apply to either sex who is discriminated against under Title IX. For more information about Title IX, call CWEALF's Information and Referral service listed on the back of this brochure.

What is Title IX?

Simply put, Title IX is the federal law that prohibits schools from treating students differently simply because of their sex. While this brochure only addresses sports, Title IX offers protection against any unequal treatment in education based on sex, ethnicity, or any protected class.

Who is covered by Title IX?

All educational programs or activities that receive federal funding are covered under Title IX. Even if only one program or activity receives federal funding, then all of the programs within the entire school — or school district — must comply with Title IX regulations.

There are certain groups to which Title IX does not apply. These include the military, school-sponsored religious programs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the YWCA and similar organizations, sororities and fraternities, and beauty pageants.

How can I tell if my school is in compliance with Title IX requirements?

There are several steps to determine if your school is in compliance with Title IX. The first step is to compare the percentage of enrolled female students and the percentage of the enrolled male students to athletic participation rates. If there are 100 girls and 100 boys in the schools, then approximately half the athletes should be girls and half boys. If this is not the case, your school may not be in compliance.

However, there are other measures of compliance to consider. If a school can demonstrate a history of expanding athletic programs for girls, then it may be in compliance. For example, if only 30% of the athletes are girls, but the school can show that it has been consistently adding more programs for girls, it may be in compliance.

Your school may still be in compliance if it can show that it is meeting the interests and abilities of its female athletes. If there is no additional interest in sports, or if there are not enough girls to field an entire team, the school may be in compliance.

Even if your school has a high rate of participation of female athletes, it still may not treat male and female athletes fairly. For example, boys' teams may receive better equipment and uniforms. Boys may have games scheduled during prime playing times, have cheerleader and band support, while girls do not receive these same benefits.

What can I do if I don't think my school is in compliance with Title IX?

If you feel that your school does not treat its female and male athletes fairly, you can talk to your school's Title IX Coordinator, file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) or bring a private law suit against the school. You can also call CWEALF's Information and Referral service for information and assistance.

Who can file a grievance?

Students, coaches, parents, or even a person with no direct contact can file a grievance through OCR. However, a private lawsuit must be filed by the student or parents/legal guardian on the student's behalf.

Must girls have the same sports programs as boys?

Title IX does not require that girls and boys have identical athletic programs. The requirement is that the athletic ability and interests of girls must be similarly accommodated. OCR will look at the total program for boys and compare that to the girls' program to determine if standards for equal treatment are met.

I want to play on the boys' football team, is the school required to let me play?

Title IX does not apply to certain contact sports. Examples of these sports are football, rugby, boxing, basketball and any other sport in which the main purpose involves bodily contact. However, certain athletic conferences do require that schools allow girls to play contact sports.

My school spends more money on the boys' programs than the girls' programs, is this a Title IX violation?

Title IX does not require that schools spend the same amount of money on boys' and girls' sports. Instead, schools should show the reasons for this imbalance.

Are town recreation programs covered under Title IX?

Title IX has not been interpreted to cover town recreation programs. If you feel that your town program is treating its boys' and girls' teams unequally, you should speak with your coach and your parents. You may be able to file a lawsuit under your state and federal constitution or your state laws providing equal access to public accommodations.

Where to file a complaint:

Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Regional Office
Regional Civil Rights Director
Office For Civil Rights, Region 1
U.S. Department of Education
J.W. McCormack Post Office
& Courthouse Building, Room 22
Boston, MA 02109-4557
Tel: 617-223-9667 or 617-223-9662

For legal information call:

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
Information and Referral Service
Monday - Friday
Greater Hartford: 524-0601
Toll Free: 1-800-479-2949

CWEALF also publishes a series of booklets that discuss legal issues of concern for women and girls.

Other publications available from CWEALF:

- * Child Support in Connecticut
- * Divorce in Connecticut
- How to Choose an Attorney
- Legal Rights of Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals in Connecticut
- Legal Rights of Older Women
- * Pregnancy, Family and Medical Leave in Connecticut
- * Sexual Harassment in Schools
- * Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- Women and Credit
- Women, Work and Sex Discrimination
- * Title IX Gender Equity in Sports
- Pridelink

*Information available in Spanish.