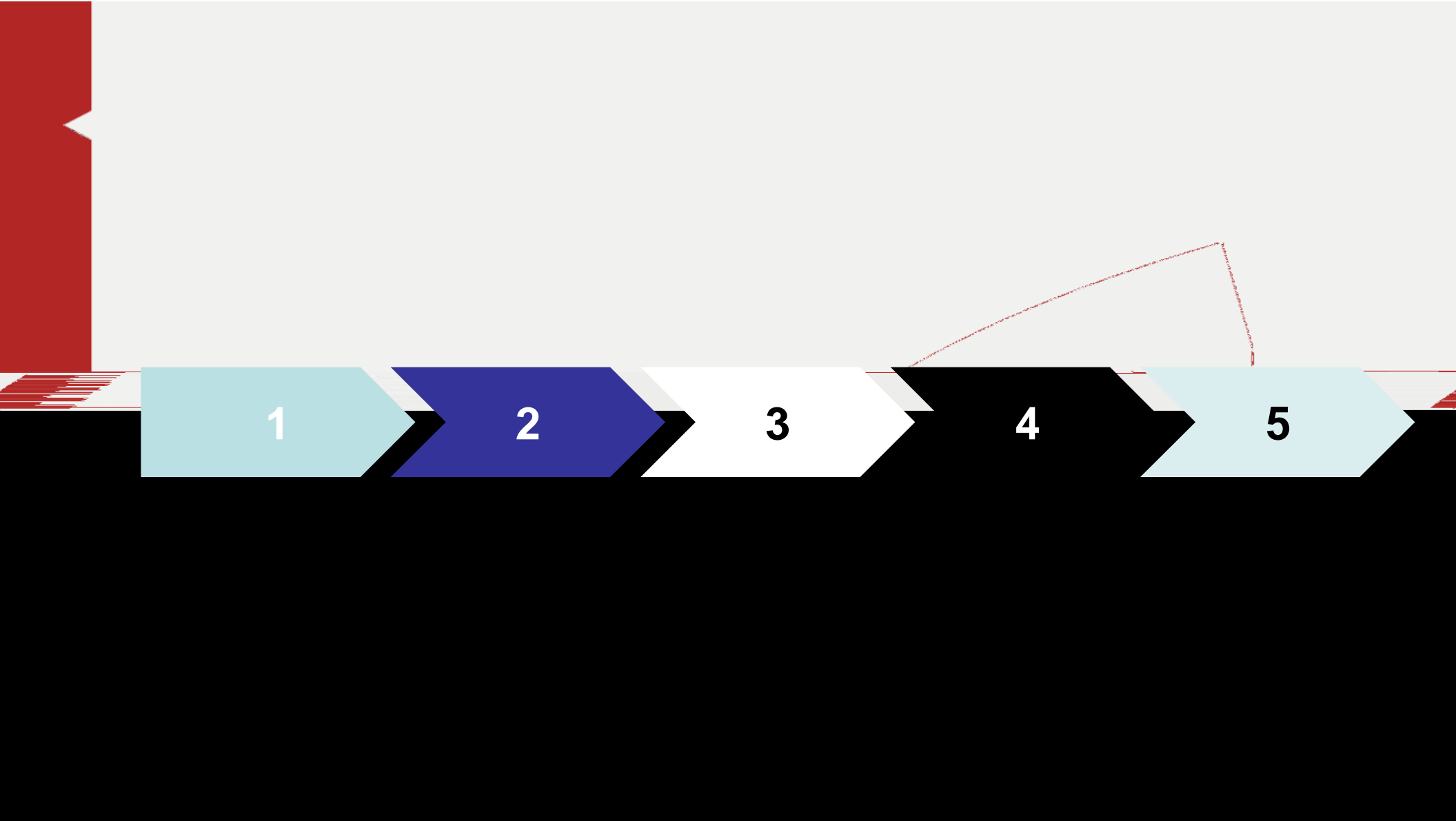




Presented By:



- Following an introductory webinar, “A First Look at the New Title IX Regulations,” this is the fourth in a series of webinars focusing on implementation.
- This webinar will:
 - Examine the prescriptive requirements of the final Title IX regulations related to investigations
 - Discuss evidentiary considerations
 - Outline effective investigation protocols



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Subsequent IRG webinars will focus on specific aspects of the regulations, as written and as applied, including:

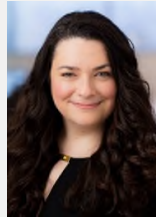
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Maureen P. Holland

Gina Maisto Smith

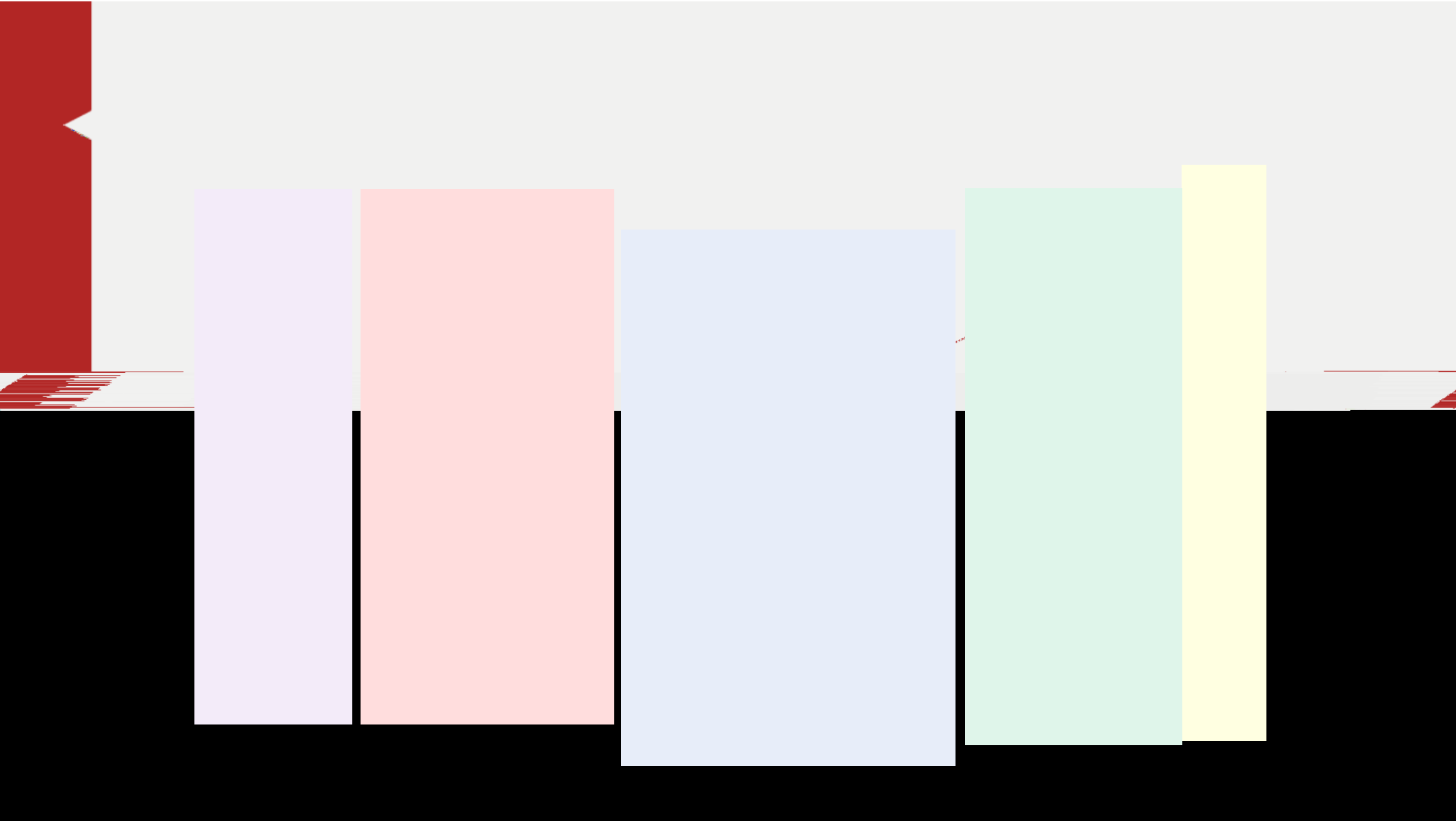
Leslie Gomez

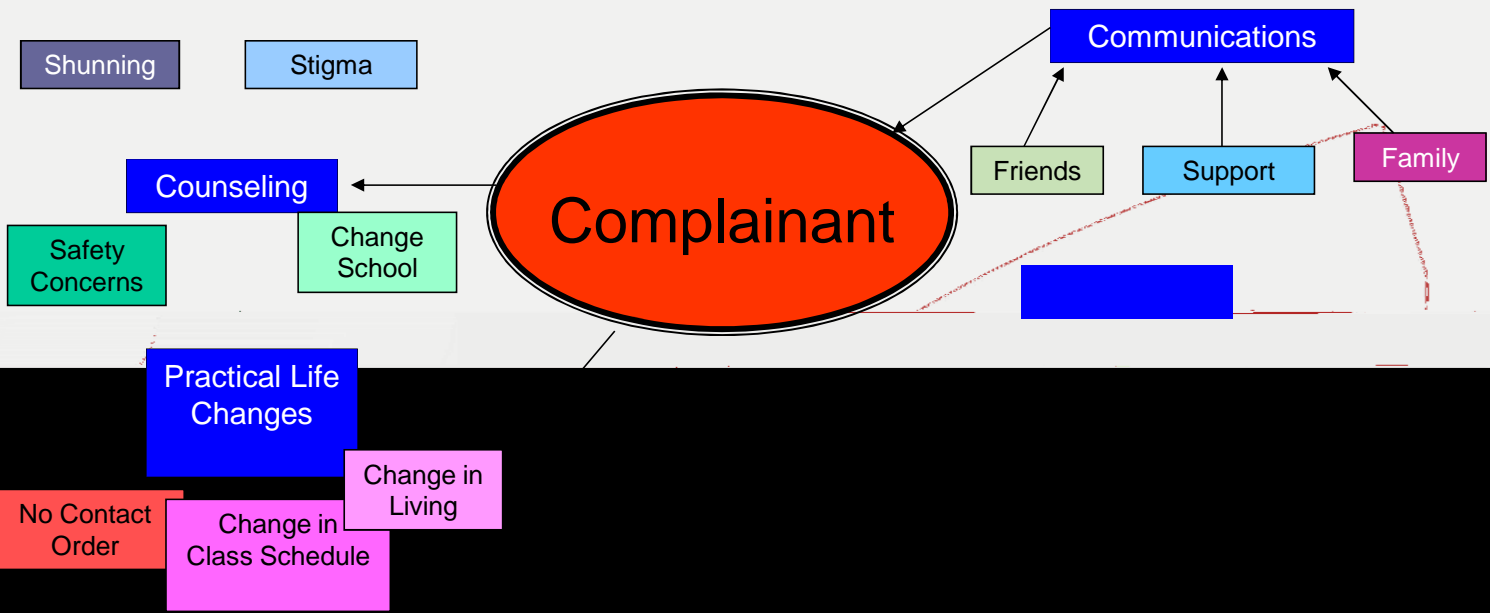
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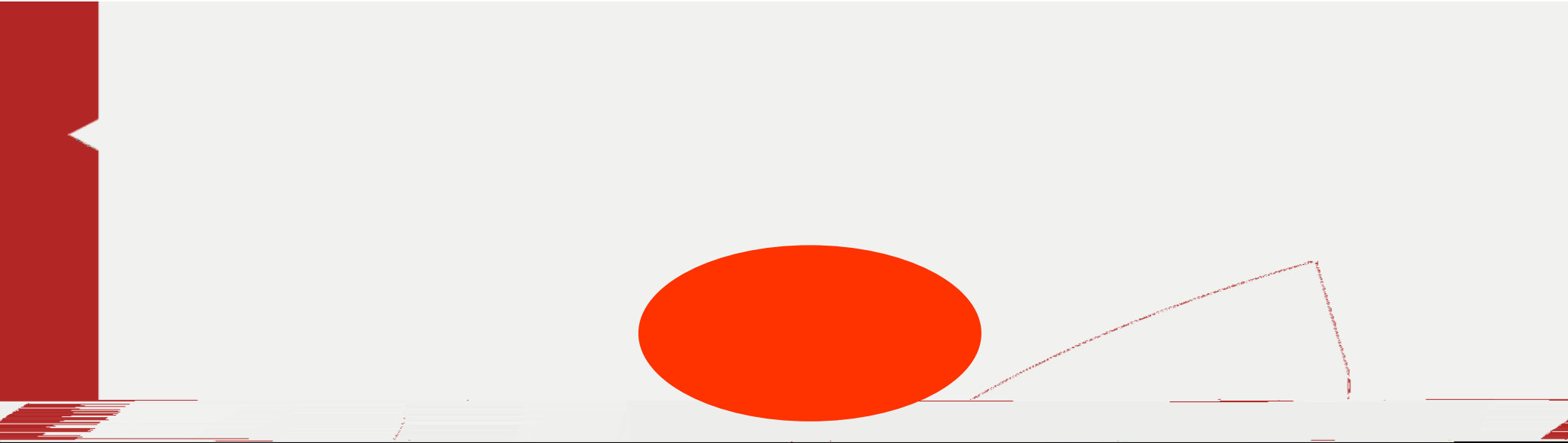
Michael Stackow













- The **burden is on the school** – not the parties – to gather sufficient evidence to reach a **fair, impartial** determination as to whether sexual misconduct or a hostile environment has occurred.
- Requires a **trained investigator** to analyze and document the available evidence to support reliable decisions, **objectively evaluate the credibility** of parties and witnesses, synthesize all available evidence and take into account the unique and complex circumstances of each case.
- Investigator must be free from actual or perceived **conflicts of interest**

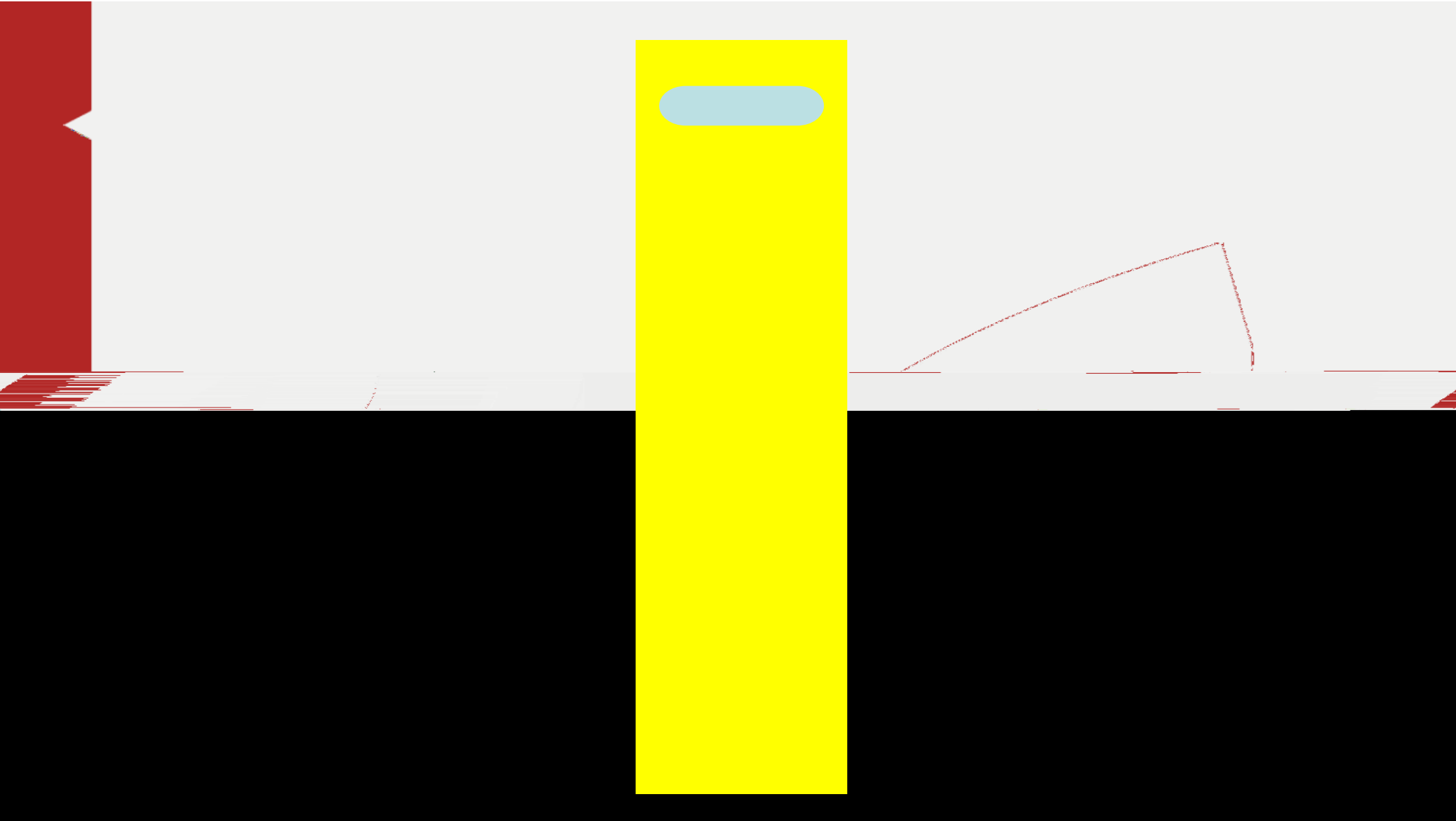
- Any rights or opportunities that a school makes available to one party during the investigation should be made available to the other party on **equal** terms.
- The reporting and responding parties and appropriate officials must have **timely and equal access to any information** that will be used during informal and formal disciplinary meetings and hearings.

- **Written notice** to a respondent of the allegations constituting a potential violation should include “**sufficient details and with sufficient time to prepare a response before any initial interview.**”
- Notice should include:
 - The identities of the parties involved
 - The specific section of the code of conduct allegedly violated
 - The precise conduct allegedly constituting the potential violation
 - The date and location of the alleged incident.

- The investigation **should** result in a **written report** summarizing the relevant **exculpatory and inculpatory** evidence.
- The parties should have the **opportunity to respond to the report in writing** in advance of the decision of responsibility and/or at a live hearing to decide responsibility.
- OCR recommends that a school provide **written notice of the outcome** of disciplinary proceedings to the reporting and responding parties concurrently.



- Open-ended and thorough inquiry
- Equitable opportunities for the parties to participate
- The conduct of the investigation matters
- Separating intake/support from investigation
- Maintaining and reinforcing impartiality
 - Screening for conflicts of interest or bias
 - Attention to language and communications
- Trained and experienced investigators

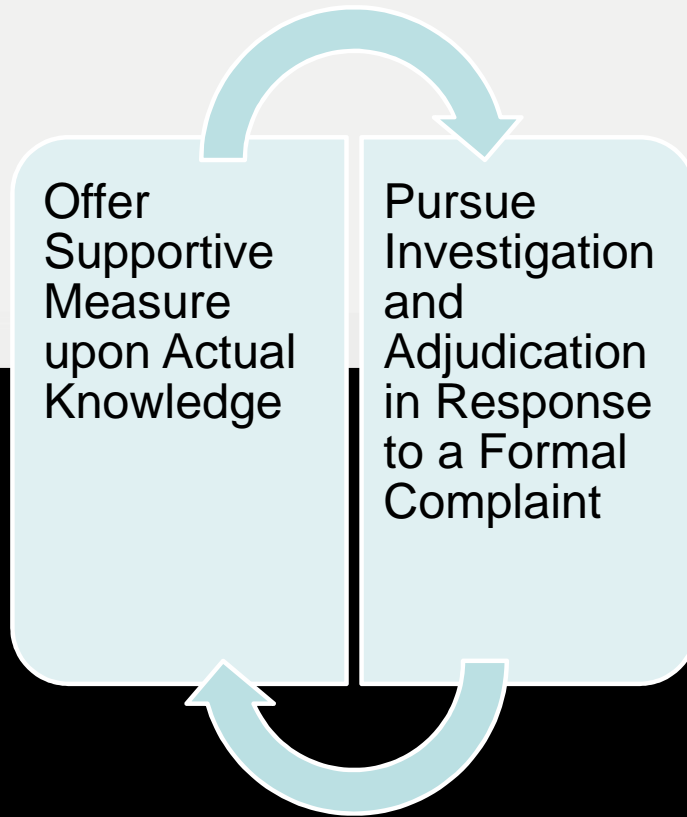


- “Because these final regulations represent the Department’s interpretation of a recipient’s legally binding obligations, **rather than best practices**, recommendations, or guidance, these final regulations focus on **precise legal compliance requirements** governing recipients.”

- “These final regulations leave recipients the **flexibility to choose to follow best practices and recommendations** contained in the Department’s guidance, or similarly, best practices and recommendations made by non-Department sources, such as Title IX consultancy firms, legal and social







- “The final regulations promote clarity as to recipient’s legal obligations, and **promote respect for each complainant’s autonomy**, by distinguishing between a complainant’s report of sexual harassment, on the one hand, and the filing of a formal complaint that has initiated a grievance process against a respondent, on the other hand.”
- “The Department acknowledges that **a recipient should respect the complainant’s autonomy and wishes** with respect to a formal complaint and grievance process **to the extent possible.**”

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020, Preamble, 85 F.R. 30282; 30219.

- Balancing a recipient's obligation to respond to instances of sexual harassment with a complainant's autonomy
 - A rigid requirement such as an investigation in every circumstance may chill reporting of sexual harassment...
 - A student may receive supportive measures irrespective of whether the student files a formal complaint...these final regulations encourage students to report sexual harassment while allowing them to exercise some control over their report.

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020; Preamble, 85 F.R. 30190

- Formal complaint:
 - A document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and
 - Requesting that the recipient investigate the allegation of sexual harassment
- Once a formal complaint is filed, a recipient **must** investigate the allegations in that complaint
 - The Department believes that where a complainant has chosen to file a formal complaint, or the Title IX Coordinator has decided to sign a formal complaint, the recipient must investigate those allegations regardless of the merits of the allegations. (emphasis in original)

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020 §106.30 Definitions and §106.45(b)(3)
Dismissal of a formal complaint; 85 F.R. 30574



Notice

Mandatory

- Require an objective evaluation of all relevant evidence
 - Including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
 - Credibility determinations may not be based on a person's status



- State whether the **standard of evidence** to be used to determine responsibility is the preponderance of the evidence standard or the clear and convincing evidence standard,
 - Apply the same standard of evidence for formal complaints against students as for formal complaints against employees, including faculty
 - Apply the same standard of evidence to all formal complaints of sexual harassment

- Include the procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal
- Describe the range of supportive measures available
- Not require, allow, rely upon, or otherwise use questions or evidence that constitute, or seek disclosure of, **information protected under a legally recognized privilege**, unless the person holding such privilege has waived the privilege

Relevant Regulations Sections:

Appeal: §§ 106.45(b)(1)(viii) and 106.45(b)(7)(ii)(F)



Range of Supportive Measures: § 106.45(b)(1)(ix)

Waiver of Privilege: § 106.45(b)(1)(x)





- Separate support/advocacy/intake functions from investigative/adjudicative functions to reduce potential for conflict of interest or perception of bias
- Conflation of roles can:
 - Impact thorough assessment of the facts
 - Create distrust/confusion by complainant
 - Give appearance of bias/lack of impartiality

- 
- Reinforce neutrality in language and communications
 - Ensure sufficient resources for timely response
 - Consider creative models for separation of intake from support from investigation from decision-making
- 

- “Section 106.44(c) does not preclude a recipient from using Title IX personnel trained under §106.45(b)(1)(iii) to make the emergency removal decision or conduct a post-removal challenge proceeding, but **if**

Title IX Regulations May 19 2020; §106.45(b)(5)(v) 85 F.R. 30424

- Must provide written notice of the allegations.
 - Sufficient time to prepare a response before any initial interview
 - Sufficient details known at the time
 - identities of the parties, if known;



– Must state that:





Notice

Intake

- If during the investigation, the recipient decides to investigate allegations about the complainant or respondent that are not included in the original notice, the recipient must provide notice of the additional allegations to the parties whose identities are known.
- The Preamble makes it clear that any supplemental notice must be in writing.
 - Although § 106.45(b)(2) requires subsequent written notice to the parties as the recipient discovers additional potential violations...

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020 §106.45(b)(2)(ii); Preamble 85
F.R. 30283

- Checkpoints for additional policy violations
 - Post complainant interview
 - Post respondent interview
 - Post evidence review

- Procedural due process: “Notice”
- Consider similar checkpoints for mandatory dismissal of the formal complaint



- A recipient **may** consolidate formal complaints as to allegations of sexual harassment against more than one respondent, or by more than one complainant against one or more respondents, or by one party against the other party, **where the allegations of sexual harassment arise out of the same facts or circumstances.**

- The requirement for the same facts and circumstances means that the multiple complainants' allegations are so intertwined that their allegations directly relate to all the parties.

- The Department believes that recipients and parties will benefit from knowing that recipients have discretion to consolidate formal complaints...
- Intended to give “discretion” to consolidate formal complaints that arise “out of the same facts or circumstances and involve more than one complainant, more than one respondent, or what amount to counter-complaints by one party against the other.”

- If the respondent is facing an additional allegation, the respondent has a right to know what allegations have become part of the investigation for the same reasons the initial written notice of allegations is part of a fair process, and the complainant deserves to know whether additional allegations have (or have not) become part of the scope of the investigation.
- This information allows both parties to meaningfully participate during the investigation, for example by gathering and presenting inculpatory or exculpatory evidence (including fact and expert witnesses) relevant to each allegation under investigation.

- Multiple instances of a respondent engaging in misconduct towards the same complainant
- Multiple allegations by same complainant against same respondent





- Ensure that the burden of proof and the burden



- The investigator is obligated to **gather evidence directly related to the allegations** whether or not the recipient intends to rely on such evidence (for instance, where evidence is **directly related to the allegations but the**

- Not restrict the ability of either party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather and present relevant evidence.

- Provide an equal opportunity for the parties to present witnesses and evidence
 - Fact and expert witnesses
 - Inculpatory and exculpatory evidence

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020; §106.45(b)(5)(iii) ; 85 F.R. 30576.

- 
- Preparing for interview
 - Interview protocols and templates for introduction, scope
- 
- 

- Developing rapport
 - Allow additional time for the interview
 - Conversational language and tone
 - Avoid distractions
- Privacy considerations
 - Ensuring a private setting
 - Facilitating the presence of advisor of choice
- Sharing documents

- We do not believe that specifying what restrictions on advisor participation may be appropriate is necessary, and we decline to remove the discretion of a recipient to restrict an advisor's participation so as not to unnecessarily limit a recipient's flexibility to conduct a grievance process that both complies with § 106.45 and, in the recipient's judgment, best serves the needs and interests of the recipient and its educational community.

- “Section 106.45(b)(5)(iv) (allowing recipients to place restrictions on active participation by party advisors) and the revised introductory sentence to § 106.45(b) (requiring any rules a recipient adopts for its grievance process other than rules required under § 106.45 to apply equally to both parties) would, for example, **permit a recipient to require parties personally** to answer questions posed by an investigator during an interview, or personally to make any opening or closing statements the recipient allows at a live hearing, so long as such rules apply equally to both parties.”


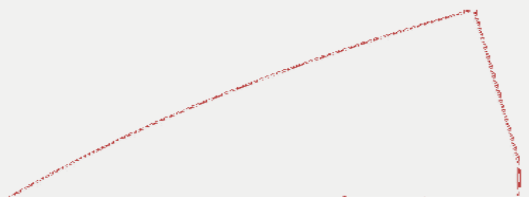
Title IX Regulations May 19 2020; Preamble at 30298.

- The final regulations do not require training for advisors of choice. This is because the recipient is responsible for reaching an accurate determination regarding responsibility while remaining impartial, yet a party's ability to rely on assistance from an advisor should not be limited by imposing training requirements on advisors, who by definition need not be impartial because their function is to assist one particular party.


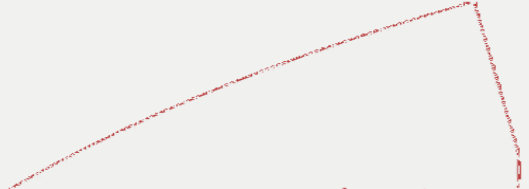
Title IX Regulations May 19 2020; Preamble at 30333.

- To allow recipients to meet their obligations with as much flexibility as possible, the Department declines to require recipients to pre-screen a panel of assigned advisors from which a party could make a selection at a hearing, or to require provided advisors to receive training from the recipient.

Title IX Regulations May 19 2020; Preamble at 30340-41.

- 
- Process meeting to discuss policy, decorum, and expectations
 - Requirement that advisors:
 - Review policy in advance
- 



- 
- Privileged Information & Records
 - Relevance
 - Prior Sexual History
 - Prior or Subsequent Misconduct
- 

- Recipient cannot access, consider, disclose, or otherwise use a party's records that are made or maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other recognized professional or paraprofessional acting in the professional's or paraprofessional's

- The final regulations do not define relevance, and the ordinary meaning of the word should be understood and applied.

- “While the proposed rules do not speak to
 - admissibility of hearsay,
 - prior bad acts,
 - character evidence,
 - polygraph (lie detector) results,
 - standards for authentication of evidence,
 - or similar issues concerning evidence,

- this includes **both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence**, and
- the final regulations deem questions and evidence about a complainant's prior sexual behavior to be **irrelevant** with two exceptions, and
- preclude use of any information protected by a **legally recognized privilege** (e.g., attorney-client)."

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020; Preamble at 30247, footnotes omitted.

- Questions and evidence about the complainant's sexual predisposition or

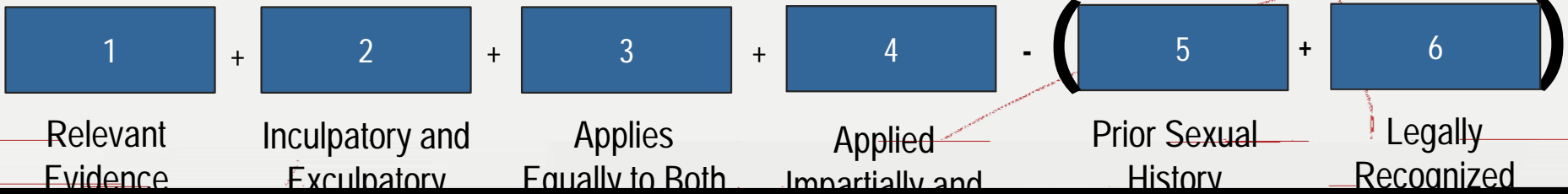
- Only applies to complainants
 - The Department reiterates that the rape shield language in this provision does not pertain to the

- The Department disagrees that the rape shield language is too broad. Scenarios described by commenters, where a respondent might wish to prove the complainant had a motive to fabricate or conceal a sexual interaction, do not require admission or consideration of the complainant's sexual behavior.
- Respondents in that scenario could probe a complainant's motive by, for example, inquiring whether a complainant had a dating or romantic relationship with a person other than the respondent, without delving into a complainant's sexual behavior; sexual behavior evidence would remain irrelevant in such circumstances.

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020; §§ 106.45(b)(1)(iii) and 106.45(b)(6);
Preamble at 30351.

- The regulations do not prohibit the use of prior or subsequent misconduct
 - “Evidence of a pattern of inappropriate behavior by an alleged harasser” permitted if relevant
- Schools will need to determine if such conduct is:
 - Relevant
 - May be used in determining responsibility
 - May be used in sanctioning
- If so, will need to set criteria for consideration

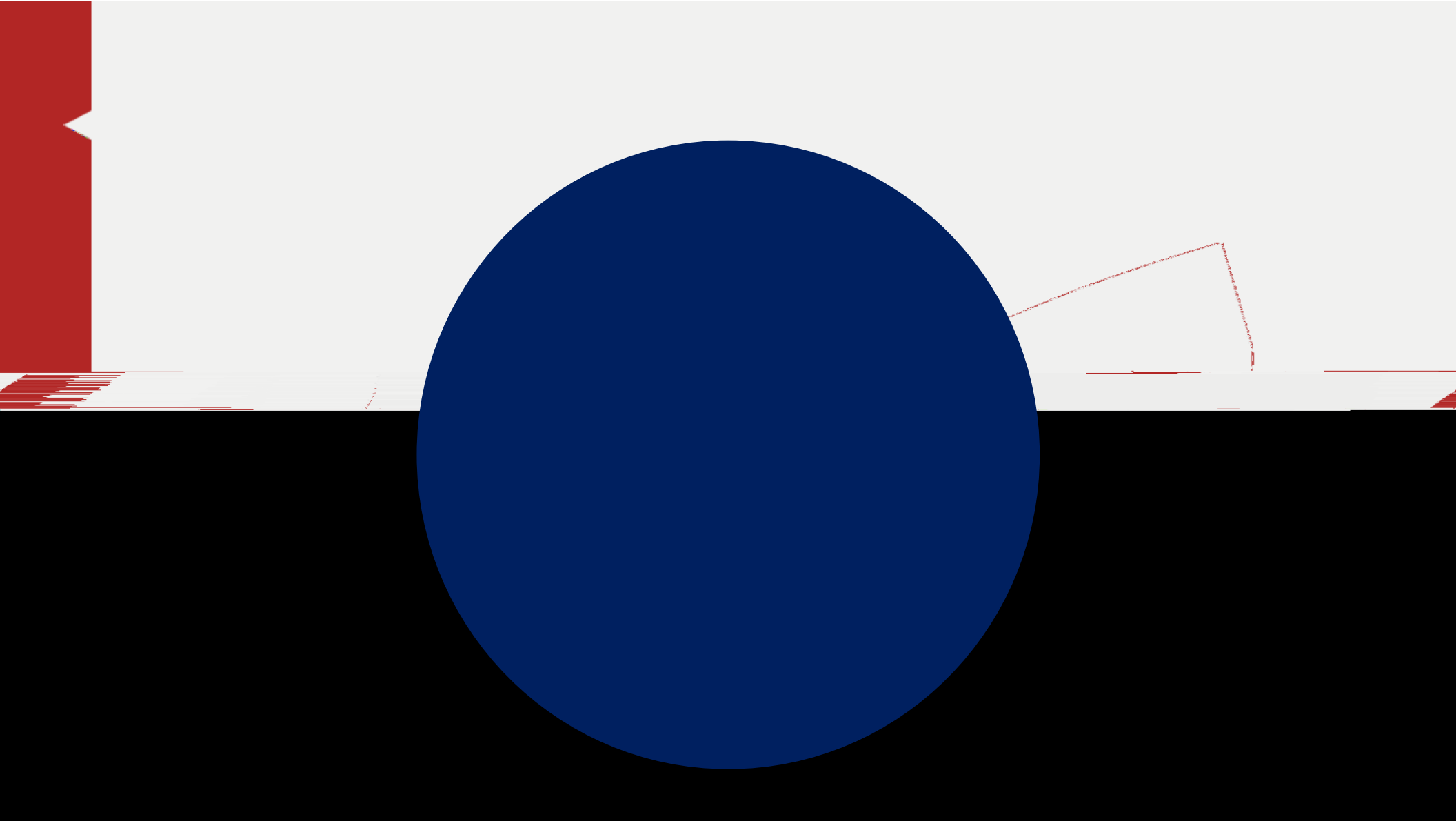
- Prior or subsequent misconduct may be relevant to demonstrate:
 - Intent/knowledge/state of mind
 - Motive
 - Opportunity
 - Lack of mistake
 - Pattern
 - Identity
 - Information that is inextricably interwoven with the facts
- Consider prejudicial vs. probative value



- “Provide both parties an **equal opportunity to inspect and review any evidence** obtained as part of the investigation that is **directly related to the allegations** raised in a formal complaint so that each party can meaningfully respond to the evidence prior to conclusion of the investigation.”

- “Recipient must send to each party and the party’s advisor, if any, **the evidence subject to inspection and review** in an electronic format or a hard copy, and the parties must have at least **10 days to submit a written response**, which the investigator will consider prior to completion of the investigative report.”

- Allowing parties the opportunity to inspect this broader universe of evidence will further each party's own interests by identifying evidence either overlooked by the investigator or erroneously deemed relevant or irrelevant.



- Not defined in the regulations or the Preamble
 - The Department declines to define certain terms such as “evidence directly related to the allegations,” as these terms should be interpreted using their plain and ordinary meaning.
- “Directly related” aligns with the requirements in FERPA
 - The Department previously noted that the “directly related to” requirement in § 106.45(b)(vi) aligns with FERPA.
 - For example, the regulations implementing FERPA define education records as records that are “directly related to a student” pursuant to § 99.3.
 - [T]he school has some discretion to determine what evidence is directly related to the allegations in a formal complaint.

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020; Preamble at 30304, 30428.

- [T]he universe of that exchanged evidence should include all evidence (inculpatory and exculpatory) that relates to the allegations under investigation, without the investigator having screened out evidence related to the allegations that the investigator does not believe is relevant.

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020 §106.45(b)(5)(vi);
Preamble 85 F.R.30304

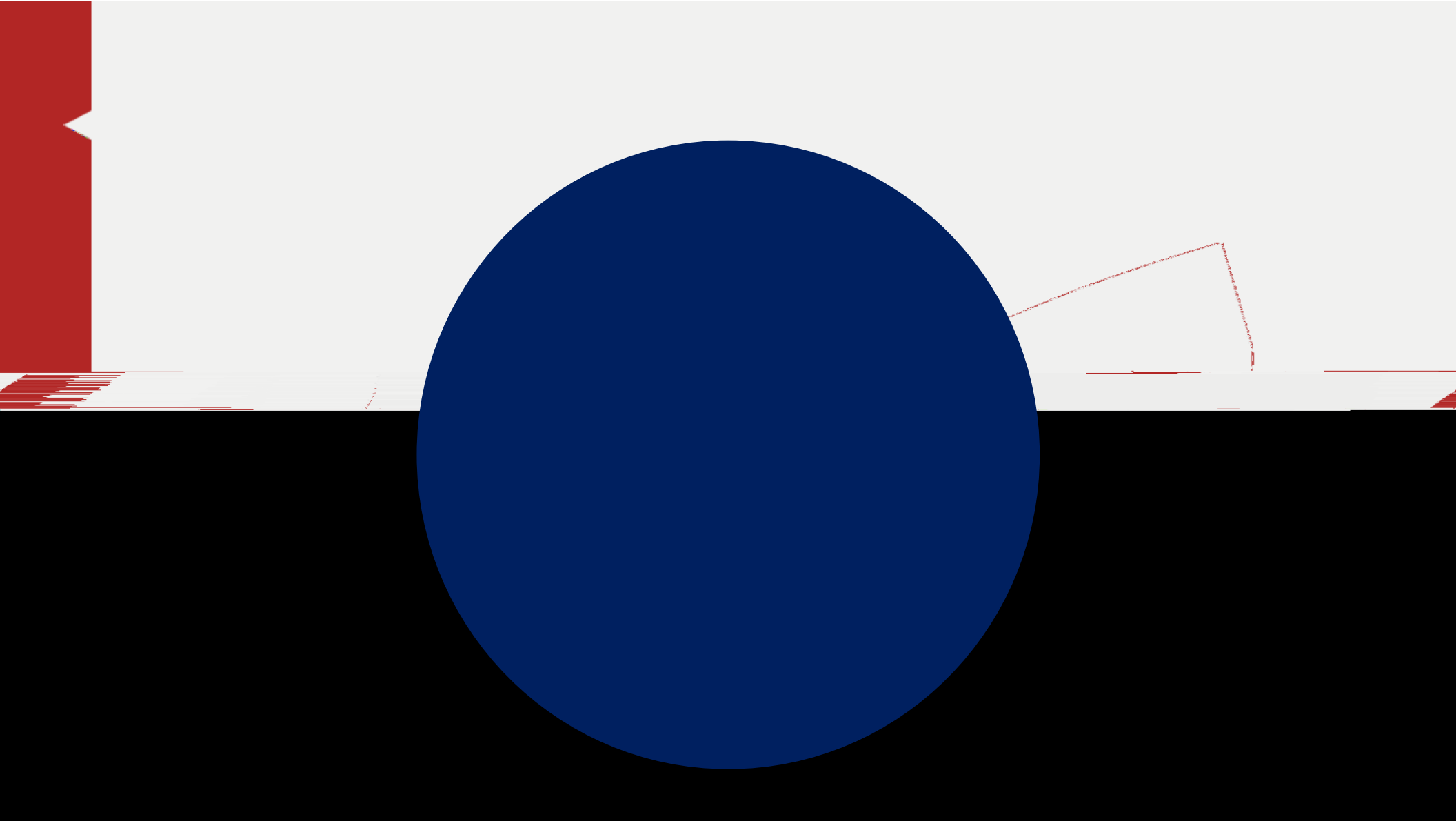
- Evidence that is “directly related to the allegations” may encompass a broader universe of evidence than evidence that is “relevant.”
- The Department does not believe that determinations about whether certain questions or evidence are relevant or directly related to the allegations at issue requires legal training and that such factual determinations reasonably can be made by layperson recipient officials impartially applying logic and common sense.

Title IX Regulations May 19, 2020; Preamble at 30304, 30321.

- Redacting information within evidence (documents, interviews, medical records, etc.)
- May be redacted if:
 - Not directly related to the allegations
 - Privileged, or
 - Obtained without proper consent
- A recipient may permit or require the investigator to redact information ... such as information protected by a legally recognized privilege ... contained within documents ... that are directly related to the allegations, before sending the evidence to the parties for inspection and review.

- Imposing restrictions on dissemination or use
 - Recipients may impose on the parties and party advisors restrictions or require a non-disclosure agreement not to disseminate or use any of the evidence for a purpose unrelated to the Title IX grievance process.
 - As long as doing so does not violate the regulations or law.

- The parties may make corrections, provide appropriate context, and prepare their responses and defenses before a decision-maker reaches a determination regarding responsibility.
- If relevant evidence seems to be missing, a party can point that out to the investigator, and if it turns out that relevant evidence was destroyed by a party, the decision-maker can take that into account in assessing the credibility of parties, and the weight of evidence in the case.






- Create an **investigative report** that fairly summarizes relevant evidence and
- Send to each party and the party's advisor, if any, the investigative report in an electronic format or a hard copy, for their review and written response, **at least 10 days prior** to the determination of responsibility (hearing)

– Th.39 Tf 1e11.1(nd)a6.39 Tf

- The regulations do not address the specific contents of the investigative report other than specifying its core purpose of summarizing the relevant evidence.
- The Department takes no position here on such elements beyond what is required in these final regulations; namely, that the investigative report must fairly summarize relevant evidence.

- 
- Must issue a simultaneous written determination regarding responsibility, including
 - Identification of the allegations
 - Description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the formal complaint through the determination

- The Department does not wish to prohibit the investigator from including recommended findings or conclusions in the investigative report.
- However, the decision-maker is under an independent obligation to objectively evaluate relevant evidence, and thus cannot simply defer to recommendations made by the investigator in the investigative report.
- If a recipient chooses to include a credibility analysis in its investigative report, the recipient must be cautious not to violate § 106.45(b)(7)(i), prohibiting the decision-maker from being the same person as the Title IX Coordinator or the investigator.

- § 106.45(b)(7)(i) prevents an investigator from actually making a determination regarding responsibility.
- If an investigator's determination regarding credibility is actually a determination regarding responsibility, then §106.45(b)(7)(i) would prohibit it.

- Fairly summarizes the relevant evidence
- Investigator may redact information from the report
 - Recipients may permit or require the investigator to redact from the investigative report information that is not relevant, which is contained in documents or evidence that is relevant.

- Allow parties to provide a written response to the investigative report
 - Recipients must also give the parties meaningful opportunity to un0 0 1n3(p)3orn atdeoc the recipientl

- At least 10 days prior to the determination of responsibility (hearing)

- At least 10 days prior to the determination of responsibility (hearing)
 - The parties then have equal opportunity to review the investigative report; if a party disagrees with an investigator's determination about relevance, the party can make that argument in the party's written response to the investigative report and to the decision-maker at any hearing held.

- Use template format with consistent language and content across investigations
- Language: balanced, neutral and non-judgmental
- Avoid declarative credibility language
 - “Unreliable” vs. insufficient information
 - Recognize perspective of the parties
 - Comment on the evidence, not the parties
- Use of verbatim quotes
- Leave sufficient time for writing, editing, proof reading and review by a fresh set of eyes




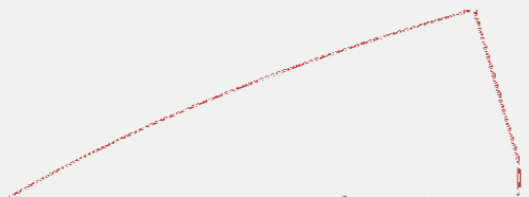
- The grievance process must include:
 - reasonably prompt time frames for conclusion of the grievance

- The grievance process must include:
 - reasonably prompt time frames for conclusion of the grievance process, including reasonably prompt time frames for filing and resolving appeals and informal resolution processes if the recipient offers informal resolution processes
 - a process that allows for the temporary delay of the grievance process or the limited extension of time frames for good cause with written notice to the complainant and the respondent of the delay or extension and the reasons for the action
- Good cause may include considerations such as:





- A recipient must ensure that **Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution** process, receive training on:
 - The definition of sexual harassment in § 106.30
 - The scope of the recipient's education program or activity
 - How to conduct an investigation and grievance process including hearings, appeals, and informal resolution processes, as applicable
 - How to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias
- A recipient must ensure that **decision-makers** receive training on:
 - Any technology to be used at a live hearing
 - Issues of relevance of questions and evidence, including when questions and evidence about the complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, as set forth in paragraph (b)(6) of this section.

- 
- Preparation
 - Policy
 - Protocols
 - Personnel
 - Proficiency
 - Training
 - Experience
- 



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