

Sexual Harassment in Schools: A Parent's Guide!

It's not a joke!
It's not OK!
It's illegal!

Litchfield Public Schools

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This information is intended to help us work together to introduce the subject of sexual harassment to our children. It is our legal obligation as a school district to educate our students on the definition, types, effects, and protections against sexual harassment.

It is our hope that you thoughtfully review this booklet and then read and discuss the information with your children at their own pace of understanding. It is critical for our children to understand what is, and what is not, appropriate and that the laws are strict in terms of enforcement.

Our goal is that every child in the Litchfield School District learns in an environment free from harassment of every kind.

Thank you for your attention to this important educational endeavor.

Sherri Turner
Superintendent

Sexual Harassment

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature which interferes with a student's right to learn, study, work, achieve, or participate in school activities in a comfortable and supportive atmosphere. Under federal and state laws and policies, sexual harassment is illegal and is prohibited in school settings.

Sexual harassment may involve a boy harassing a girl, a girl harassing a boy, a boy harassing another boy, or a girl harassing another girl. Harassment may be student-to-student, adult-to-student, or student-to-adult.

As of 2006, sexual harassment includes website postings, instant messages, texts, and e-mail messages that ridicule or humiliate another person.

Persons in the Litchfield Public Schools prepared to handle sexual harassment complaints:

Center School

Lisa Deltano, Principal
Rachel Caporuscio, Counselor

Litchfield

Intermediate School

Michael Pascento, Principal
Karen Tesch, Counselor

Litchfield Middle School

Stephanie Kubisek, Principal
Carrie Gibbs, Counselor

Litchfield High School

Kristen Della Volpe, Principal
Michael Valerio, Dean

Mr. Seth Newton,
School Psychologist

Ms. Lisa Heuschkel,
Social Worker

State and Federal Agencies Bullying and Harassment

CT State Department
of Education (860)
713-6752

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department
of Education
(617) 289-0111

What Behaviors are Not OK?

- It is not OK to grab, touch, or pinch the private body parts of another person.
- It is not OK to grab another person's underwear or to pull someone's clothing up or down to show their underwear or body parts.
- It is not OK to say silly or nasty things about anyone's private body parts.
- It is not OK to make fun of someone for being a boy or being a girl.
- It is not OK to tell stories about anyone's body parts or their private behavior.
- It is not OK to give an unwanted kiss or hug or to dare someone else to do that.
- It is not OK to brush up against someone in a way that makes them feel bad.
- It is not OK to pass notes, pictures, jokes, or cartoons that make someone feel bad.
- It is not OK to make gestures that make someone feel bad.

What to tell your children about Sexual Harassment!

- Sexual harassment is not your fault. Nothing you say or do makes you deserve it.
- Sexual harassment isn't about feelings of love or being attracted to someone.
- It's about having power over someone and not respecting their decisions and limits.
- Flirting is *welcome* behavior that goes both ways and makes both people feel flattered. Sexual harassment, on the other hand, is *unwanted* behavior. It is *one-sided* and uses the power of words and actions to make someone feel embarrassed or dirty.
- 'No' means 'no.'

It is NOT tattling to tell an adult about things that make you feel bad in these ways!

How do I know when sexual harassment may be occurring?

Is my child being harassed? Is my child harassing someone? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the behavior make my child or someone else feel bad?
- Does the behavior interfere with my child's, or someone else's, ability to learn or to enjoy school or classroom activities?
- Does the behavior involve one person trying to have some kind of power over another person?
- Is the behavior part of a repeated pattern?
- Would I want this behavior to be directed toward my child?

What are a child's responsibilities and rights related to sexual harassment?

- Students are legally protected against sexual harassment and sex discrimination by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, a federal law prohibiting discrimination in schools on the basis of sex. Sex discrimination is also covered under Connecticut state law.
- They have the right to participate in all school and classroom activities in an atmosphere free from sexual harassment.
- They also have a responsibility NOT to engage in behaviors that are unwelcome or offensive to others.

What should I do if I believe my child is being sexually harassed?

- Ignoring sexual harassment is not a way to stop it!
- Tell your child's teacher, principal, school nurse, psychologist, or social worker.
- Tell your child to firmly say "No! Stop!" to the harasser whenever possible.
- Help your child to recall and write down: date, time, place, and other people who may have been around.
- Print email messages or Internet postings and turn them over to the school.