



# Title IX Higher Ed Level 2

**Title IX Investigator Training**



**Bricker & Eckler**  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Disclaimers

**We can't help ourselves. We're lawyers.**

- We are not giving you legal advice
- Consult with your legal counsel regarding how best to address a specific situation
- Feel free to ask general questions and hypotheticals
- If you did not receive your slides by email, we will post a link in the chat box. Please download and save them!

## Presentation Rules

---

- Seriously – questions are encouraged!
- “For the sake of argument...”
- Be aware of your own responses and experiences
- Follow-up with someone if you have questions and concerns
- Take breaks as needed

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Posting These Training Materials?

---

- Yes!
- Your Title IX Coordinator is required by 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b)(10)(i)(D) to post materials to train Title IX personnel on its website
- We know this and will make this packet available to your institution electronically to post



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Additional information available at:

---



Title IX Resource Center at  
[www.bricker.com/titleix](http://www.bricker.com/titleix)



Find us on **Twitter** at  
**@BrickerHigherEd**

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Required Training for Investigators

---

Definition of Sexual Harassment (Level 1)

Scope of Institution's Education Program or Activity (Level 1)

How to conduct an Investigation

Steps of the Grievance Process (Level 1)

Serving Impartially and without Bias

Issues of Relevance

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Topics

---

- The role of investigators
  - Bias and conflicts of interest
  - Relevancy
- Investigative Techniques
  - Mock Interview
  - Writing a report
  - Takeaways

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Aspirational Agenda

---

*All times EST/EDT*

### Day 1

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 2:00-2:30 | Introduction, Investigator's Role               |
| 2:30-3:15 | Relevance                                       |
| 3:15-3:30 | Break   |
| 3:30-5:00 | Relevance continued and Relevancy Hypotheticals |

### Day 2

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 2:00-3:15 | Investigative Techniques                  |
| 3:15-3:30 | Break                                     |
| 3:30-3:45 | Live Interview Scenario                   |
| 3:45-5:00 | Writing the Report/ Impartiality and Bias |

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## The investigator's role



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## No single-investigator model

---

- The role of investigator and decision-maker **MUST** be separate.
- The investigator does not make decisions.



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## The investigation and report

---

- The investigator has the burden of asking the parties for and collecting all relevant evidence.
- Relevant may be institution-determined, but we will discuss it further later today.
- Parties have the right to present fact and expert witnesses.
- Issues of relevancy will often not be made until the decision-maker is involved (after your involvement).

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## The Investigator's Roles

---



The **GATHERER** of all relevant evidence.



The **ORGANIZER** of all relevant evidence.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Issues of Relevance

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

### What is Relevant? 1 of 3

---

The regulations don't really tell us directly.  
But, it may include evidence that is:

**“ probative of any material fact concerning the allegations ”**

- Preamble, 30343

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What is Relevant? 2 of 3

---

The preamble also tells us:

“evidence pertinent to proving whether **facts material to the allegations** under investigation are **more or less likely to be true** (i.e., on what is relevant)”

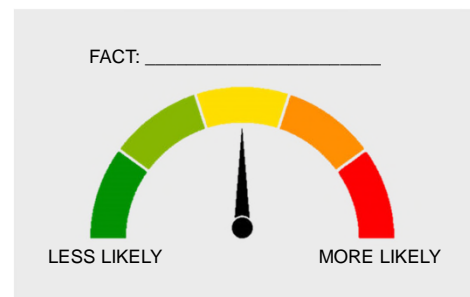
- Preamble, 30294

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What is Relevant? 3 of 3

---

Does this question, topic, evidence help **move the dial** under the standard of evidence?



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Issues of Relevancy (NOT Rules of Evidence) 1 of 2

---

- The Rules of Evidence do **NOT** apply and **CANNOT** apply



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Issues of Relevancy (NOT Rules of Evidence) 2 of 2






---

“[A] recipient may **not** adopt rules **excluding** certain types of **relevant evidence** (e.g., **lie detector test results**, or rape kits) where the type of evidence is not either deemed “**not relevant**” (as is, for instance, evidence concerning a complainant’s prior sexual history) or otherwise barred for use under 106.45 (as is, for instance, information protected by a legally recognized privilege).”



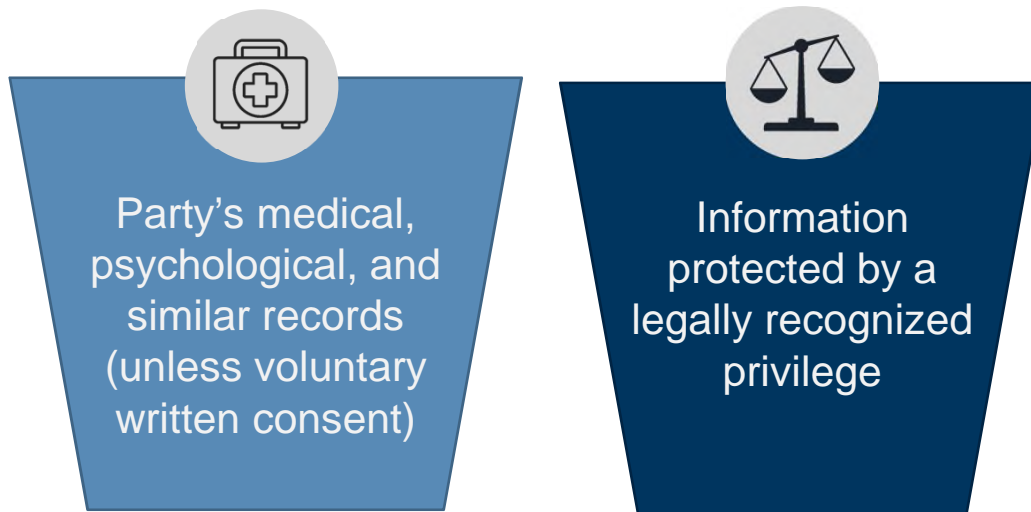
© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## This means: 1 of 2

- 
 Cannot exclude redundant evidence
  - 
 Cannot exclude character evidence
  - 
 Cannot exclude hearsay
  - 
 Cannot exclude evidence where the probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice (30294)
- 

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Issues of Relevancy: What isn't relevant?



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy: Medical treatment and Investigations



### Section 106.45(b)(5)(i): when *investigating* a formal complaint, **recipient**:

- “[C]annot 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 capacity, or assisting in that capacity, and which are made and maintained in connection with the provision of treatment to the party, **unless the recipient obtains that party’s voluntary, written consent to do so for a grievance process under this section.**”

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy: Legally Privileged Information



### Section 106.45(b)(1)(x):

- A **recipient’s** grievance process **must...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.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy: Legally Privileged Info – What does this include?



- Preamble identifies medical and treatment records.
- Jurisdiction-dependent
  - Attorney-client communications
  - Implicating oneself in a crime
  - Confessions to a clergy member or other religious figures
  - Spousal testimony in criminal matters
  - Some confidentiality/trade secrets

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Issues of Relevancy: What isn't relevant? – Rape Shield Provision



- Evidence about **complainant's** prior sexual history (must exclude) unless such questions/ evidence:
  - are offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct, or
  - if the questions/evidence concern specific incidents of the complainant's prior sexual behavior with respect to the respondent and are offered to prove consent.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

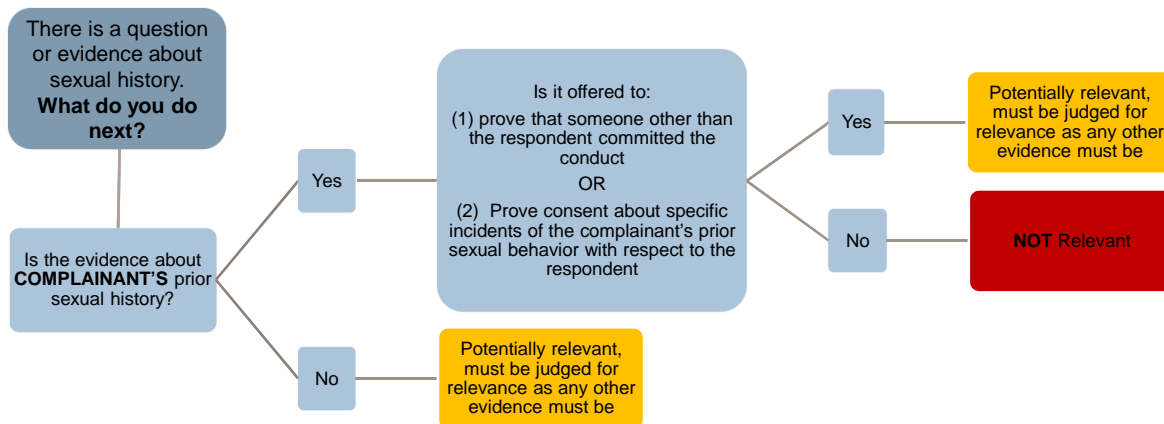
## Issues of Relevancy: What isn't relevant? – Rape Shield Provision



- Rape shield protections do not apply to Respondents
- “The Department reiterates that the rape shield language . . . does not pertain to the sexual predisposition or sexual behavior of respondents, so **evidence of a pattern** of inappropriate behavior by an alleged harasser **must be judged for relevance as any other evidence must be.**”

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Rape Shield Provision Flowchart



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Retaliation

---

- When parties elect not to participate, a recipient cannot retaliate against them (30322)
- It is the right of any party or witness not to participate in the investigation

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy and the Investigator

---

### The gatherer of all relevant evidence

“**Recipient** must ensure that “all *relevant* questions and evidence are admitted and considered (though varying weight or credibility may of course be given to particular evidence by the decision-maker).”

- Preamble, 30331

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy and the Investigation and Report 1 of 2

---



Summarize



Evaluate



The requirement for **recipients** to **summarize** and evaluate **relevant evidence**, and specification of certain types of evidence that must be deemed not relevant or are otherwise inadmissible in a grievance process pursuant to section 106.45, appropriately direct **recipients** to **focus investigations** and adjudications **on evidence pertinent to proving whether facts material to the allegations under investigation are more or less likely to be true** (i.e., on that is relevant.)



- Preamble, 30294

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy and the Investigation and Report 2 of 2

---



1

The **GATHERER** of all relevant evidence.



2

The **ORGANIZER** of all relevant evidence.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Relevancy Hypotheticals for the Investigator

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Relevancy Hypotheticals

---

*Disclaimer: The following hypotheticals are not based on any actual cases we have handled or of which we are aware. Any similarities to actual cases are coincidental.*

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Relevancy Hypotheticals: Scenario Review

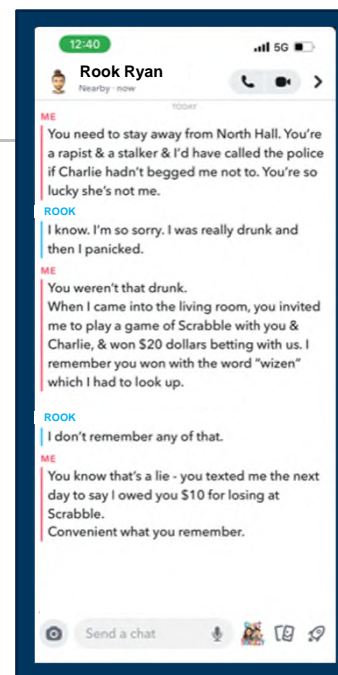
- The following hypotheticals are all based upon the scenario we provided in advance of today. We will go through it together now before we go through the hypotheticals.
- You are the investigator who has been handed this information from the Title IX Coordinator.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Report

**Reporter Name:** Charlie Chun  
**Received:** January 10, 2023 at 9:12 A.M.  
**Intake Format:** Compliance System Report  
**Parties Identified:** Charlie Chun and Rook Ryan

**Narrative:** Rook sexually assaulted me early in the morning of January 5, 2023. Rook STALKED me too, they contacted me after I told them to STOP. I even blocked them, and they showed up outside of my dorm and aggressively approached me. So, I had to act in self-defense to get away from them. I retreated to my room and hid in there for several days, which made me miss class. Here is a screenshot of a Snapchat conversation with my roommate Wendy and Rook. Rook is a PREDATOR!!!!



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Notices of Allegations

January 10, 2023

Title IX Office sent Notices of Allegations to the parties that Charlie had filed a formal complaint that Rook engaged in prohibited conduct that could violate Title IX for sexual harassment and stalking and that the Title IX Office was initiating an investigation



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Report #2

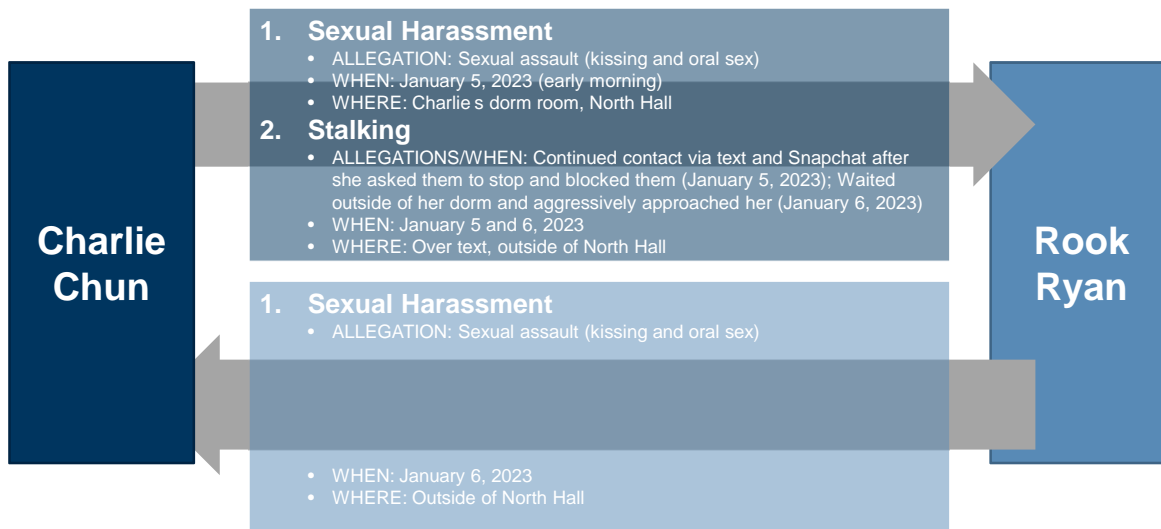
January 11, 2023

After receiving the Notice of Allegations, Rook came to the Title IX Office and filed a formal complaint against Charlie alleging that she engaged in prohibited conduct under Title IX for sexual harassment and dating violence



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Summary of Allegations



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical One

You sit down to interview Charlie. Charlie tells you that she heard that after she broke up with Rook, Rook sexually assaulted several other people. Charlie identified a couple of these other people for you to interview about Rook's sexual history.

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this relevant?



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Two

---

In your interview with Rook, Rook tells you that they have hired an expert witness who will provide a report stating that there is no way that Rook could have sexually assaulted Cameron.

Is this relevant?

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Three

---

In your interview with Charlie, Cameron disclosed to you that they have proof that they have post-traumatic stress disorder from Rook's actions. Charlie states that they have medical treatment records to prove this, but does not want to provide them to you.

Is this relevant?

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Four

---

In your interview with Rook, Rook mentions that before they started dating Charlie, they heard that Charlie was nearly expelled from high school for threatening a teacher with physical violence.

Is this relevant?

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Five

---

Rook states that Charlie cheated on him and may have sexually assaulted two other witnesses who Rook identifies.

Is the information from those witnesses relevant?

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Six

---

In your interview with Charlie, Charlie tells you that they have consulted with a psychic who is willing to state that she was sexually assaulted by Rook.

Is this relevant?

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Seven

---

In your interview with Rook, Rook tells you that they have been unable to sleep since Charlie filed the report and would like to provide treatment records to support the effects of Charlie's report on Rook. Rook is willing to sign a waiver.

Is this relevant?

FACT: \_\_\_\_\_



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Introduction to Investigative Techniques

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

### Initial Review

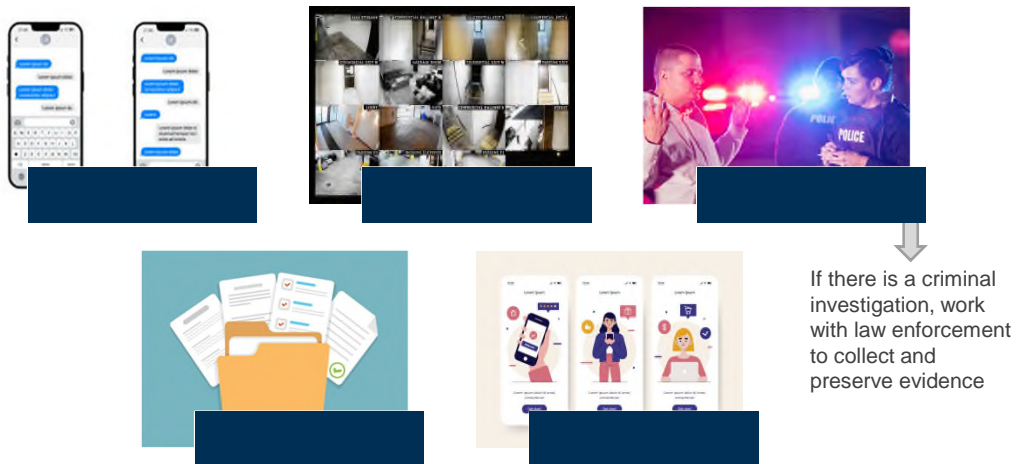
---

- Review notes and information collected by the Title IX Coordinator
- Review Notices to Complainant and Respondent
- Review Policy/Code of Conduct
- Define Scope of Investigation
  - What elements do you think will be disputed?
  - Agreed upon?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Begin Evidence List

---



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Begin Witness List

---

- If there is a criminal investigation, work with law enforcement to ensure permission to question witnesses
- Who should be included?
- Who should NOT be included?
- In what order should the witnesses be interviewed?
- Be flexible

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Craft Questions for Each Witness

---

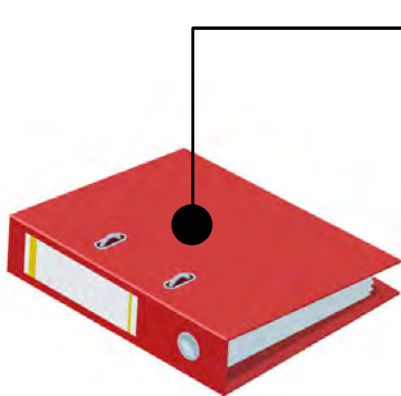
- Refer to the policy
- Consider what information they are likely to have related to each element
- Consider what information they are likely to have that may assist the decision-maker in determining credibility
- Be flexible



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Organizing for the Interview

---



- What should you have with you?
  - Intake Report
  - Written notice with allegations
  - Investigation log
  - Investigation notes cover sheet
  - Pre-prepared questions
  - Evidence you may need to reference or show witness
  - Policy or Handbook

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Note-taking Tips

---

- Use predictable symbols in the margin to easily skim during the interview:
  - ? ← Follow-up questions
  - \* ← Potential evidence
  - W ← Potential witness
- Try to record exact quotes when possible
- Interview notes are now required to be produced as part of the record

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Simultaneous Criminal Matter

---

- Is it okay to proceed with the investigation?
- **If not, could be interfering with a police investigation**
- Communicate with your Title IX Coordinator
- May require calling the local police department and/or detective



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Remember: The gatherer of relevant evidence

---

- To ensure burden of proof and burden of gathering evidence is not on the parties (106.45(b)(5)(i))
- To provide an equal opportunity for the parties to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses, and other inculpatory or exculpatory evidence (106.45(b)(5)(ii))
- Not restrict the ability of either party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather or present relevant evidence (106.45(b)(5)(iii))

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Setting Up the Interview 1 of 2

---

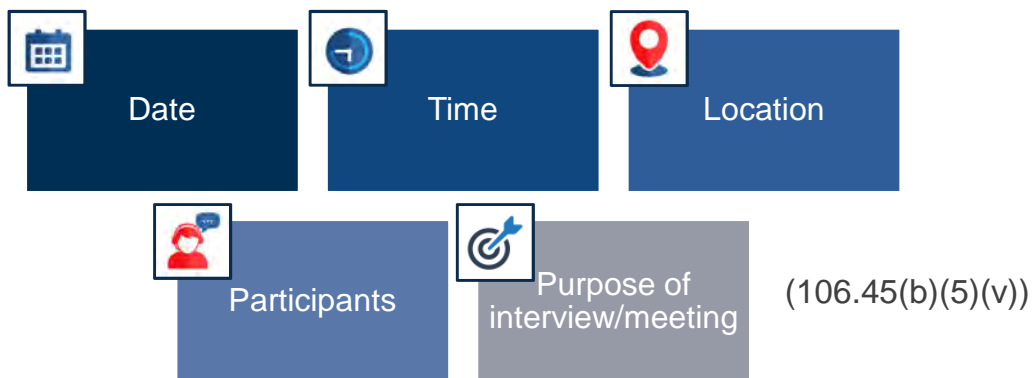
- Identify yourself, your role, and a general outline of what you're investigating
- Consider requesting the TIX Coordinator check in with those who fail to respond or refuse to participate
- Don't give up on the interview till you've tried at least 3 times, in at least 2 different methods

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Setting Up the Interview 2 of 2

---

You must now provide any party whose participation you seek, with written notice (email) with “sufficient” time to prepare:



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Set the Stage

---

- Make introductions
- Be hospitable
- Give overview of why they are being interviewed
- Explain retaliation policy
- Invite questions

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Begin Broadly

---

### **Elicit a monologue about the incident**

What happened earlier that day before the incident?

What happened with regard to the incident?

What happened next?

### **Open-ended follow-up questions**

### **Specific questions**

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Ask Follow-Up Questions

---

- Re-review your notes
- Re-review the elements of each charge
  - Have you elicited all of the information this witness might have about each element?
  - Do you have an understanding of how the witness obtained the information they shared?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Freeze Frames

---



- Ask the witness to “freeze” on the moment and describe details
  - What could they see? Feel? Smell? Taste? Hear?
  - Where was the other person? How were they positioned?
  - Where were you? How positioned?
  - What did you say to the other person? Them to you?
  - Describe other person’s tone, demeanor, body language

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## When Consent is at Issue

---

- **Common concern of Title IX Coordinator: investigators not asking the questions to get details needed for incapacitation analysis**
- Consider the wording and tone of your questions
- Utilize “freeze frame” strategy
- Ask questions about what happened to determine whether there was unspoken consent
- Ask questions to identify whether alcohol/drugs may have played a role regarding consent
- See Level 1 slides for a list of questions to get you started

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Credibility

---

- Gather facts to assist **decision-maker**
- Your job: Ask questions to test memory
- Identify where the witness may corroborate or contradict their testimony, or other witnesses, and physical evidence
- Be sensitive to potential trauma experienced by witnesses

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Questions about Credibility - Bias

---

- Bias: (a) lay witnesses and (b) experts.
- Relationships (friendship and romantic)
- Experts: getting paid for testimony
  - You charge fees based on an hourly rate?
  - You were paid to produce a written report?
  - Based on this report, you're testifying today?
  - You're charging money for each hour you're here?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Questions about Credibility – Perception and Recall

---

- What is the witness's perception of the facts?
  - Has **time** impacted recall or ability to remember clearly?
  - How many times has the **witnesses talked to the other party** about this case?
  - Was there **anything** that impacts the person's physical or mental ability to perceive or recall facts accurately?
- Does the witness form a conclusion without knowing certain information?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Questions about Credibility – Inconsistency in Statements

---

### **Only happens if you interview the parties or witnesses multiple times**

- If a fact was very important, why is the hearing the first time it has come up?
- What possible reasons might the witness have for changing their testimony?
- Did a witness receive coaching from the party or others between making one statement and another?
- Has the witness's perspective or motive changed between statements?
- Does changing this fact help the other party's case?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Questions about Credibility – Example

---

- **Example: Intoxication level information from witness.**
  - You did not see the consumption, or keep track of how long the party was consuming alcohol?
  - You did not measure the alcohol poured by \_\_\_\_\_ or the party?
  - Your statements are based on information provided by others? the other party?
  - Party's statements were made after they had been drinking alcohol (consuming other drugs, etc.)?

Remember: The person is not speaking from personal knowledge.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Closing the Interview

---

- Closing questions
- Request copies of all evidence potentially available to the witness
- Discuss confidentiality - but do not prohibit a party from discussing allegations
- Inform the witness of next steps and how to reach you

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## After the Witness Leaves 1 of 2

---

- Update investigation log
- Review notes, make corrections/clarifications
- Update witness list
- Update list of evidence to be obtained
- Write down questions to ask other witnesses
- Consider whether appropriate to send email



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## After the Witness Leaves 2 of 2

---

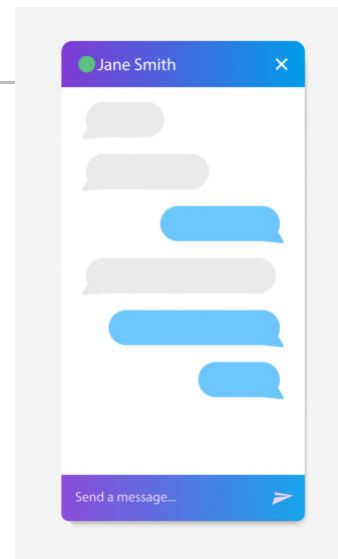
- Consider whether there are additional allegations that you need to bring to the Title IX Coordinator
  - Remember: notice of allegations must be sent out before you can ask questions of a respondent.
- Ensure you are not leaving the burden of proof on any party or witness alone (106.45(b)(5)(i))

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Physical Evidence

---

- Follow up on anything identified during interviews
- Is law enforcement involved? Could they be?
- Ensure physical evidence is in a secure location and documented in the investigation log. Chain of custody is important!



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What about advisors or support persons in interviews?

---

Must provide parties the same opportunity to be accompanied by the advisor of their choice

- Nothing in the preamble prohibits support persons in the interview process (this is different at the hearing)
- Allowed to limit participation of advisor in process
- Whatever rules your institution selects, apply them equally to both parties

(106.45(b)(5)(iv))

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

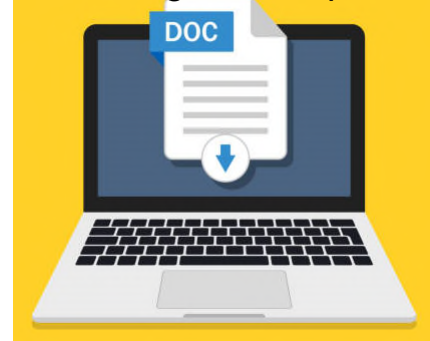
## Inspection and Review of Evidence

---

### Provide ALL Evidence to both parties and advisors

- Include everything related to allegations, even if you don't expect decision-maker to rely on it
- Allow 10 days to review
- Allow written response
- Follow up where necessary
- Consider responses when preparing report (106.45(b)(5)(vi))

### Preliminary Investigation Report



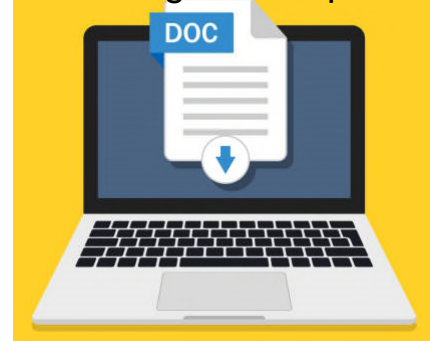
© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Create Investigative Report

---

- Summarize **facts**
- No determination
- Provide to parties and advisors
- Allow 10 days to review prior to hearing
- We will discuss report writing later today

### Final Investigation Report



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



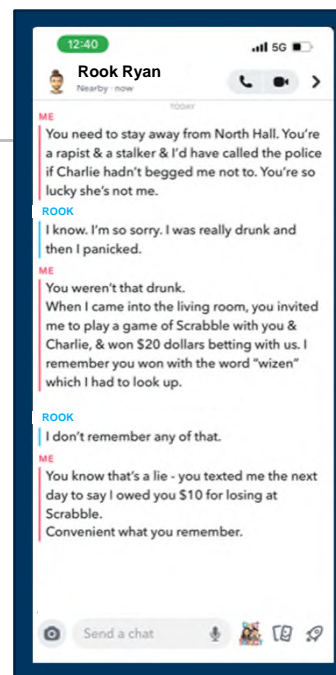
## Mock Interviews

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical Report. Same as previous.

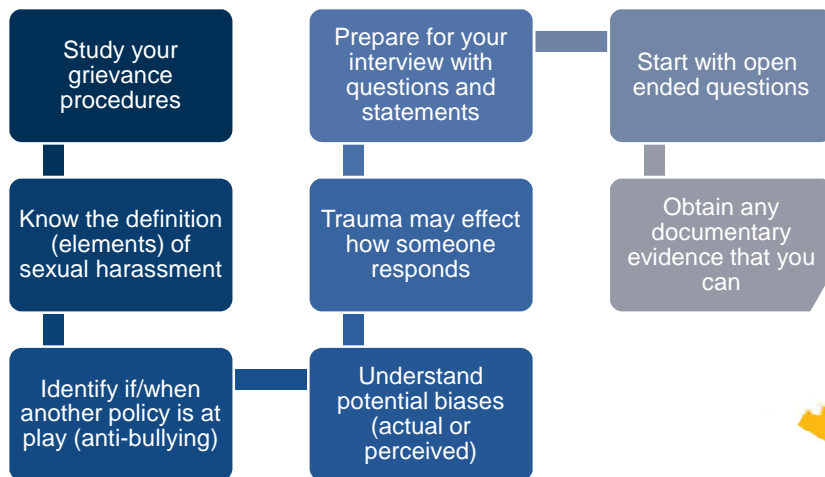
**Reporter Name:** Charlie Chun  
**Received:** January 10, 2023 at 9:12 A.M.  
**Intake Format:** Compliance System Report  
**Parties Identified:** Charlie Chun and Rook Ryan

**Narrative:** Rook sexually assaulted me early in the morning of January 5, 2023. Rook STALKED me too, they contacted me after I told them to STOP. I even blocked them, and they showed up outside of my dorm and aggressively approached me. So, I had to act in self-defense to get away from them. I retreated to my room and hid in there for several days, which made me miss class. Here is a screenshot of a Snapchat conversation with my roommate Wendy and Rook. Rook is a PREDATOR!!!!



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Key Takeaways



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Writing the Report

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

Remember: The organizer of all relevant evidence. 1 of 2

---



The **GATHERER** of all relevant evidence.



The **ORGANIZER** of all relevant evidence.



Here are some tools for how to best organize all the relevant evidence.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

Remember: The organizer of all relevant evidence. 2 of 2

---

The Regulations provide that the investigator must create a report that:

- Fairly summarizes relevant evidence

(106.45(b)(5)(vii))

What does this mean?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Start with the basic information

---

Identify with just factual information:



**Complainant**



**Respondent**



**Investigator**



**Witnesses**

- Perhaps organize by fact v. expert witnesses or by party whom requested the witness

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Consider general organization

---

Natural and neutral organization suggestions:

- Chronological order
- By topic or allegation
  - Perhaps by chronology within each topic or allegation
- By chronology of how the information came in to the investigation
- By witness summary

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Explain how organized

---

Explain your structure. Example:

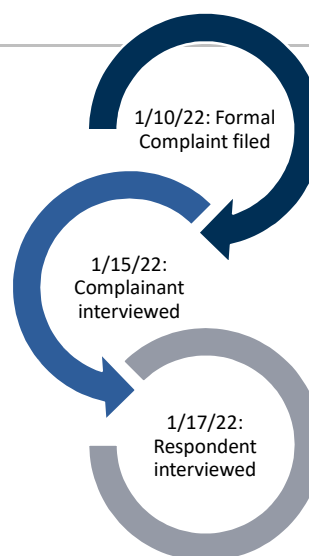
*“The information in this report is a summary of the facts as agreed upon by the parties and the witnesses. Where there is a difference in the accounts, it is noted in the report. For the sake of clarity, the report is organized chronologically and by subject matter when appropriate.”*

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Other basic information to include

---

- Basic description of charges
- How did the complaint make its way to an investigation?
- Witnesses Interviewed
- Witnesses Not Interviewed (and why)
- The procedure followed, step-by-step
- Any procedural anomalies that need explained?



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Identification of witness sign-off

---

If this is your practice:

“Each person interviewed was provided with a written copy of a summary of their interview, and was given an opportunity to provide feedback and approve the accuracy of the summary.”

- Did everyone do so?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## A statement regarding relevant evidence

---

“All relevant information gathered during the course of the investigation has been included in this report.”

- Identify if you thought something was not relevant and why – consider still including in attachment for decision-maker
- Provide a table or list of all relevant evidence gathered and attach that evidence



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Identify and include all alleged policy violations

---

- Definition of prohibited conduct alleged from applicable policy
- Related definitions as appropriate (e.g. consent, incapacitation) or any code of conduct included if done together
- Include verbatim, in entirety



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What to do with evidence

---



**Give an overview** of evidence collected

**AND**



**Attach as appendices** any statements and important evidence

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Be helpful to reviewers – keep it transparent 1 of 2

---

### Citations to the record – always

- Be helpful for your fact-finders!

Hearing packet or exhibits – helpful to number the pages sequentially for easy citation

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Include screenshots/pictures in the report?

---

*Text text text text  
text text text text  
text text text text*



### **YES (and also in appendix)**

Pros: can be illustrative and forefront; reviewer doesn't have to flip to the appendix

Cons: can make the report bulky

*Text text text text text text text text  
text text text text text text text text  
text text text text text text text text*

### **NO (just include in appendix)**

Pros: can keep the report neat and concise




Cons: may lose impact if the viewer doesn't jump back and forth between the appendix and text, which can also be annoying for reviewers

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What not to include in report (but note requested and why not included) 1 of 3

---

The specific type of evidence deemed not relevant in the Regulations:

-  Information protected by a legally recognized privilege
-  Party's medical, psychological, and similar records unless voluntary written consent
-  Rape Shield protection for Complainant

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What not to include in report (but note requested and why not included) 2 of 3

---

If evidence is requested by a party and/or you determine it is not relevant, always explain that it was requested and why you determined it was not relevant.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## What not to include in report (but note requested and why not included) 3 of 3

---

If you determined evidence was not relevant because of matters outside of the specific reasons identified in the regulations—i.e. because you did not think it was probative of material fact—explain and consider attaching in an Appendix

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

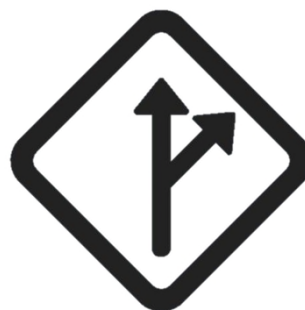
## Helpful synthesis

---

If you can, synthesize the information from multiple parties and witnesses

Where the stories diverge:

- “Information from [Complainant]”
- “Information from [Respondent]”



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Summary of Information 1 of 2

---

Don't forget to summarize impact on **complainant** if the charges require consideration as an element

- *“The investigator notes that this incident and the process may have had an impact on [Respondent]. However, to determine whether sexual harassment occurred, the hearing panel will be required to review the impact of the reported behavior on [Complainant]. This is the reason that the information here focuses solely on [Complainant].”*

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Summary of Information 2 of 2

---

### Undisputed Facts

- Series of numbered sentences

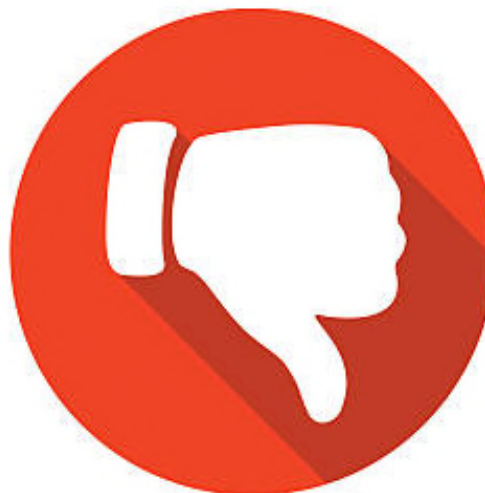
### Disputed Facts

- Series of numbered sentences

Make sure you have facts for each element of each charge.

**Do not make credibility determinations.**

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Bad vs. neutral and clear writing examples

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Writing examples

---

*Disclaimer: The following hypotheticals are not based on any actual cases we have handled or of which we are aware. Any similarities to actual cases are coincidental.*

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Example 1

---



**Bad example:** Rook was very believable when they said they had been attacked by Charlie.



**Neutral and clear correction:** Rook stated they were attacked by Charlie outside of North Hall. Rook provided the names of witnesses and contact information for those witnesses.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Example 2

---



**Bad example:** Charlie stated that she didn't think she had witnessed anything, but that I should check with her.



**Neutral and clear correction:** Charlie stated that Charlie did not believe that her roommate, Wendy, had witnessed anything. Charlie asked the investigator to follow up with Rebecca to verify what, if anything, Rebecca witnessed.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Example 3

---



**Bad example:** Rook seemed nervous at the interview and wasn't consistent with the information.



**Neutral and clear correction:** Rook provided the following information at the interview: that Rook had 3 whiskey sours, that Rook had at least 2 whiskey sours, and that Rook may not have had any whiskey sours.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Example 4

---



**Bad example:** Charlie requested that I follow up with her roommate, but I did not because the evidence seemed redundant.



**Neutral and clear correction:** Charlie requested the investigator follow up with her roommate, Wendy. The investigator scheduled an interview with the roommate to follow up on any additional information the roommate may have. The roommate's account of events at the interview, provided in Exhibit C, is consistent with Charlie's statement regarding the time period between 8 and 9am on January 6, 2023. The roommate was not present outside of that time frame and had no additional information.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Impartiality and Avoiding Bias, Conflict of Interest and Prejudgment of Facts 1 of 2

---

Section 106.45 **requires** that investigators (and Title IX Coordinators, decision-makers, informal resolution officers and appeals officers)

- be free from **conflict of interest, bias,** and
- be trained **to serve impartially** and **without prejudging facts.**

(30053)

## Impartiality and Avoiding Bias, Conflict of Interest and Prejudgment of Facts 2 of 2

---

- We will discuss each of these individually and provide examples, but some of the factors for each overlap.
- For example, being impartial is greatly aided by not pre-judging facts.



(30249-30257; 30496)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Impartiality

---

- Be neutral
- Do not be partial to a complainant or a respondent, or complainants and respondents generally
- Do not judge: memory is fallible [and it's contrary to your neutral role] (30323)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Bias: Concerns raised in comments in preamble

---

- Neutrality of paid staff in Title IX positions
- Institutional history and “cover ups”
- Tweets and public comments
- Identifying as a feminist



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Perceived v. Actual Bias

---

- Both can lead to the same perception (30252)
- On appeal of decisions, the Department requires the bias “that could affect the outcome of the matter”

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## How the Department tried to prevent bias

---

No single-investigator model (34 C.F.R. 106.45(b)(7)(i)):

- Decision-maker (or makers if a panel) must not have been the same person who served as the Title IX Coordinator or investigator (30367)
- Separating the roles protects both parties because the decision-maker may not have improperly gleaned information from the investigation that isn't relevant that an investigator might (30370)
- The institution may consider external or internal investigator or decision-maker (30370)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Bias: Objective Rules and Discretion 1 of 2

---

“[R]ecipients ***should*** have **objective rules** for determining when an adjudicator (or Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or person who facilitates an informal resolution) is biased, and the **Department leaves recipients discretion to decide how best to implement the prohibition on conflicts of interest and bias...**” (30250)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Bias: Objective Rules and Discretion 2 of 2

---

- **Discretionary:** Recipients have the discretion to have a process to raise bias during the investigation.
- **Mandatory:** Basis for appeal of decision-maker's determination per 34 C.F.R. 106.45(b)(8)(i)(C).

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Conflict of Interest: Concerns raised in comments in preamble

---

- Financial and reputational interests of Title IX employee aligns with institution
- Past advocacy for a survivor's group
- Past advocacy for a respondent's group

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Preamble Discussion on Bias and Conflict of Interest 1 of 3

---

- Final regulations “leave recipients flexibility to use their own employees, or to outsource Title IX investigation and adjudication functions, and the Department encourages recipients to pursue alternatives to the inherent difficulties that arise when a recipient’s own employees are expected to perform functions free from conflicts of interest and bias.” (30251)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Preamble Discussion on Bias and Conflict of Interest 2 of 3

---

- No *per se* prohibited conflicts of interest in using employees or administrative staff
  - including supervisory hierarchies (but see portion about decision-makers and Title IX Coordinator as supervisor)
- No *per se* violations for conflict of interest or bias for professional experiences or affiliations of decision-makers and other roles in the grievance process

(30352-30353)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



## Preamble Discussion on Bias and Conflict of Interest 3 of 3

---

- Example: it is **not** a *per se* bias or conflict of interest to hire professionals with histories of working in the field of sexual violence (30252)
- Cautions against using generalizations to identify bias and conflict of interest and instead **recommends** using a **reasonable-person test** to determine whether bias exists.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Example of Unreasonable Conclusion that Bias Exists

---

- “[F]or example, **assuming** that all self-professed **feminists**, or self-described **survivors**, are biased against men, or that a **male** is incapable of being sensitive to women, or that prior work as a **victim advocate**, or as a **defense attorney**, renders the person biased for or against complainants or respondents” is **unreasonable** (30252)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Training, Bias, and Past Professional Experience

---

This required training (that you are sitting in right now) can help protect against disqualifying someone with prior professional experience (30252)



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Department: Review of Outcomes Alone Does Not Show Bias

---

- Cautioned parties and recipients from concluding bias or possible bias “based solely on the outcomes of grievance processes decided under the final regulations.”
- Explained: the “mere fact that a certain number of outcomes result in determinations of responsibility, or non-responsibility, does not necessarily indicate bias.” (30252)

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Examples of Bias

---

- An investigator used to supervise one of the parties;
- Information “gleaned” by the investigator is shared with the decision-maker outside the investigation report (in meetings to discuss pending cases, in passing while at work, etc.)



© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Avoiding Prejudgment of Facts at Issue

---

A good way to ensure impartiality and avoid bias:

- Keep an open mind and actively listen
- Each case is unique and different

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypotheticals 1 of 2

---

Thinking about how to move forward with some issues of impartiality, conflict of interest and bias (perceived or actual).

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypotheticals 2 of 2

---

### Scenario for the next several hypotheticals:

You are an investigator for your Tile IX Office. You have just been handed a formal complaint to investigate. An initial review did not identify you as having any conflict of interest or bias. But you will need to assess the following situations based on additional information you have.

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical 1

---

You review the report and realize that the name of one of the parties seems familiar to you from a past and unrelated investigation. You don't have any real memory of the case or any thoughts you have of that party, but you realize that could change when you meet the party.

What should you do?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical 2

---

Your institution's student conduct office, Title IX office, and Greek life office meet weekly to discuss student issues and potential issues. In these meetings, you discuss specific students by name for continuity of care for students and to ensure everyone is on the same page. As a result, you have heard other employees discuss the parties in the case handed to you and some of it seemed to indicate that the Complainant may be dramatic.

What should you do?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical 3

---

The formal complaint you are handed includes a former coworker from the Title IX Office who now works in a different office at the institution. You do not like this former coworker. You do not know the other party involved.

What should you do?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

## Hypothetical 4

---

During your investigation, the Respondent's attorney accuses you of bias because of your former work as a victim advocate.

What should you do?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

# The Bottom Line

---

## Be Human & Be a Blank Slate

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler



Questions?

© 2023 Bricker & Eckler

# Thank you for attending!

---



**Title IX Resource Center** at  
[www.bricker.com/titleix](http://www.bricker.com/titleix)



Find us on **Twitter** at  
**@BrickerHigherEd**