

SUBJECT: TITLE IX – HEAD START PROGRAM ONLY

Overview

Astor Services (Head Start Program) (“Astor”) is committed to creating and maintaining education programs and activities which are free from sexual harassment. This policy addresses complaints of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, made under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 and its implementing regulations (Title IX). It is just one component of Astor's overall commitment to maintaining a discrimination and harassment-free educational and work environment.

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity operated by a program that receives federal financial assistance. As required by Title IX, Astor does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs and activities or when making employment decisions.

Astor adopts this policy as part of its effort to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment. Astor will promptly respond to reports of sex discrimination, ensure that all investigations are conducted within a reasonably prompt time frame and under a predictable fair grievance process that provides due process protections to complainants and respondents, and impose sanctions and implement remedies when warranted.

Inquiries about this policy or the application of Title IX may be directed to Astor’s Title IX Coordinator(s), the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education, or both.

Scope and Application of Policy

This policy is limited to addressing complaints of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, that fall within the scope of Title IX which, among other things, has a specific definition of sexual harassment and applies only to sex discrimination occurring against a person in the United States. This policy applies to any individual participating in or attempting to participate in Astor’s Head Start Program, including students and employees.

Other policies and documents address sex-based misconduct and may have different definitions, standards of review, and grievance procedures. These documents must be read in conjunction with this policy as they may cover incidents of sex-based misconduct not addressed by Title IX.

If the allegations forming the basis of a formal complaint of sexual harassment, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct under Title IX, then the grievance process outlined in this policy would be applied to the investigation and adjudication of all the allegations. Depending on the allegations, additional grievance procedures may apply.

The dismissal of a formal complaint of sexual harassment under Title IX does not preclude action under another related Astor policy, procedure, collective bargaining agreement, or other document.

What Constitutes Sex Discrimination Including Sexual Harassment

Title IX prohibits various types of sex discrimination. Under Title IX, sexual harassment includes conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- a. An employee of Astor conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of Astor on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- b. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to Astor's Head Start education program or activity;
- c. Sexual assault, meaning an offense classified as a forcible or nonforcible sex offense under the uniform crime reporting system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
- d. Dating violence, meaning violence committed by a person:
 1. Who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and
 2. Where the existence of such a relationship will be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:
 - a. The length of the relationship;
 - b. The type of relationship; and
 - c. The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.
- e. Domestic violence, meaning felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction; or
- f. Stalking, meaning engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to:
 1. Fear for their safety or the safety of others; or
 2. Suffer substantial emotional distress.

Title IX Coordinator

Astor has designated and authorized the following employee(s) to serve as its IX Coordinator(s):

Kate Bagshaw
6339 Mill Street
Rhinebeck, NY 12572
(845) 264-8210

The Title IX Coordinator(s), who must be referred to as such, will coordinate Astor's efforts to comply with its responsibilities under Title IX. However, the responsibilities of the Title IX Coordinator(s) may be delegated to other personnel.

Where appropriate, the Title IX Coordinator(s) may seek the assistance of other appropriately trained individuals in investigating, responding to, and remedying complaints of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment.

Reporting Allegations of Sex Discrimination

Any person may report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, regardless of whether they are the alleged victim or not. Reports may be made in person, by using the contact information for the Title IX Coordinator, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's oral or written report. This report may be made at any time (including during non-business hours) by using the telephone number or email address, or by mail to the office address, listed for the Title IX Coordinator.

Reports of sex discrimination may also be made to any other Astor employee. All reports of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, will be forwarded to Astor's Title IX Coordinator. Reports may also be forwarded to other employees depending on the allegations.

All Astor employees who witness or receive an oral or written report of sex discrimination must immediately inform the Title IX Coordinator. Failure to immediately inform the Title IX Coordinator may subject the employee to discipline up to and including termination.

Making a report of sexual harassment is not the same as filing a formal complaint of sexual harassment. A formal complaint is a document either filed by a complainant or a parent or legal guardian who has a right to act on behalf of the complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator which alleges sexual harassment against a respondent and requests that Astor investigate the allegations. While Astor must respond to all reports it receives of sexual harassment, the Title IX grievance process is only initiated with the filing of a formal complaint.

If the Title IX Coordinator is unavailable, including due to a conflict of interest or other disqualifying reason, the report will be directed to another Title IX Coordinator, if Astor has designated another individual to serve in that capacity. If Astor has not designated another Title IX Coordinator, the Chief Human Resources Officer will ensure that another person with the appropriate training and qualifications is appointed to act as the Title IX Coordinator.

Grievance Process for Formal Complaints of Sexual Harassment

Astor will respond to allegations of sexual harassment in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent whenever it has actual knowledge of sexual harassment in an education program or activity of Astor. For purposes of reports and formal complaints of sexual harassment under Title IX, education program or activity includes locations, events, or circumstances over which Astor

exercised substantial control over both the respondent(s) and the context in which the sexual harassment occurred.

Astor will follow a grievance process that complies with law and regulation before the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions or other actions that are not supportive measures against a respondent.

Astor will conduct the grievance process in a timely manner designed to provide all parties with a prompt and equitable resolution. It is anticipated that, in most cases, the grievance process will be conducted within a reasonably prompt manner and follow the time frames established in this policy.

Definitions

- a. "Complainant" means an individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.
- b. "Days" means calendar days.
- c. "Respondent" means an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

General Requirements for the Investigative and Grievance Process

During the investigation of a formal complaint and throughout the grievance process, Astor will ensure that:

- a. Complainants and respondents are treated equitably. This includes applying any provisions, rules, or practices incorporated into Astor's grievance process, other than those required by law or regulation, equally to both parties.
- b. All relevant evidence is objectively evaluated, including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence. Inculpatory evidence implicates or tends to implicate an individual in a crime or wrongdoing. Exculpatory evidence frees or tends to free an individual from blame or accusation.
- c. The Title IX Coordinator, investigator, decision-maker involved in the grievance process, or any person designated by Astor to facilitate any informal resolution process does not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual complainant or respondent.
- d. Respondents are presumed not to be responsible for the alleged conduct until a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process.
- e. The grievance process, including any appeals or informal resolutions, is concluded within a reasonably prompt time frame and that the process is only temporarily delayed or extended for good cause. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, considerations such

as the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; or the need for language assistance or accommodation of disabilities. Whenever the time frame is temporarily delayed or extended, written notice will be provided to all complainants and respondents of the delay or extension and the reasons for the action.

- f. The range of possible disciplinary sanctions and remedies that may be implemented by Astor following any determination regarding responsibility are described to any known party.
- g. The same standard of evidence is used to determine responsibility in all formal complaints.
- h. The procedures and permissible bases for an appeal are known to all complainants and respondents.
- i. The range of supportive measures available are known to all complainants and respondents.
- j. There is no requirement, allowance of, reliance on, or otherwise use of questions or evidence that constitute, or seek disclosure of, information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless the person holding the privilege has waived the privilege.
- k. The burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination regarding responsibility rests on Astor and not on the parties.
- l. The Title IX Coordinator, the investigator, any decision-maker, or any other person participating on behalf Astor does not 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 Astor obtains that party's voluntary, written consent to do so for the grievance process. If the party is not an eligible student, as defined in FERPA as a student who has reached 18 years of age or is attending a post-secondary institution, Astor will obtain the voluntary, written consent of a parent.
- m. The parties have an equal opportunity to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses, and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence.
- n. Credibility determinations are not based on a person's status as a complainant, respondent, or witness.
- o. The ability of either party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather and present relevant evidence is not restricted.

- p. The parties are provided with the same opportunities to have others present during any grievance proceeding, including the opportunity to be accompanied to any related meeting or proceeding by the advisor of their choice, and Astor will not limit the choice or presence of advisor for any complainant or respondent in any meeting or grievance proceeding. Advisors may be present to provide support for the complainant or respondent, but may not participate in the process, which includes not answering questions, asking questions or making statements.
- q. Written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of all investigative interviews, or other meetings, is provided to any party whose participation is invited or expected with sufficient time for the party to prepare to participate.
- r. The parties are provided with 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, including the evidence upon which Astor does not intend to rely on in reaching a determination regarding responsibility and inculpatory or exculpatory evidence whether obtained from a party or other source, so that each party can meaningfully respond to the evidence prior to conclusion of the investigation.
- s. Any document sent to a minor or legally incompetent person is also sent to the party's parent or legal guardian.
- t. Any document sent to a party is also sent to the party's advisor, if known.

After a Report of Sexual Harassment Has Been Made

After receiving a report of sexual harassment, the Title IX Coordinator will:

- a. Promptly contact the complainant to discuss and offer supportive measures;
- b. Inform the complainant both of the range of supportive measures available and that these measures are available regardless of whether a formal complaint is filed;
- c. Consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures; and
- d. Explain to the complainant the process for filing a formal complaint.

The Title IX Coordinator may also contact the respondent to discuss and/or impose supportive measures.

Requests for confidentiality or use of anonymous reporting may limit how Astor is able to respond to a report of sexual harassment.

Emergency Removal and Administrative Leave

At any point after receiving a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment, Astor may immediately remove a respondent from Astor's education program or activity on an emergency basis, provided that Astor:

- a. Undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis;
- b. Determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of sexual harassment justifies removal;
- c. Provides the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal and affords them any legally required procedural due process; and
- d. Adheres to applicable laws, regulations, and Astor policies.

Astor should coordinate their Title IX compliance efforts with special education staff when initiating an emergency removal of a student with a disability from an education program or activity as the removal could constitute a change of placement under the IDEA or Section 504.

Astor may place an employee respondent on administrative leave with or without pay during the pendency of the grievance process in accordance with law and regulation and any applicable Astor policy, procedure, or collective bargaining agreement.

Filing a Formal Complaint

A complainant may file a formal complaint with the Title IX Coordinator in person or by mail, email, or other method made available by Astor. The complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in the education program or activity of Astor at the time of filing the complaint. The filing of a formal complaint initiates the grievance process.

A formal complaint must be signed by the complainant, the complainant's parent or legal guardian as appropriate, or the Title IX Coordinator. Where a parent or legal guardian signs the complaint, the parent or legal guardian does not become the complainant; rather the parent or legal guardian acts on behalf of the complainant. The Title IX Coordinator may sign the formal complaint, but their signature does not make them a complainant or a party to the complaint. If the formal complaint is signed by the Title IX Coordinator, the Title IX Coordinator is still obligated to comply with the grievance process outlined in this policy.

The complainant, or the complainant's parent or legal guardian, must physically or digitally sign the formal complaint, or otherwise indicate that the complainant is the person filing the formal complaint. When a formal complaint is filed, the Title IX Coordinator must send a written notice of allegations to all parties which includes the identities of all known parties.

Astor will not discriminate on the basis of sex in its treatment of a complainant or a respondent in responding to a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

The formal complaint form may be obtained from Astor's Title IX Coordinator or found on Astor's website.

Consolidation of Formal Complaints

Astor may consolidate formal complaints 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.

Written Notice of Allegations

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, Astor will send all known parties written notice of:

- a. Astor's grievance process, including any informal resolution process; and
- b. The allegations of sexual harassment which will:
 1. Provide sufficient details known at the time and sufficient time to prepare a response before any initial interview. Sufficient details include the identities of the parties involved in the incident, if known, the conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment, and the date and location of the alleged incident, if known;
 2. State that the respondent is presumed not to be responsible for the alleged conduct and that a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process;
 3. Inform the parties that they may have an advisor of their choice;
 4. Inform the parties that they may inspect and review any evidence obtained as part of the investigation that is directly related to the allegations raised in the formal complaint; and
 5. Include notice of any provision in any applicable policy, procedure, collective bargaining agreement, or other document that prohibits knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.

If, in the course of an investigation, Astor decides to investigate allegations about any complainant or respondent that were not included in the initial notice, Astor will provide another notice of the additional allegations to the parties whose identities are known.

Investigation of a Formal Complaint

The Title IX Coordinator will oversee Astor's investigation of all formal complaints. During the investigation of a formal complaint, one of Astor's Title IX Coordinators, who shall not be the Title IX Coordinator who receives the formal complaint and oversees supportive measures for the complainant, or another appropriately trained Astor employee, may serve as Astor's investigator. Astor may also outsource all or part of an investigation to appropriate third parties. The outsourcing

of all or part of an investigation does not relieve Astor from its obligation to comply with law and regulation.

It is anticipated that most investigations will be completed within sixty days after receiving a formal complaint.

During the investigation of a formal complaint, the investigator will, as appropriate:

- a. Collect, review, and preserve all evidence including, but not limited to, any relevant documents, videos, electronic communications, and phone records.
- b. Interview all relevant persons including, but not limited to, any complainants, respondents, and witnesses. Interviews of complainants and respondents will be conducted separately.
- c. Create written documentation of the investigation (such as a letter, memo, or email), which contains the following:
 1. A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
 2. A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
 3. A timeline of events; and
 4. A summary of prior relevant incidents, reported or unreported.
- d. Keep any written documentation and associated documents in a secure and confidential location.

Prior to completion of the investigative report, Astor will 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. The parties will have at least ten days to submit a written response, which the investigator will consider prior to completion of the investigative report.

At the end of the investigation, an investigative report will be created that fairly summarizes all relevant evidence.

At least ten days prior to a determination regarding responsibility, the investigative report will be sent to each party and the party's advisor, if any, in an electronic format or a hard copy, for their review and written response.

Dismissal of a Formal Complaint

Astor must investigate the allegations in a formal complaint. Astor must dismiss a formal complaint under Title IX if the conduct alleged:

- a. Would not constitute sexual harassment even if proven;
- b. Did not occur in Astor's education program or activity; or
- c. Did not occur against a person in the United States.

Further, Astor may dismiss a formal complaint or any of its allegations under Title IX, if at any time during the investigation or hearing:

- a. A complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the complainant would like to withdraw the formal complaint or any of its allegations;
- b. The respondent is no longer enrolled in, or employed by, Astor; or
- c. Specific circumstances prevent Astor from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination as to the formal complaint or any of its allegations.

Upon a dismissal of a formal complaint, Astor must promptly send written notice of the dismissal and reason(s) for the dismissal simultaneously to the parties.

The dismissal of a formal complaint under Title IX does not preclude action under another related Astor policy, including Astor's procedures, or collective bargaining agreement.

Informal Resolutions

Before reaching a determination regarding responsibility, but only after a formal complaint is filed, Astor may offer and facilitate the use of an informal resolution process, such as mediation, that does not involve a full investigation and adjudication of the formal complaint.

It is anticipated that most informal resolutions will be completed within 30 days.

Astor will not require that parties participate in an informal resolution process. Astor will not offer or facilitate an informal resolution process to resolve allegations that an employee sexually harassed a student. Further, Astor will not require the waiver of the right to an investigation and adjudication of formal complaints of sexual harassment as a condition of enrollment or continuing enrollment, or employment or continuing employment, or enjoyment of any other right.

If Astor offers and facilitates the use of an informal resolution process, it will:

- a. Provide written notice to all known parties which details:
 - 1. The allegations in the formal complaint;
 - 2. The requirements of the informal resolution process including the circumstances under which it precludes the parties from resuming a formal complaint arising from the same allegations, provided, however, that at any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process

and resume the grievance process with respect to the formal complaint;

3. Any consequences resulting from participating in the informal resolution process, including the records that will be maintained or could be shared; and

- b. Obtain the parties' voluntary, written consent to the informal resolution process.

Determination Regarding Responsibility

Astor will designate an individual decision-maker or a panel of decision-makers to issue a written determination regarding responsibility. A decision-maker can either be an Astor employee or, where appropriate, a third-party. They cannot be the same individual as either the Title IX Coordinator or the investigator(s).

Before reaching a determination regarding responsibility, the decision-maker(s) will afford each party the opportunity to:

- a. Submit written, relevant questions that a party wants asked of any party or witness;
- b. Provide each party with the answers given by any party or witness; and
- c. Allow for additional, limited follow-up questions and responses from each party to occur.

Questions and evidence about a complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior will not be considered, unless the questions and evidence about the complainant's prior sexual behavior are offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct alleged by the complainant, or if the questions and evidence concern specific incidents of the complainant's prior sexual behavior with respect to the respondent and are offered to prove consent. The decision-maker(s) will explain to the party proposing the questions any decision to exclude a question as not relevant.

The decision-maker will issue a written determination regarding responsibility to the Title IX Coordinator, the Superintendent (if the Superintendent is not the decision-maker), and all parties simultaneously.

To reach this determination, the decision-maker(s) will use the preponderance of the evidence standard which is the standard of evidence that will be applied in all formal complaints of sexual harassment.

The written notice of the determination regarding responsibility will include all legally required elements.

Finality of Determination Regarding Responsibility

The determination regarding responsibility becomes final either on the date that Astor provides the parties with the written determination of the result of the appeal, if an appeal is filed, or if an appeal is not filed, the date on which an appeal would no longer be considered timely.

Where a determination regarding responsibility for sexual harassment has been made against the respondent, remedies may be provided to a complainant and disciplinary sanctions may be imposed on a respondent. Remedies will be designed to restore or preserve equal access to Astor's education program or activity. Remedies and disciplinary sanctions will be implemented in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, as well as any Astor policy, including Astor's procedures, or collective bargaining agreement.

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for the effective implementation of any remedies and/or disciplinary sanctions. The Title IX Coordinator will work with other individuals as necessary to effectively implement remedies and/or disciplinary sanctions.

Appeals

Either party may file an appeal from a determination regarding responsibility or from Astor's dismissal of a formal complaint or any of its allegations. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Title IX Coordinator within ten days of the written notice of the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal of the formal complaint or any of its allegations.

An appeal may only be based upon one or more of the following bases:

- a. Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter;
- b. New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made, that could affect the outcome of the matter; and
- c. The Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or decision-maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter.

The bases on which a party is seeking an appeal should be specifically stated in the party's written appeal.

Upon receipt of an appeal, Astor will:

- a. Notify the other party in writing that an appeal has been filed and implement appeal procedures equally for both parties;
- b. Ensure that any decision-maker for the appeal:
 1. Is not the same person as any decision-maker that reached the initial determination regarding responsibility or dismissal, investigator, or Title IX Coordinator;

2. Does not have any conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual complainant or respondent;
- c. Give all parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome. Parties will have to submit these written statements;
- d. Issue a written decision describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result; and
- e. Provide the written decision simultaneously to the Title IX Coordinator, the Superintendent, and all parties.

Prohibition of Retaliatory Behavior (Commonly Known as "Whistle-Blower" Protection)

Astor prohibits retaliation against any individual for the purpose of interfering with their Title IX rights or because the individual made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under Title IX.

Charging an individual with applicable violations that do not involve sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, but arise out of the same facts or circumstances as a report or complaint of sex discrimination for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Title IX, constitutes retaliation. Charging an individual with other applicable violations for making a materially false statement in bad faith during a grievance proceeding does not constitute retaliation, provided, however, that a determination regarding responsibility, alone, is not sufficient to conclude that any party made a materially false statement in bad faith.

Confidentiality

Except where disclosure may be permitted or required by law or regulation, Astor will keep confidential the identity of any:

- a. Individual who has made a report or complaint of sex discrimination;
- b. Individual who has made a report or filed a formal complaint of sexual harassment;
- c. Complainant;
- d. Individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of sex discrimination;
- e. Respondent; and
- f. Witness.

Training

Astor will ensure that all Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers or persons who facilitate an information resolution process are appropriately trained.

All Astor Head Start employees will receive training on mandatory reporting obligations and any other responsibilities that they may have relative to Title IX.

Materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process will not rely on sex stereotypes and will promote impartial investigations and adjudications of formal complaints of sexual harassment. Training materials will be made publicly available on Astor's website.

Notification

Astor will notify students, parents or legal guardians of students, employees, applicants for employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with Astor of this policy.

Further, Astor will prominently publish this policy and the contact information for the Title IX Coordinator(s) on its website and in other publications, including in each handbook or catalog that it makes available to the individuals and entities referenced above.

20 USC Section 1092(f)(6)(A)(v)
20 USC Section 1681, et. seq.
34 USC Section 12291(a)(8, 10, and 30)
34 CFR Part 106
Education Law Section 13
8 NYCRR Section 100.2(kk)

Adopted:

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