

ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY COORDINATOR

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of PK-12 Education
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One of the procedural requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 banning discrimination on the basis of sex, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 barring discrimination on the basis of disability and Chapter 95 of the Iowa Administrative Code banning discrimination in employment and requiring affirmative action plans is that educational agencies assign an employee the responsibility of coordinating their compliance efforts. There is no similar procedural requirement for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination on the basis of race and national origin in education. However for the sake of fairness it is recommended that the coordinator's responsibilities include issues related to race and national origin.

It is recommended that most school districts in Iowa designate one coordinator, referred to as the educational equity coordinator, to be responsible for coordinating the agency's activities to stay in compliance with civil rights and equity related legislation. Keep in mind, however, an educational agency may choose to assign different persons to each of these coordinator roles. Large school districts, area education agencies and community colleges may choose to do so. However if they do, it will be important to insure that the individuals assigned are communicating with one another and working together as a team.

Although the designation of a coordinator does not diminish the ultimate legal responsibility of an agency's governing body and chief executive officer, it establishes responsibility and accountability for coordinating and monitoring the activities necessary to ensure compliance with educational equity laws. The effectiveness of the educational equity coordinator is critical to an agency's efforts to comply with civil rights related requirements. It is essential that the designated employee's job description and annual objectives include their equity-related responsibilities.

State and federal regulations specify no specific duties or functions of the coordinator beyond the general requirement they "coordinate" an agency's compliance activities. The potential scope of such coordination responsibilities extends through every aspect of an agency's policies, programs, and practices. However there are five basic responsibilities a coordinator has. They are:

1. **Dissemination of Information:** To disseminate information about federal and state civil rights legislation to board members, administrators and all employees, students, parents and applicants for employment. The district is responsible for including information about the district's non discrimination policies, harassment policies, the identity and phone number of the equity coordinator, and information about the grievance procedure in all major annual publications and the district's website.
2. **Professional Development:** To plan, facilitate or provide training for employees that will help them carry out the expectations of the legislation.
3. **Facilitate the Grievance Process:** To mediate conflicts and to facilitate the use of the grievance procedure to be used when parents, staff or students allege they have been the victims of discrimination and harassment.
4. **Documentation:** To record or document the agency's efforts to comply with civil rights laws (Professional development activities, student activities, communications, program modifications etc.)
5. **Monitoring:** Reviewing and disseminating disaggregated student achievement data, building and course enrollment data, student activity data, employment and personnel data and conducting surveys of parents, students and staff regarding issues relating to equity.

The role of the coordinator is complex. Coordinators have to maintain a difficult balance between serving as the compliance coordinator, while functioning as an employee of a school system operating under the constraints of budget, staff, and community pressure. It is clear from past experience and research on the role of the equity coordinator that the most effective coordinators are pro-active and take preventative actions rather than solely reacting to concerns or processing complaints and grievances.

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