

Addressing Participation Opportunities

- According to the 1996 Clarification the following indicators of unmet interest by the underrepresented sex that a school must evaluate under part three of the three-part test are: requests that a particular sport be added; requests that an existing club sport be elevated to varsity status; participation in particular club or intramural sports; interviews with students, coaches, administrators, and others regarding interest in particular sports; results of questionnaires and surveys regarding interests in particular sports; and participation rates in high schools, local recreation groups, and community sports leagues that operate in areas from which the school district draws its students.

The school district should consider forming a standing and ongoing gender equity committee to assess compliance and conduct annual assessments. The committee should include, but not be limited to, the school district Title IX compliance officer, athletic administrators, coaches, student-athletes, school administrators, school board members, faculty and parent or tax payer representatives. The committee should report directly to the person(s) within the school district who have the authority to implement their suggestions. In addition, the committee members should receive the training and resources necessary to understand the law's legal requirements and their role in order to appropriately carry out their duties.

- ***a. Requests from Students***

Requests by students that the school add a particular sport are indicators that students are interested in playing that particular sport. The school district should solicit and evaluate requests from students on a regular basis to add sports in order to identify unmet interests. The school district should develop and implement written policies and procedures for soliciting, accepting, evaluating, and responding to the requests in a timely manner. These written policies and procedures that address these requests should require that the requests be submitted to the school's Title IX compliance officer or designee; the school should provide a written acknowledgement to the requesting student or students within a timely manner; the school should inform the student(s) about procedures for reviewing the request and when a decision will be made; the gender equity committee should assess all student requests in order to anticipate budget development for the next school year; and the gender equity committee should inform the requesting student(s) of their decision in writing within a timely manner of the date of the decision.

Because most students have little understanding of how Title IX works, policies and procedures should be written in language that is easily understood and are age appropriate for the school district's students. In addition, the school district should use every venue available to the district in order to disseminate the policies and procedures including posting on the school district website, mailings, school assemblies, student/parent orientations, postings throughout all schools, school publications, and using any type of outreach mechanisms to students and parents.

- ***b. Varsity Status***

Requests by existing club teams that the school district elevate a sport to varsity status is another indicator that students are interested in playing the requested sport(s). The school district should solicit and evaluate any requests from students to elevate a club or intramural sport to varsity status. The school district should develop policies and procedures for soliciting, accepting, and responding to requests that a current existing club or intramural sport be elevated to interscholastic team status. These written policies and procedures that address these requests should require that the requests be submitted to the school's Title IX compliance officer or designee; the school should provide a written acknowledgement to the requesting student or students within a timely manner; the school should inform the student(s) about procedures for reviewing the request and when a decision will be made; the gender equity committee should assess all student requests in order to anticipate budget development for the next school year; and the gender equity committee should inform the requesting student(s) of their decision in writing within a timely manner of the date of the decision.

The school district should maintain a current list of clubs and intramural sports and the numbers of participants in each and should on a yearly basis evaluate the participation rates of these groups to

determine any unmet interests for interscholastic teams. However, in making the assessment, the school district should consider whether or not a team's participants have sufficient ability to sustain an interscholastic team and whether or not there is/are reasonable opportunities for the team(s) to compete.

➤ ***c. Face to face***

It will be important for the school district to make opportunities available for face-to-face conversations with students and student-athletes in order to obtain information that might not result from evaluating other instruments. The school district should annually conduct interviews with students, student-athletes, coaches, administrators, parents and other stakeholders to evaluate interest levels in particular sports and to determine if there is any unmet interests. The athletic administration or the gender equity committee should conduct the interviews.

In order to conduct the interviews the school district should make this a part of any student orientation program, registration process, during class meetings or assemblies, during student government meetings, or through homeroom or activity periods to site a few examples.

The school district should use surveys annually to survey students of the underrepresented sex to determine their interests in any particular sports. The school district should use guidelines listed in the 1996 Clarification in order to develop and implement the survey appropriately. The school district should assess the results of the survey on an annual basis. This is an ongoing and dynamic process not a static one.

➤ ***d. Expand Middle School***

Develop and implement a plan to expand opportunities at the middle school level. Providing one team in some instances for six middle schools does not provide the opportunity to develop the interests at that level. Participation in sports at the middle school and high school level is evidence of interests and abilities that could translate into potential college participation. The school district should continue to monitor athletic participation of younger students at the elementary and especially the middle school/junior high school levels to identify what sports these students are participating in. If these students are participating in sports not offered at the high school level then the high schools should consider adding those sports.

➤ ***e. Adding a sport***

In addition to assessing and evaluating the participation rates in sports in the middle schools and high school, the school district should assess and evaluate the participation rates in any local amateur athletic associations, and community sports programs that operate within the boundaries of the school district. The school district should consider adding a particular sport if there is substantial interest in a particular sport in the community programs and associations that the school district does not offer for the underrepresented sex.