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# Hearings in a Post Regulatory World

## ICUT, Day 1

Martha Compton

Director of Strategic Partnerships and  
Client Relations  
July 2021

## Your Facilitator



# Martha Compton

Director of Strategic Partnerships & Client  
Relations

Martha Compton is a nationally recognized expert in student conduct and has over 20 years of experience in higher education, specifically investigating and resolving student conduct, sexual misconduct, and interpersonal violence matters. Martha is the current past-president of the Association for Student Conduct Administration. She speaks and presents frequently across the country on developing policy and conducting thorough and impartial investigations and hearings. Martha is currently a Ph.D. student at Ohio University and received her master's degree from Appalachian State University and her bachelor's degree from Keene State College.





## Vision

We exist to help create safe and equitable work and educational environments.



## Mission

Bring systemic change to how school districts and institutions of higher education address their Clery Act & Title IX obligations.



## Core Values

- ❖ Responsive Partnership
- ❖ Innovation
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Transformation
- ❖ Integrity

# Today's Agenda

01

Title IX Requirements for Hearings

05

The Hearing

02

Process Participants

06

After the Hearing

03

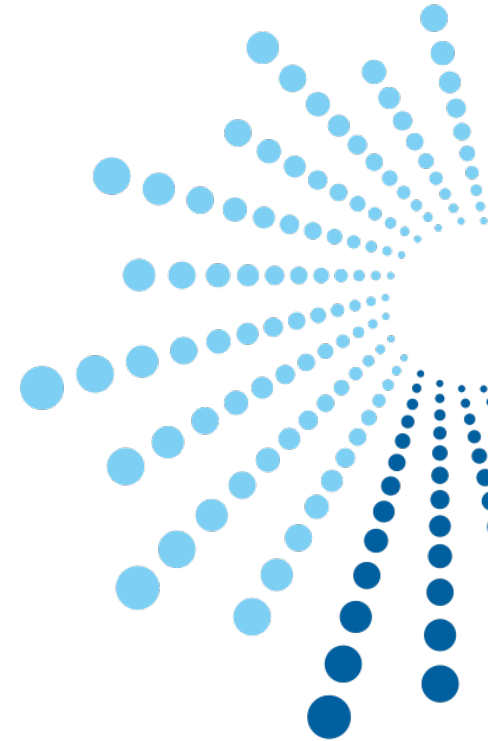
Advisor's First Steps

07

Practical Application

04

Pre-Hearing Tasks







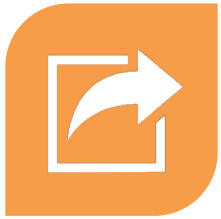
# Title IX Requirements For Hearings

01

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# Procedural Requirements for Investigations



Notice TO BOTH PARTIES



Equal opportunity to present evidence



An advisor of choice



Written notification of meetings, etc., and sufficient time to prepare



Opportunity to review ALL evidence, and 10 days to submit a written response to the evidence prior to completion of the report



Report summarizing relevant evidence and 10-day review of report prior to hearing



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# Procedural Requirements for Hearings

Must be live, but can be conducted remotely

No Compelling participation

Standard of proof used may be preponderance of the evidence or clear and convincing; standard must be the same for student and employee matters

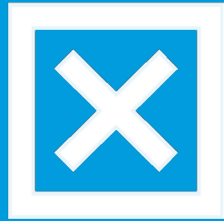
Cross examination must be permitted and must be conducted by advisor of choice or provided by the institution

Decision maker determines relevancy of questions and evidence offered

Exclusion of Evidence if no cross examination

Written decision must be issued that includes finding and sanction

# Impact of Not Submitting to Cross Examination



Exclusion of all statements of that party or witness



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# Cross Examination

## Exceptions to the Exclusionary Rule



Statements that consist of or are made in the course of the prohibited conduct



When cross examination is waived or not conducted

# When Has a Party Submitted to Cross Examination?



The party or witness has answered all questions deemed relevant on cross



A party or witness appears for cross, but the advisor does not ask any relevant questions



A party or witness refuses to answer one relevant question posed by advisor



A party or witness only answers the decision maker's questions and refuses to answer questions on cross

# Hearing Technology: Requirements and Considerations



If hearings cannot be in person, or if someone chooses to participate remotely, must have a remote participation platform available.



All hearings must be recorded.



Participants must be able to communicate during the hearing

The parties with the decision maker(s)  
The parties with their advisors

# Purpose of the Hearing

Why does it matter?

Review and  
Assess  
Evidence



Make  
Findings of  
Fact



Determine  
Responsibility  
/ Findings of  
Responsibility



Determine  
Sanction  
and  
Remedy



# Evaluating the Evidence

Is it relevant?

Evidence is relevant if it has a tendency to make a material fact more or less likely to be true.



Is it authentic?

Is the item what it purports to be?



Is it credible?

Is it convincing?



Is it reliable?

Can you trust it or rely on it?



What weight, if any, should it be given?

Weight is determined by the finder of fact!

Trauma-informed practices provide tools/techniques for interviewing and engaging with the Complainant, Respondent, and Witnesses.



Format/Structure of the Interview

Format of Questions



Approach to Clarification



# Process Participants

02

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# The Participants

## The Parties

Complainant	Respondent
<p>“The person who is alleged to be the victim of conduct prohibited under this policy.”</p>	<p>“The person who who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct prohibited under this policy.”</p>

# The Participants

## The Investigator

- Presents a summary of the final investigation report, including items that are contested and those that are not;
- Submits to questioning by the Decisionmaker(s) and the parties (through their Advisors).
- Present during the entire hearing process, but not during deliberations.
- Questions about their opinions on credibility, recommended findings, or determinations, are prohibited. If such information is introduced, the Chair will direct that it be disregarded.



- Can be anyone, including a lawyer, a parent, a friend, and a witness
- No particular training or experience required (College appointed advisors will be trained)
- Can accompany their advisees at all meetings, interviews, and the hearing
- Advisors should help the Parties prepare for each meeting and are expected to advise ethically, with integrity, and in good faith
- May not speak on behalf of their advisee or otherwise participate, except that the advisor will conduct cross examination at the hearing.
- Advisors are expected to advise their advisees without disrupting proceedings
- Any Advisor who oversteps their role as defined by this policy will be warned only once. If the Advisor continues to disrupt or otherwise fails to respect the limits of the Advisor role, the meeting will be ended, or other appropriate measures implemented. Subsequently, the Title IX Coordinator will determine how to address the Advisor's non-compliance and future role.

# The Participants

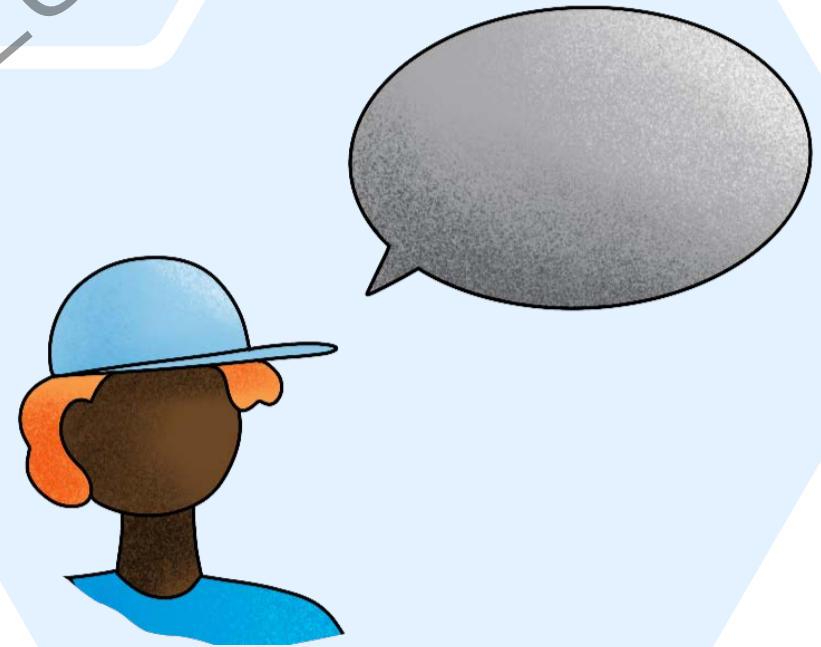
## Advisors



# The Participants

## Advisors: Prohibited Behavior

Any Advisor who oversteps their role as defined by this policy will be warned only once. If the Advisor continues to disrupt or otherwise fails to respect the limits of the Advisor role, the meeting will be ended, or other appropriate measures implemented. Subsequently, the Title IX Coordinator will determine how to address the Advisor's non-compliance and future role.



# The Participants

## The Hearing Facilitator/Coordinator

- Manages the recording, witness logistics, party logistics, curation of documents, separation of the parties, and other administrative elements of the hearing process
- Non-Voting





# The Participants

## The Decision Maker(s)

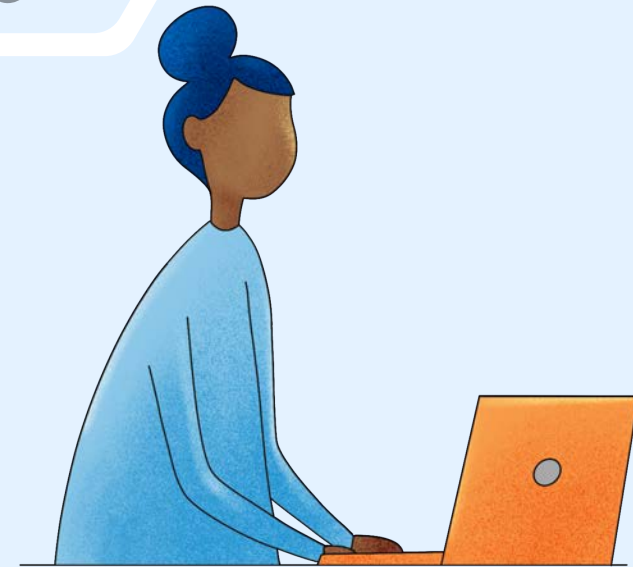
- One person or a panel of three
- Questions the parties and witnesses at the hearing
- Determines responsibility
- Determines sanction, where appropriate



# The Participants

## The Hearing Chair

- Is a decision maker
- Answers all procedural questions
- Makes rulings regarding relevancy of evidence, questions posed during cross examination
- Maintains Decorum
- Prepares the written deliberation statement
- Assists in preparing the Notice of Outcome





# Advisor's First Steps

03

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After you are assigned a case...



Review the policy



Review the materials provided, if any



Reach out to your advisee



Schedule a meeting



# Make the Party Aware that ...

You are under no obligation to keep what the party tells you confidential

There is no attorney client relationship nor any other recognized privilege between you and the party

Were this matter go to a court of law, and you were asked to testify, you would have to do so, truthfully

Do this at the outset



# Pre-Hearing Tasks

What should be done in advance of the hearing

04

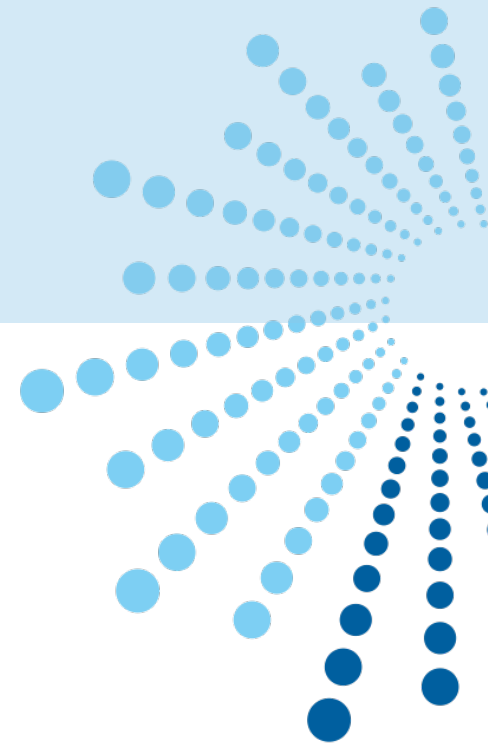
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# Pre-Hearing Tasks for the Hearing Panel and Chair

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# Prior to the Hearing

The Chair will provide the names of persons who will be participating in the hearing, all pertinent documentary evidence, and the final investigation report to the parties at least ten (10) days prior to the hearing.

The Title IX Coordinator will give the Decision-maker(s) a list of the names of all parties, witnesses, and Advisors at least five (5) days in advance of the hearing. Any Decision-maker who cannot make an objective determination must recuse themselves from the proceedings when notified of the identity of the parties, witnesses, and Advisors in advance of the hearing. If a Decision-maker is unsure of whether a bias or conflict of interest exists, they must raise the concern to the Title IX Coordinator as soon as possible.

During the ten (10) day period prior to the hearing, the parties have the opportunity for continued review and comment on the final investigation report and available evidence. That review and comment can be shared with the Chair at the pre-hearing meeting or at the hearing and will be exchanged between each party by the Chair.

The Chair MAY convene a pre-hearing meeting.



# Pre-Hearing Meetings

Review the Logistics for the Hearing

Set expectations

- Format
- Roles of the parties
- Participation
- Decorum
- Impact of not following rules

Advance Submission of Questions

Relevancy Arguments and Advance Rulings

# The Decision Maker(s)



Review evidence and report



Review applicable policy and procedures



Preliminary analysis of the evidence



Determine areas for further exploration



Develop questions of your own



Anticipate the party's questions



Anticipate challenges or issues



Prepare the script

# Common Areas of Exploration



Credibility?



Clarification on timeline?



The thought process?



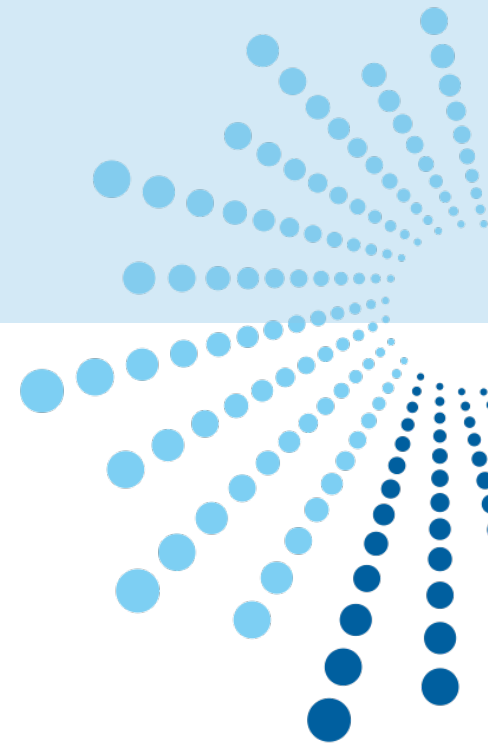
Inconsistencies?



# Pre-Hearing Tasks for the Advisor

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# Pre-Hearing Preparation

# Do Your Homework



# Exactly, What Type of Homework?

- Review applicable policy language/provisions
- Familiarize yourself with investigative report
- Understand the ins and outs of the report
- What is the timeline of events
- Think about what areas you may want to highlight or expand upon
- What type of questions you will ask
- Who are the key witnesses
- Consult with your advisee
- Anticipate questions of others
- Consider impact of your decisions and develop a strategy

# What Does the Advisor Want to Show?



Credibility?



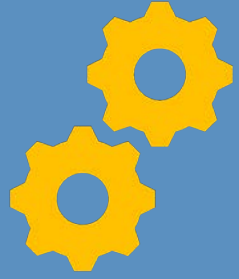
Clarification on timeline?



The thought process?

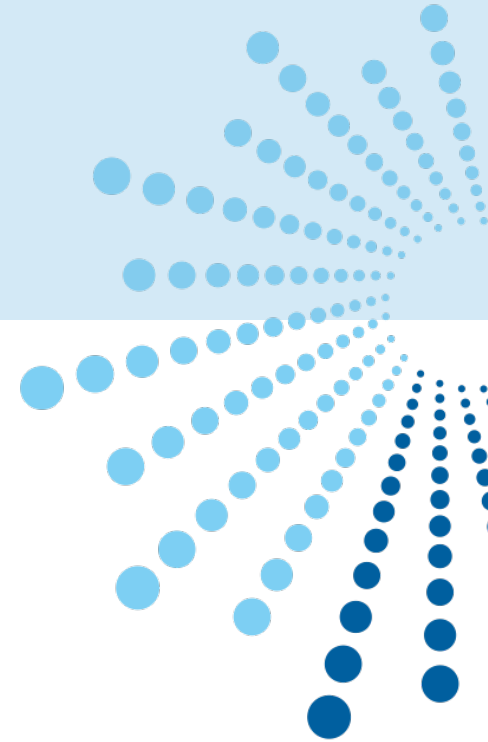


Inconsistencies?



# The Hearing

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05



# Order of the Proceedings

01

Opening introductions and instructions by the Chair

02

Opening statements

03

Testimony and questioning of the parties and witnesses

04

Deliberations

# Opening Instructions by the Chair

- The College has a script for this portion of the proceedings, and it should be used.
- Introduction of the participants.
- Overview of the procedures.
- Be prepared to answer questions.
- Parties are provided on last opportunity to challenge the composition of the Panel for bias or conflict of interest.
  - Chair or TIXC will make ruling.





# Testimony

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A photograph of a man in a brown jacket shouting into a white megaphone. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text.

# Testimony & Questioning of the Parties

01

Opening remarks by the parties

02

The Hearing Panel will question Complainant first

03

Advisor questioning of Complainant will occur

04

Follow up by the Hearing Panel

05

The Hearing Panel will question Respondent second

06

Advisor questioning of Respondent will occur

07

Follow up by the Hearing Panel

# Questioning of the Witnesses

01

The Chair will determine the order of questioning of witnesses

02

The Hearing Panel will question first

03

Advisor cross-examination will occur next

04

Follow up by the Hearing Panel

# General Questioning Guidelines

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# Format of Questioning



The Hearing Panel or the advisor will remain seated during questioning;



Questions will be posed orally,

Advisors can request permission to ask questions electronically, or in writing



Questions must be relevant

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# What constitutes a relevant question?

The Department declines to define “relevant”, indicating that term “should be interpreted using [its] plain and ordinary meaning.”

*See, e.g.,* Federal Rule of Evidence 401 Test for Relevant Evidence:

“Evidence is relevant if:

- (a) it has any tendency to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without the evidence; and
- (b) the fact is of consequence in determining the action.”



# When is evidence relevant?

Logical connection between the evidence and facts at issue

Assists in coming to the conclusion – it is “of consequence”

Tends to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without that evidence



# Irrelevant and Impermissible Questions

Questions that seek to illicit irrelevant information

- Complainant's prior sexual history
- Information protected by an un-waived legal privilege
- Medical treatment and care

Duplicative questions

Information that is otherwise irrelevant

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# When Questioning....



Be efficient.



Explore areas where additional information or clarity is needed.



Listen to the answers.



Be prepared to go down a road that you hadn't considered or anticipated exploring.



Take your time. Be thoughtful. Take breaks if you need it.

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# Foundational Questions to Always Consider Asking

Were you interviewed?

Did you see the interview notes?

Did the notes reflect your recollection at the time?

As you sit here today, has anything changed?

Did you review your notes before coming to this hearing?

Did you speak with any one about your testimony today prior to this hearing?

# Common Areas of Where Clarity or Additional Information is Needed

Details about the alleged misconduct

Facts related to the elements of the alleged policy violation

Relevancy of Certain Items of Evidence

Factual Basis for Opinions

Credibility

Reliability

Timelines

Inconsistencies

# Questioning to Assess Reliability

Inherent plausibility

Logic

Corroboration

Other indicia of reliability

# Questioning to Assess Credibility

**No formula exists, but consider asking questions about the following:**

opportunity to view

ability to recall

motive to fabricate

plausibility

consistency

character, background, experience, and training

coaching





# Opinion Evidence

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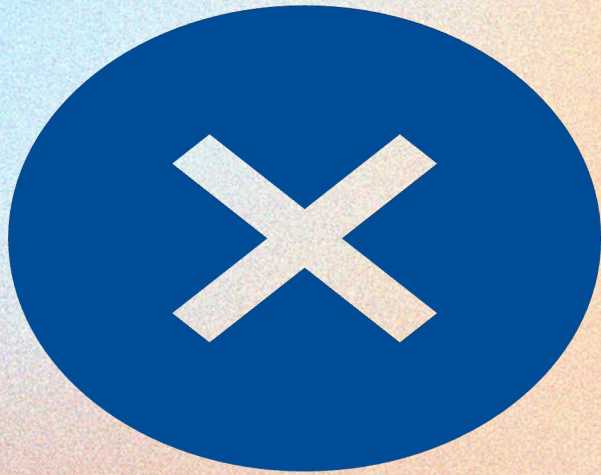
When might it be relevant?

How do you establish a foundation for opinion evidence so that the reliability of the opinion can be assessed?



# Asking Questions to Assess Authenticity

Investigating the products of the investigation



Never assume that an item of evidence is authentic.



Ask questions, request proof.



Request further investigation of the authenticity if necessary.



# What are the “Hard” Questions

Details about the sexual contact

Seemingly inconsistent behaviors

Inconsistent evidence/information

What they were wearing

Alcohol or drug consumption

Probing into reports of lack of memory

# How to Ask the Hard Questions

## Lay a foundation for the questions

- Explain why you are asking it
- Share the evidence that you are asking about, or that you are seeking a response to

## Be deliberate and mindful in your questions:

- Can you tell me what you were thinking when....
- Help me understand what you were feeling when...
- Are you able to tell me more about...

# Special Considerations for Questioning the Investigator

- The Investigator's participation in the hearing is as a fact witness;
- Questions directed towards the Investigator shall be limited to facts collected by the Investigator pertinent to the Investigation;
- Neither the Advisors nor the Decision-maker(s) should ask the Investigator(s) their opinions on credibility, recommended findings, or determinations;
- The Investigators, Advisors, and parties will refrain from discussion of or questions about these assessments. If such information is introduced, the Chair will direct that it be disregarded.

# Special Considerations for Questioning the Investigator



Ask questions about how they conducted their investigation



Explore the investigators decision making



Seek clarity about evidence collected

Where it came from  
Authenticity of the evidence



Ask factual questions that will assist in evaluation of the evidence



If bias is not in issue at the hearing, the Chair should not permit irrelevant questions of the investigator that probe for bias.

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# Special Considerations for Panels

If a panel, decide in advance who will take the lead on questioning

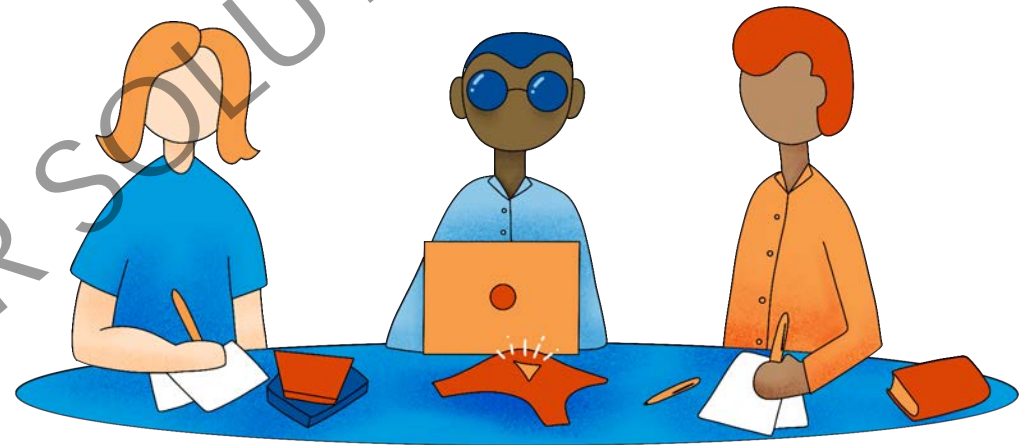
Go topic by topic

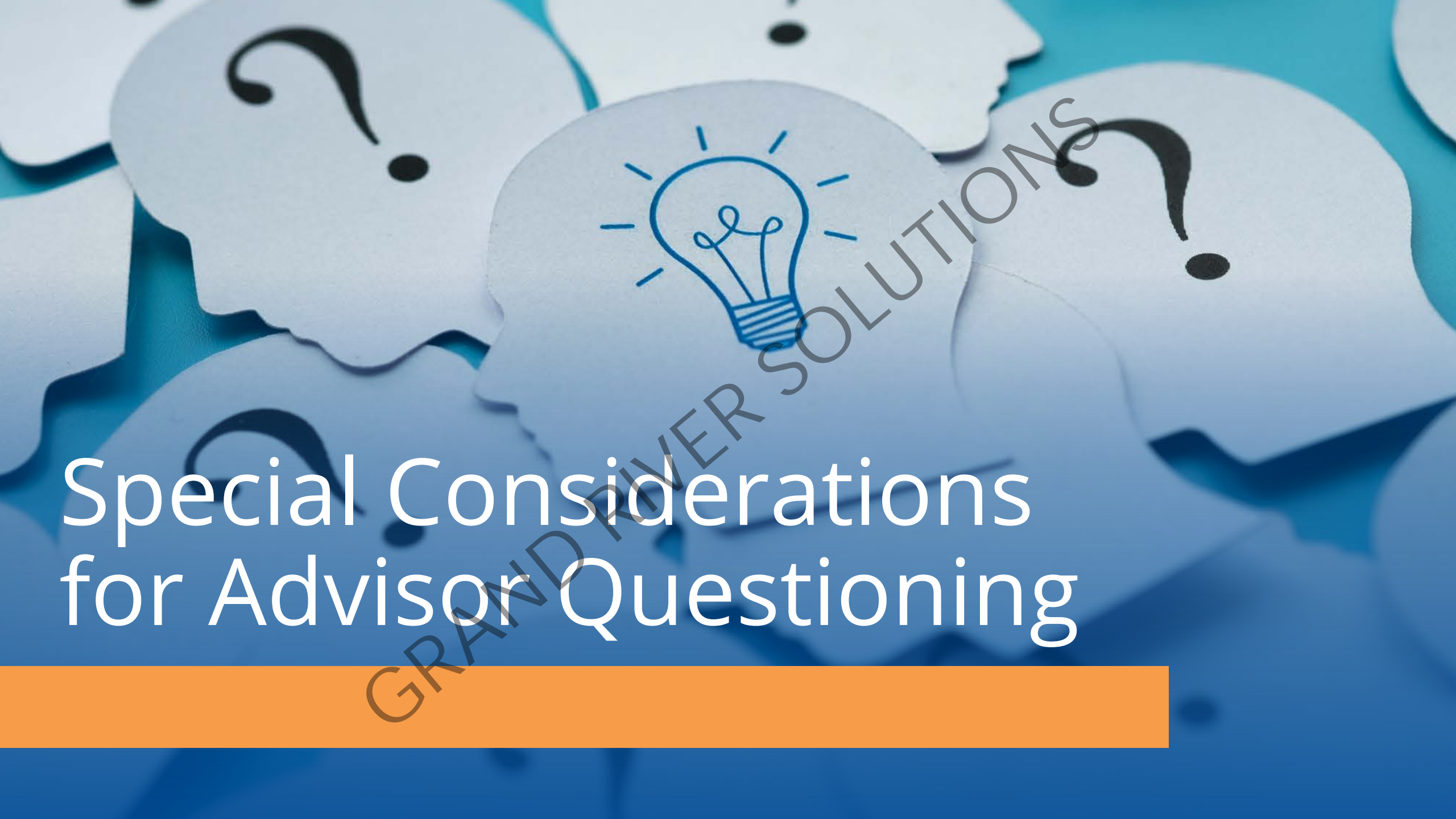
Ask other panelists if they have questions before moving on

Do not speak over each other

Pay attention to the questions of other panelists

Ok to take breaks to consult with each other, to reflect, to consult with the TIXC or counsel



The background features several light blue thought bubble shapes on a darker blue background. One central bubble contains a glowing lightbulb icon, while others contain question marks. A diagonal watermark reading "GRAND RIVER SOLUTIONS" is overlaid across the image. At the bottom, there is a solid orange horizontal bar.

# Special Considerations for Advisor Questioning

# First Decide: To Cross or Not to Cross

## Special Considerations



WILL SUBMITTING TO CROSS  
EXAMINATION SERVE THE PARTY'S  
INTERESTS?

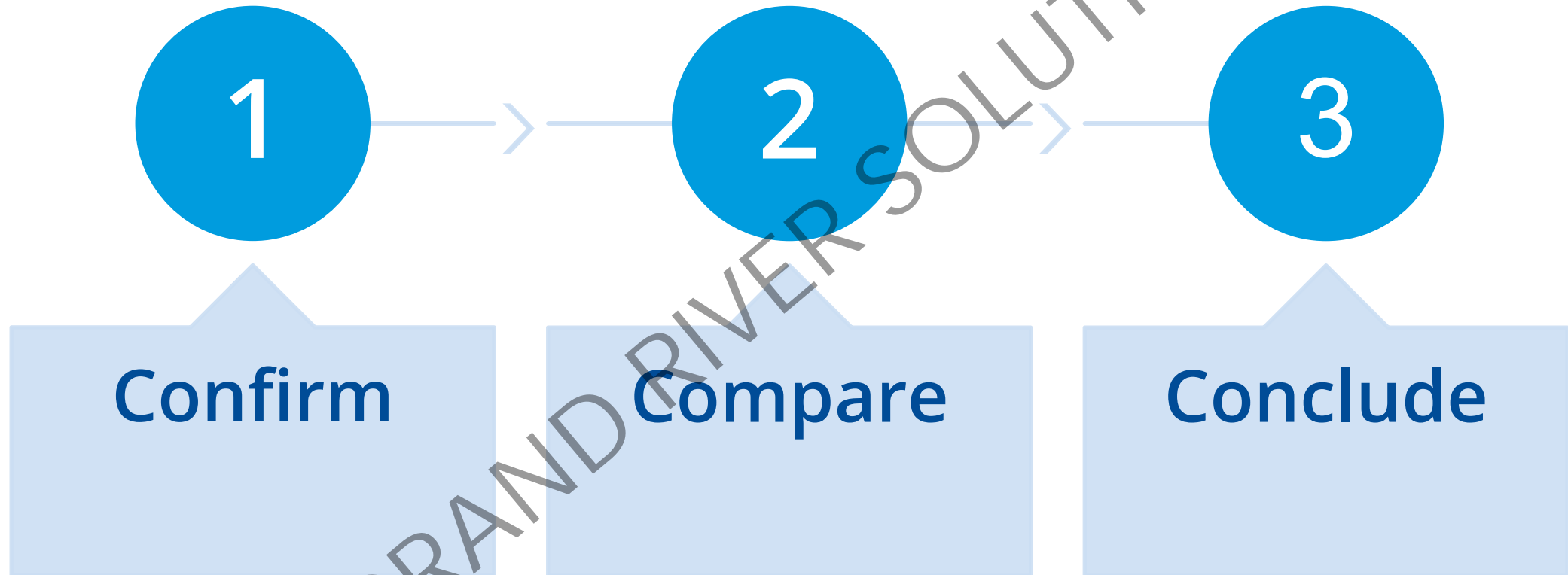


WILL CONDUCTING CROSS  
EXAMINATION SERVE THE  
PARTY'S INTERESTS?



# Questioning

## How to Discount



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# Confirm

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- Witness Y, earlier today you were asked about what you heard and saw on the night in question...
- And you indicated that you heard loud voices, but that you are not sure if it was fighting, is that correct?
- You also said that the parties came out together and then went back into the room, is that what you saw?
- And you are sure of this?





# Compare

- Witness Y, this isn't the first time you shared your observations of Complainant and Respondent that night, is it?
- Did you talk to the investigator about this?
- And that statement was provided just two days after the incident, correct?
- Do you recall what you said to the the investigator?
- Did you tell the investigator the truth when you were interviewed?





# Conclude

- Witness Y, when you spoke to the investigator, you indicated that you heard fighting, correct?
- And that Complainant came out of the room crying, isn't that right?
- And that Respondent came out looking angry, correct?
- You also stated that you saw Respondent grab Complainant and drag them back into the room, isn't that true?
- Since speaking with the investigator, you and Complainant have had a falling out, haven't you?

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# The Do's of Conducting Cross



Be efficient



Highlight the portions of their testimony that support your narrative.



Listen.



Do make your points through pointed and calm questioning



Be prepared to go down a road that you hadn't considered or anticipated exploring.



Do raise concerns about credibility and reliability



Take your time. Be thoughtful. Ask for breaks if you need it.

# The Do Nots of Cross Examination:

Don't rehash everything a witness has said.

Don't call folks liars or attack them.

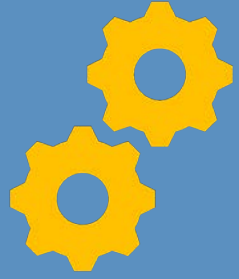
Don't rant, rave, lose your temper.

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# Observe and Listen

Be open to adjusting plans or strategy based on information presented at the hearing.

Make note of any issues that you think may be appropriate for appeal.



# The Decision Maker's Role in Advisor Questioning

05(a)

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# The Role of the Decision Maker During Questioning by the Advisors

After the advisor poses a question, the proceeding will pause to allow the Chair to consider it.

Chair will determine whether the question will be permitted, disallowed, or rephrased. The Chair may explore arguments regarding relevance with the Advisors.

The Chair will limit or disallow questions on the basis that they are irrelevant, unduly repetitious (and thus irrelevant), or abusive.

The Chair will state their decision on the question for the record and advise the Party/Witness to whom the question was directed, accordingly. The Chair will explain any decision to exclude a question as not relevant, or to reframe it for relevance.

The Chair has final say on all questions and determinations of relevance. The parties and their advisors are not permitted to make objections during the hearing. If they feel that ruling is incorrect, the proper forum to raise that objection is on appeal.

# When Assessing Relevance, the Decision Maker Can:

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Ask the advisor why their question is relevant

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Take a break

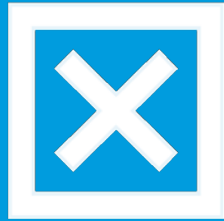
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Ask their own questions of the party/witness

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Review the hearing record

# Impact of Not Submitting to Cross Examination



Exclusion of all statements of that party or witness

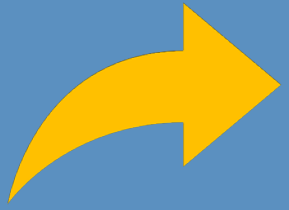


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**When a Party  
or Witness  
Declines to  
Answer a  
Relevant  
Questions  
Posed by an  
Advisor**

**The Chair should:**

- Remind the party of the impact of not submitting to cross examination;
- Pause the proceedings to allow the party or witness to reconsider.



# After the Hearing

06

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# Deliberations

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# Weighing the Evidence & Making A Determination

1. Evaluate the relevant evidence collected to determine what weight, if any, you will afford that item of evidence in your final determination;
2. Apply the standard of proof and the evidence to each element of the alleged policy violation;
3. Make a determination as to whether or not there has been a policy violation.

# Preponderance of the Evidence

More likely than not

Does not mean 100% true or accurate

A finding of responsibility = There was sufficient reliable, credible evidence to support a finding, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the policy was violated

A finding of not responsible = There was not sufficient reliable, credible evidence to support a finding, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the policy was violated

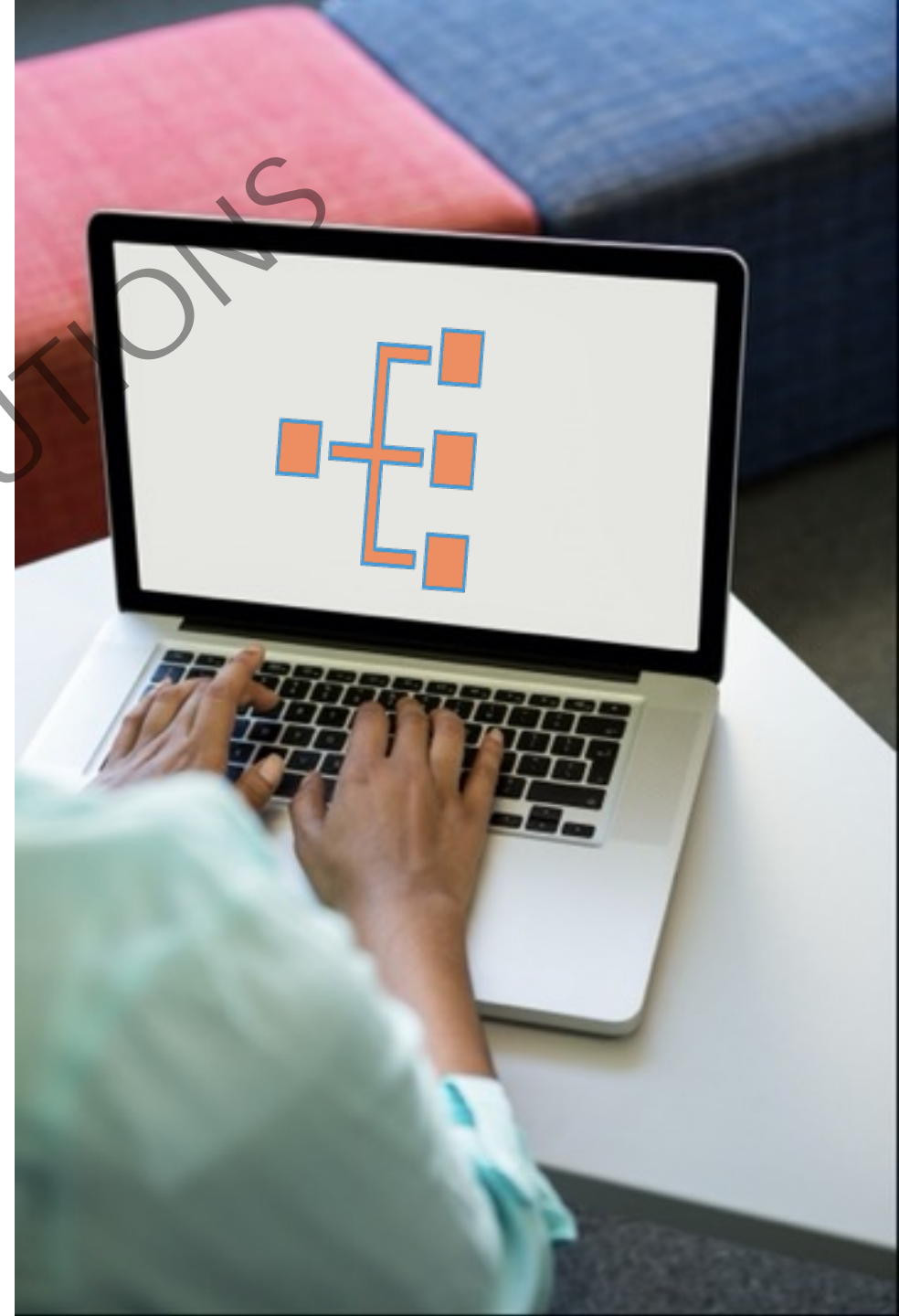




# Policy Analysis

- Break down the policy into elements
- Organize the facts by the element to which they relate

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# Allegation: Fondling




## Fondling is the:

- ❑ touching of the private body parts of another person
- ❑ for the purpose of sexual gratification,
- ❑ without the consent of the victim,
  - ❑ including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their age or **because of their temporary or permanent mental incapacity.**

# Analysis Grid

Touching of the private body parts of another person	For the purpose of sexual gratification	Without consent due to lack of capacity
<p>Undisputed: Complainant and Respondent agree that there was contact between Respondent's hand and Complainant's vagina.</p>	<p>Respondent acknowledges and admits this element in their statement with investigators.</p> <p>"We were hooking up. Complainant started kissing me and was really into it. It went from there. Complainant guided my hand down her pants..."</p>	<p>Complainant: drank more than 12 drinks, vomited, no recall Respondent: C was aware and participating Witness 1: observed C vomit Witness 2: C was playing beer pong and could barely stand Witness 3: C was drunk but seemed fine Witness 4: carried C to the basement couch and left her there to sleep it off.</p>

# Apply Preponderance Standard to Each Element

Touching of the private body parts of another person	For the purpose of sexual gratification	Without consent due to lack of capacity
<p>Undisputed: Complainant and Respondent agree that there was contact between Respondent's hand and Complainant's vagina.</p> 	<p>Respondent acknowledges and admits this element in their statement with investigators.</p> <p>"We were looking up. Complainant started kissing me and was really into it. It went from there. Complainant guided my hand down her pants..."</p> 	<p>Complainant: drank more than 12 drinks, vomited, no recall Respondent: C was aware and participating</p> <p>Witness 1: observed C vomit Witness 2: C was playing beer pong and could barely stand Witness 3: C was drunk but seemed fine Witness 4: carried C to the basement couch and left her there to sleep it off.</p> 

# Final Report



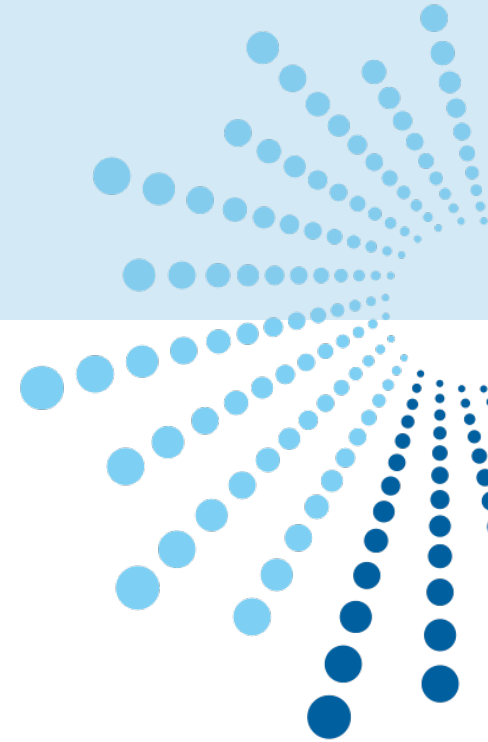
- The allegations
- Description of all procedural steps
- Findings of fact
- Conclusion of application of facts to the policy
- Rationale for each allegation
- Sanctions and remedies
- Procedure for appeal



# Practical Application

07

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# Scenario 1

During the hearing, Witness 1 appears. Witness 1 answers all relevant questions by the Hearing Panel, the Complainant's Advisor, and the Respondent's Advisor. After cross by both Advisors, the Hearing Panel asks a second round of questions. Witness 1, who is now tired and frustrated, refuses to answer any of the Hearing Panel's follow up questions.

- **Can the Hearing Panel rely upon/consider the statements of Witness 1?**





## Scenario 2A

Respondent provides a polygraph report to investigators wherein it is concluded that Respondent is not being deceptive when denying the allegations.

- **The Investigator determines the report is irrelevant. Must the Investigator share the report with the decision maker?**





## Scenario 2B

Respondent provides a polygraph report to Investigators wherein it is concluded that Respondent is not being deceptive when denying the allegations. The polygrapher appears and declines to answer all questions posed on cross by Complainant's advisor.

- **Can the Hearing Panel consider the answers to other questions during the hearing? The report?**



## Scenario 2C

Respondent provides a polygraph report to Investigators wherein it is concluded that Respondent is not being deceptive when denying the allegations. The polygrapher appears and answers all relevant questions on cross.

- **Must the Hearing Panel find Respondent not responsible because of the findings in the report?**



## Scenario 3

Complainant provides records of a sexual assault forensic exam. In the record, the nurse notes that Complainant had bruising on her inner thighs and abrasions on her cervix. The nurse does not appear at the hearing. Complainant testifies and fully submits to cross. In her testimony she states that she saw bruises on her inner thighs and that the nurse told her about the injuries to her cervix.

- **Can the HP consider evidence of the inner thigh injuries?**
- **Can the HP consider evidence of the injuries to C's cervix?**



## Scenario 4

Respondent appears at the hearing with Witness 7. Respondent would like Witness 7 to provide information testimony about text messages between them and Complainant that indicate that Complainant has made the allegations up.

- **Can the HP hear from Witness 7 at the hearing?**

# Questions?



Leave Us Feedback:



Email Us:

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[info@grandriversolutions.com](mailto:info@grandriversolutions.com)



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