



INFORMATION

Facts on Title IX & Athletics

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the primary federal law barring sex discrimination in education programs and activities, including sex discrimination in sports programs. Title IX requires schools and colleges receiving federal funds to give women and girls an equal chance to play sports and to treat men and women equally when it comes to things like athletic scholarships, equipment, coaching, and facilities.

Title IX has led to greater opportunities for women and girls to participate on athletic teams, receive scholarships, and obtain the benefits of playing sports. The number of female college athletes is now nearly five times the pre-Title IX rate. The number of high school girls playing competitive sports has ballooned from fewer than 300,000 before Title IX to 2.78 million in 2001.

We have come a long way, but women still have a long way to go to catch up with their male counterparts. Not only does the number of male college athletes (210,989) still far exceed the number of female athletes (150,185), but resources for women's athletic programs continue to lag behind men's at all levels. While women are 53% of the student body at Division I colleges, they are only 41% of the athletes, receive only 32% of recruiting dollars and get only 36% of overall athletic operating budgets. Football and basketball continue to consume the majority of men's total athletic budgets in Division I-A schools -- 72% -- forcing the other men's programs to compete for the remaining funds.

Gender equity problems at the middle and high school levels mirror those at the college level. Although national data on disparities in expenditures and treatment is not available (federal law only requires colleges and universities to make this data publicly available), news reports and anecdotal information indicate that female athletes at these levels are frequently treated like second-class citizens. For example, news stories often describe boys' facilities as being of stadium-like quality and girls' facilities as bare-bones at best. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, the primary federal agency that enforces Title IX, there were 119 Title IX athletics complaints filed against high schools and 28 against colleges and universities in fiscal year 2001.

Not only are students and parents lodging OCR complaints, but some are also suing local school districts and state athletic associations. A federal court in Michigan recently held that the Michigan High School Athletic Association discriminates against girls by scheduling several of their sports in nontraditional seasons. In this case, in which NWLC served as of counsel, parents also successfully settled issues such as the lack of publicity for girls' tournaments, unequal facilities and fewer tournament opportunities. Title IX lawsuits have also been filed against state athletic associations in Kentucky, Virginia, South Dakota, and West Virginia.

Participating in athletics can have an enormous positive impact on the lives of women and girls. Studies show that high school girls who participate in sports have higher grades, higher scores on standardized tests, lower rates of teen pregnancy and are more likely to graduate than non-athletes. That is why it is so important for women and girls to have the equal athletic opportunities they deserve.



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