

Betsy Smith:

Really that understanding that we get from that data is what fuels that prevention. And when I say fuels that prevention, you're probably like, what does that mean? What do we do with that then? And for me, it's directed training and education and putting in broader remedies. So if we know that we're having certain types of issues, we're able to train our school, our kiddos, our employees, our students at a higher ed institution in certain areas or clubs on these really specific issues that are going on without saying people's names, without calling out specific situations, but really saying, this is what our policy says, this is what it means. This is what happens when those types of behaviors occur.

Courtney Bullard:

Hello and welcome back to the Law and Education Podcast. My name is Courtney Bullard. I am your host. I'm also the CEO and founder of Institutional Compliance Solutions and a lawyer. Great to have you back. I'm sorry we have been away for a little while and getting these episodes out is really exciting to me. We have several. This one is really special because it is with our director of Title IX services, Betsy Smith, where we sit down and talk about the importance of the visibility of the Title IX coordinator. One thing that I pride myself on with my team and with our mission and values at ICS is ensuring that we're not just talking about the work, but that we're actually in the work. And everyone on my team serves in the various Title IX roles for different institutions and school districts. And most recently, Betsy Smith is serving as an interim Title IX coordinator at a very, very large school district that receives on average 10 to 17 reports that could fall under Title IX a day.

And being in that role has really invigorated her and her innovation in this space. You'll hear it as she talks, but also gives us that on the ground experience that we love to bring to our clients. And so we had a community partner meeting, our most recent quarterly Zoom meeting where we talked about the importance of the visibility of the Title IX coordinator and Betsy presented. And for our higher ed Zoom meeting, we had one of our community partners present as well about work they're doing on social media to ensure that they are sharing with the community at large and the campus about what their office does in order to encourage folks to, of course, report and also to educate on Title IX and all the resources that their office brings to the campus. It was a wildly popular community partner meeting when we got a ton of feedback afterwards about how practical and useful it was.

And so we decided to record a podcast, and that's what Betsy and I are going to share with you today. I also wanted to, in this introduction today, highlight what it means to be a community partner at ICS. We get asked the question a lot, well, what's a community partner? What's community access? And of course we have the commercial that runs during our podcast, but I think this is a really good time to just share a few things with you as we go into the new year anticipating new Title IX regulations. So being a community partner with ICS simply means that your institution or your school district pays an annual fee in order to have access to our community. The Oxford Dictionary defines community as a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.

And Miriam Webster defines community as a unified body of individuals such as a body of persons of common and especially professional interest scattered through a larger society. Those definitions really do encapsulate the mission behind the community that I created at ICS to support Title IX coordinators and other administrators engaged in the work each day. We have community partner Zoom meetings that are quarterly, and then we have special ones when something new comes out like a new law or regulation. And each community partner Zoom meeting always reminds me of how thankful I am for my team, the support we're able to provide to clients and partners and the value that each and every community partner brings to ICS and each other. So a few highlights of what it means to be a

community partner. The biggest one and the one that I think our community partners find the most valuable is access to Title IX University.

We have core curriculum in Title IX University that you can use to train each and every Title IX role. So your investigators, your coordinators, your decision makers, informal resolution facilitators, et cetera. Those are unlimited. So if you want to train 50 people or two people, the team that Betsy has, Team 9 at the school district that we were talking about, she has 200 folks trained. Some of our schools or institutions have 10. Either way, it is the same cost to train across the board and it will track and keep up with everyone's training for you. There are certificates of completion. Title IX coordinator can then run reports on who has completed what and keep up with it that way. Very simple, very user friendly. If you are a Diamond community partner member, we have refresher courses each year, and we also have level two and specialty courses such as pregnancy discrimination and accommodations under Title IX.

We have one on violence risk assessments and emergency removals. We have level two investigator courses. We have a course on being trauma informed. It's just an example of a few of those. So that is a really useful tool that our community loves. But we also have these community partner Zoom meetings. We have newsletters, we have a listserv, we have discounts on our services, on and on. So really useful tool. And the great thing about it is that as the laws change or things are updated, everything in the community is updated in real time. So I mentioned Title IX University being a huge benefit for our Title IX coordinators on the ground. There are also resources and compliance aids, and they're all broken up by the phase of the formal Title IX grievance process. So they include checklists and templates for almost everything. Notice of allegations, notice of informal resolutions.

We have flow charts because flow charts are our love language here at ICS that you can then take and repurpose on the ground. The list goes on and on. We have a ton of them. And one thing I'm really excited about coming this year and really this month is that we are going to be providing all compliance aids and resources in both English and Spanish. Another great tool that is being added and I'm thrilled about is an interactive triaging tool for determining whether or not a matter falls under Title IX. So that is probably the most difficult aspect of a Title IX coordinator's job or one of the most difficult is a report comes in and you're trying to determine which pathway it goes down. Is it Title IX or is it a different pathway at your school or institution? This interactive tool allows you to go through a rubric for making that determination.

At the end of it, you can save it as a PDF for that file and put it in the file to show what steps you went through to determine whether or not it falls under Title IX. Probably the number one question we get from our community partners and clients. Really excited about that. And then finally, there's an interactive tool that is available to all community partners in partnership with DPREP to help with your safety and risk analysis for emergency removals and beyond to violence risk assessments. So again, another interactive tool that can help you on the ground in the work that you're doing. All right, I could talk about being a community partner all day, but we would love to have you if you're not already.

If you are and you're listening, we appreciate you and you already know that because we love to send out cups of coffee and things to our community partners, just words of encouragement as you continue doing the work. But we'd love to have you on board. I will stop. Again, like I said, I could talk about this all day and I will move us to my conversation with Betsy Smith. Betsy Smith, director of Title IX services. We're doing it, we're recording a podcast, and I know it's so hard for us to get together, even though we talk all the time about podcast topics, it's been hard for us to schedule something. So I'm so excited we're doing this.

Betsy Smith:

Me too. This is going to be awesome.

Courtney Bullard:

All right, so we had a community partner Zoom meeting recently, and for those listening, we hold quarterly Zoom meetings where our community partners come on. We usually have an agenda of some sort. We give some practical updates, legal updates, housekeeping items, all the things. And the most recent one we had, Betsy did a portion for us on ensuring your Title IX coordinator is visible to your campus and why that's important and how to make that happen. We also had for higher education, one of our community partners, University of Southern Mississippi, come on and talk about all the work they're doing on their social media platform. So I encourage you to check out what they've been doing because it's really good. So we thought a podcast on the topic would be really helpful, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

So Betsy, if you've listened to the podcast before, you might already know, she's a former deputy Title IX coordinator, but she also is currently serving on the ground as an interim Title IX coordinator for a large school district. We've also served for institutions, and I think that experience has just leveled up the advice we give to clients and having to live it in real time in a totally different way. I think you would agree with me on that, Betsy, right?

Betsy Smith:

100%. Being on the ground and doing the work really just motivates me to think about how we can talk with and advise our clients in more accurate ways because we're experiencing the things that they are.

Courtney Bullard:

In our meeting you gave a presentation of sorts, which is short brief, that was titled Title IX coordinator, branding expert, salesperson, counselor, support person, policy expert, prevention specialist. The list goes on and on, and the point being trying to get our Title IX coordinators to think of unique and creative ways to ensure they're visible at their campus or their school district. So I think that's the place to start. We talk about this all the time. You always say the Title IX coordinator should be on a billboard, but let's talk through why it's important for a Title IX coordinator to be visible.

Betsy Smith:

Yeah, absolutely. We put this into four steps when we talked about it, and we'll jump through each of those hopefully in this podcast. But really it starts with the visibility is what increases your reporting. And you don't know what's happening on your campus or on your district if you're not getting that adequate reporting coming in to understand what the numbers look like. And so then we branch it to the reporting is what develops the data that you have. And as you all know, if you've listened to the podcast before or been around me at all, you know that I really love that data piece and that collection of data and trying to understand it because that data for part three is what creates our understanding. And once we have that understanding, we're then able to fuel our prevention, which in my opinion is the ultimate goal of our Title IX teams.

Courtney Bullard:

That is the part that really stuck with me when you went over this in the community partner meeting. So I think it's worth repeating at the end as well because it's so important. So let's talk with the visibility increase. How do you increase visibility? What are some thoughts there? What are some advice?

Betsy Smith:

So I always think about it in terms of acting like you're a business. So you as the Title IX coordinator are doing advertising for your services. So making sure that the individuals who are your constituents, who are your complainants, who are your respondents, who are your reporters and mandatory reporters within your district or within your institution are having an understanding of who you are. So really putting out there, starting with your website and what does your about us say, what does it explain about your team and your experience? Because that's so important that they get to know who you are and not just a name behind an email address that says Title IX coordinator at insert school district or institution. And then we talked a good bit during that community partner meeting about creating a brand or a logo for your office or your particular area that is unique but also similar to whatever else your school district or institution uses.

So something unique for you that when individuals see it, they know from the top of their head that's talking about Title IX and then also talking really clearly about your reporting options and posting those everywhere. And that's something that USM does really well is post those repeatedly on their social media. So I think that's something that we could all learn from. And finally, we talk about training options and what training does your Title IX coordinator or Title IX team offer that educates your community, not just on the behaviors that are inappropriate, but also on how to report. So those training options are really important that we're putting out there in that advertising realm as well.

Courtney Bullard:

So your slide said sell it, like you said, just to recap, talking about it in terms of a business, just like we do here at ICS, you have a brand, you're ensuring that folks recognize that brand with your office. It makes you more approachable, obviously more visible, and you want folks to know what your office does. I think sometimes that's the hardest part about the work we do. When friends ask me, my husband's friends, what do you do for a living? This is always the question, oh, you're a lawyer. What firm are you with? What area of law do you practice in? And I'm always like, okay, do you really want this full answer? Because it's very niche and very nuanced.

And so being able to have the elevator speech as a Title IX coordinator on this is what I do and the services we provide to this campus or this district, I think is huge. Betsy talked about that in the meeting, but also explaining the support you provide. Yes, you do investigations, but it's more than that. Yes, you resolve matters, but it's more than that. Your policies and procedures and then the training that you offer, that pretty much sums it up. I know we're not getting into the weeds on each one of those areas, and we could talk about each one for a long time, but anything else?

Betsy Smith:

Yeah, Courtney, you just hit the nail on the head with the elevator speech. We talk about that a lot at ICS from a business perspective, but it's so important for our Title IX coordinators and other Title IX team members on the ground, Team 9 as I like to call them. And we'll come back to that a little bit later in the podcast. But definitely thinking about that elevator speech. And what I kept getting asked in our community partner meeting was talk about the elevator speech, and my response was lead with support. So when you are talking about what you do as a Title IX coordinator, you support individuals who may have experienced sexual harassment or who are going through the sexual harassment investigative process, we want to lead with that support so that reporting doesn't feel so daunting if we start with we investigate and resolve these matters, which is accurate, it also feels like a little bit off-putting for the individuals who are going to want to report or have something to report.

And let's all be honest that talking about policy is really boring, so let's not lead with that. But it is a really important part of what you're doing for your district or your institution. So that can be a part of

your elevator speech, but not really the leading part of it. So also that final part, that training part or that communication part or that networking part within your campus or district, that's really important too. And so maybe I would even move that up earlier in my quick elevator speech. So we want you to be practicing that. It sounds so cheesy, but whether it's in the shower or when you're getting ready in the morning or when you're sitting in your office and not sure what the next thing you need to do is, because everything is so overwhelming, take that 30 seconds or minute to think about, hey, what's my elevator speech? And ground yourself in that so that you can really practice it and also be prepared when you're actually giving that speech.

Courtney Bullard:

Yes, and we talk about this too as investigators, decision makers, whatever role we're in, just being really clear. And it's hard. We all make mistakes, things happen. But as a coordinator and the leader of that team and the face of the office for the institution or the district, ensuring that you can explain that, give that elevator speech. Listen, this is getting a little sidebar, but as an accidental entrepreneur, as I sometimes call myself, people call me all the time, I want to start a business and I've got these five steps I give them. And the biggest thing is your elevator speech. What are your services, what are you about? But it can't be a long drawn out explanation. But that's hard because what Title IX coordinators do and the breadth and scope of their role is a lot. It is a whole lot. And so trying to dial that down and really get something that feels good to you as a coordinator that you can say over and over to people who are not familiar with you, I think sounds simple, but it's actually gold in my opinion.

I feel real passionate about it. All right, so we talked about your elevator speech, branding, so maybe even having your own logo, maybe having your own colors. Of course, you've got to involve your marketing department, not go rogue. Everyone's got their specific parameters that you have to work within. We talked about the policy being boring to discuss, and we talked about providing training. And as you were sitting there saying those things, I was thinking we have some smaller clients who are going to say, I don't have the capacity to do all those things. I don't have the capacity to go provide training, but I want to encourage everyone to think about it even more simple than that, I often talk about it as grassroots efforts like campaigning. I know we're in the political campaigning season right now of going around and having coffee with constituents to just explain what you do, learn about them when there's not a crisis can go a long way.

And also sitting down and talking to folks who maybe have been more challenging with your office, but talking to them outside of a crisis or a situation can go a long way for when something occurs, being able to work together maybe in a more collaborative way. What else?

Betsy Smith:

No, I think that is such an important part of the visibility piece is that we are not just on the billboard, which we can certainly talk about, but that we are really known to the community. So I gave the example of when I just recently actually just recently got back from a school district that I'm serving as the Title IX coordinator for, and I did a training for all of their administrators. And it was weird because I felt a bit celebrityish because I walked in and everyone knew who I was and I had no idea who they were, not necessarily, but I didn't know all of them by name or by photo. But they had seen me so many times in my trainings that I've provided virtually, not in person up until that point, but trainings virtually and emails that they'd received from me, that included an image of me, which is a little bit scary, but including all of those types of things so that they knew who I was and they felt comfortable with me.

It was really empowering. Also have a pretty distinct southern accent. So they were able to hear my voice and know that it was me just by listening to me talk. But it was really impactful to see, hey, if we

actually do put ourselves out there, if we actually create a training that is digestible for them, the administrators, we can really make an impact. And that was important for me to even see myself.

Courtney Bullard:

So not to dive into all of ICS' mission, but it goes to what you're saying. You mentioned not being Title IX coordinator at insert school .com or what have you, and being a face behind, leading with your face and who you are. That's something that we feel strongly about at ICS. We're not a faceless company. We want to lead with care and support. We want people to know who we are and get to know us, even if that's via social media. And then when we meet with them, to them, they already know us. We may not already know them, and it is a strange feeling, but it matters. It matters to us. And so I love that suggestion from you and thinking that way because we also know there's a lot of transition with Title IX coordinators. And so having a blanket email makes a lot of sense because if you had betsy@school.com and then Betsy leaves and it's Courtney, that's hard to change out, but you really want to be more than that.

So getting your face out there. Some suggestions we've had are YouTube videos, quick YouTube videos that are short and digestible about what the office does or what it looks like when you come in can be really helpful. If you're listening and you're overwhelmed by it, it's like start with bite size chunks. Start with, I'm going to do this quick video that's only going to go to our faculty and staff, for example, and then I'll go to students or I'm going to go to these departments. So just pick and then just start working through them. Even if you give yourself one a week or one every other week or however you've got to line it up, but start with bite size chunks. Just sit down and write it down and we love lists at ICS. Make yourself a list, prioritize.

Maybe you start with your higher risk areas where you get more information usually or more complaints or something like that, who knows? But the biggest thing is just to start, put it on your list. And just to start, none of us love to see our faces on video. That's something I've really had to get used to, but it does make a huge difference and it can be really impactful even in a virtual world. We're working with a school that's in Colorado and we're in Tennessee and it's huge. Betsy's Team 9 for the school is I think 250 people. It's enormous. But being able to have those regular trainings and them see her face has made a big difference. So let's talk about that Team 9 and the branding component.

Betsy Smith:

Yeah, so one of the things that I heard someone say to me when I was talking about Title IX, it was actually a conversation about, hey, I want this district to have some Title IX swag because for me, that's important. Identify who you are and you're that person for a school or each site person so that they're identifiable and people know that they have that role within the school or the district or within the institution. I think that's important and I think that we should be proud of that. But the pushback that I got was it's really daunting and it feels disciplinary when we say Title IX and that's the perception within our district or within our institution. And so we don't want that to worry people when they're talking to someone. And I was a little bit mind blown by that conversation. I think I felt like a little bit taken aback, and I'm sure we all know I have a terrible poker face, so I'm sure that on that Zoom call, I was like, wait, what? What is this? Why are we saying that?

That can't be, we're so proud of this. We provide support and all these positive things. So I thought about it for a while. How am I going to respond to this without offending anyone? And really what we did was we renamed the team, it's not the Title IX team anymore, it's Team 9. And we took out title, which is crazy as it is. It sounds just very formal like the title this or the title that. So we took that away and we just call it Team 9. And we even took away the Roman numerals, which feel very formal to me.

And I think to a lot of people, especially students, it feels intimidating. So we just made it much more approachable with a cute little nine, Team 9, this is the individuals who are doing this and this is what their role is with just a little explanation of what Team 9 is and what the role of the individuals on that team are.

Courtney Bullard:

I love it. We love swag and anything. We love branding. We love all things branding. I do. I'm always like, we're always on brand at ICS but it does make a difference and it makes it approachable and it takes a situation or an office that is compliance focused, often seen as compliance focused, which is compliance focused in a lot of ways because of the regs and everything else, but makes it approachable and accessible. So we talked about visibility and the importance of visibility and different ways to be visible. And I do encourage you, if you're listening to go to the University of Southern Mississippi's social media, they've done a really big social media campaign on Instagram for students and on Twitter to really hit faculty and staff. They go and they digest those numbers and look at the interaction that they're getting and the reach that they're getting, which has been great. And we had a lot of schools on there that were like, I really wanted to do this, but our lawyers say no, or our communications department, it makes them nervous.

And I don't want to steal the thunder from Kristen at USM who gave that presentation, but just to give those listening a little bit of a insight because you might be hearing that and grimacing and thinking, oh, we don't want to be on social media. We'll get humbled with people criticizing us and all of that. It has increased their engagement significantly. It's made them more accessible. There are things to think about if you're going to go down that road, and we won't get into them in this podcast, but I know if you want to reach out to us, I can get you in touch with Kristen and others who've had a lot of success and the planning that they did before they even entered social media as an office and then how it's working out for them, which it sounds like really well. And I encourage you to follow them too, if you just want to get an idea of what that looks like if it's not something your school's doing. And we'll make sure that we put their handles in the show notes.

Betsy Smith:

So Courtney, one more thing in that area is that putting yourself out on social media, it really creates a vulnerability. Even the recordings and all of that, it creates vulnerability for you. It shows your vulnerability as a person, as a human and really helps you to relate to the individuals who may utilize your services later. And so I think that's really important. I served as the director of student conduct, and when I was doing that at a large state institution, you could not have convinced me to have social media for my office or for a Title IX specific office. And I think now, multiple, multiple years later, I would say, wait a minute, what was I thinking? It could be really helpful, but it does have its risks and it is a vulnerable place. And also you're going to make mistakes in that area.

You're going to say something wrong, you're going to offend someone. But I want us to think bigger picture and the ability to understand if we've put something out there that we hadn't necessarily thought about the impact it might have or something like that, obviously you're going to put a lot of thought into it, but being vulnerable and not afraid to put yourself out there to try. And then if you make a mistake, own it, explain it, talk about it because your students and employees are making those mistakes as well. So being able to show that is definitely a way to show your approachability.

Courtney Bullard:

Yes, vulnerability is hard. And I think most schools we deal with would say, I do not want to put myself out there for criticism. I don't want to have a social media presence because people will tag me and say a lot of things or criticize. And one thing Betsy and I talked about was when she was in that role before on their website, it was like if you have a complaint about Betsy Smith, essentially, here you go, here's where to make it. You have to be willing to take that criticism. It is a thick skin job, there is no question. So we want to increase visibility because it will hopefully increase reporting and you can't know what's going on if you don't have those reports. Those reports develop data or data depending on who you are. And the data or data creates understanding and the understanding fuels prevention, which is the ultimate goal, is prevention.

And I know we've had other podcasts with some other guests talking specifically about prevention, but it is the ultimate goal. We hope that data or data is going to get us there. So anything else about visibility? So we've talked through the fact selling yourself and creating a brand, being a face of the office so you're more accessible, more approachable, and some ideas there. Website of course, is a big deal. Everybody uses websites and online reporting options. That's a whole other podcast. We have a website checklist because we get the questions so much. What does a good website look like? What should be on our website? Those types of things. So if you want to email me after this podcast, if you listen to it, I'm happy to share that free resource with you as just a starting point. But having that website is helpful and thinking of those creative ways, the social media platform is a different level of vulnerability.

So we're not, please don't take away from this podcast that we're saying, just go out there without a plan and get yourself out on social media. You definitely need a plan in place to think through some things before you go down that route, but it can be really helpful. What am I missing? Does that sum it up generally?

Betsy Smith:

Yeah, I think it does. What I promised to come back to was the billboard, and I want to talk about it just for a second. You train with us, you know I talk about this. It's scary to think about a billboard with your face on it. We're attorneys, so we see those. You all know. You're driving down the interstate, you see those attorneys that pop themselves up there. And it's really, I don't know, it makes me laugh every time I see it because I think about the Title IX coordinator and my recommendation for this, but really, I don't necessarily mean I actually want you on a billboard, but what I do mean is I want you to think about where you are seen and where your presence is on campus visually and what resources you're putting out there. So an example of this is we just released some posters with the district where I'm working a couple different sets for different things.

And one of the real big issues that we had is where's it located? And being mindful, because I know lots of people just put posters as you walk in the school. Well, does anybody really see that at that point? Is that hitting the audience that you want to know about these services? And if not, then, which is probably not, think about where it should go. And so when we were talking about communications through the internet or through text messaging or social platforms, we decided that the best place for that was in their media center, and it was in an eye-catching place that individuals could see. And it was, we thought really hard about what went on that poster and what we were advising and all of that. But we really thought hard about where in each school building of a whole lot of school buildings, 70ish, where those were going to go.

And so where is your face going to go? Where is your message? Where is your logo going to go? And that is just a piece that I want us to be thinking about in the visibility capacity. But I know we've talked a lot about that. So if we want to maybe jump into a little bit about using that data to drive that

prevention. I know we've talked about that before, but really talking about why that visibility matters a bit more.

Courtney Bullard:

Yeah. So one thing I want to say about visibility is a last note. So last on our team, Title IX coordinator at institution right now, one thing that they did was add a QR code for reporting. So with their posters on campus, added a QR code with where you can pull it up with your phone and go directly to the Title IX office to get the information you need, which I thought was a great idea too. So again, thinking outside the box, being creative. If you are a Title IX coordinator at ICS institution and you did X, Y, Z, and now you're at a different institution, it's not going to be a one size fits all approach. You want to really dig down into the culture of where you are.

And like Betsy said, even analyzing the buildings and what that's going to look like to get that visibility out there is really important. We're very anti-cookie cutter at ICS, and that's another area I think is really important. The formula might be the same, but you've really got to look at your campus and what speaks to your faculty, staff, students or your school district and what speaks to your students and your teachers and your staff. All right, let's talk about, what am I going to call it today? Data or data? Let's talk about data and how it can fuel prevention.

Betsy Smith:

I love it. Yeah, absolutely. So I just want to, you can go back and I don't even know what episode it was, but it was early on that we talked a lot about this early on for me being on the ICS team about prevention and data. But I want to talk about it just a little bit differently today because I sat through a presentation not that long ago that was strictly data. That's all that they were providing. It was important data. But if I'm being honest, I have zero idea what they said for the entire time, because I don't do stats. That's not my living. I'm an attorney for a reason, numbers are important to me, but I need to see them in a way that makes sense and I'm really visual. So putting that data or data into effective chart that makes sense, that is clear, that is not overwhelming for the individuals that you are trying to communicate to about your intake and your reports is really important.

But also including personality with your presentation of that data. And I jokingly say that, but because we're big on making sure that we are providing you with the best information and that we are doing it with the personalities that we have at ICS, which are all very individualized, but they shine through in the work that we do, we want to make sure that your personality is shining through in that data because that's how you make the impact with it. That's how you really start to turn the corner. That's how you get the increase in funding for a division or for an office, Title IX that really needs that funding and that really needs those additional resources. So just giving the numbers is one thing, but really diving into them in a visual and a personality driven way is important to making sure that your supervisors or your school board or your board of directors for an institution really understand what it is that you're asking for.

And that is coming in. Now, if you don't have those numbers because your visibility is low, because reporting is low, you're not going to have any data to show, and therefore you're not really going to be able to articulate that. So that's why it's this stepped process. And the more visible you are, the higher those numbers get. So if you'll remember from long time ago we talked about it, your numbers are going to go up, the more visible you are, the goal is that we get them to a plateau and then that we're able to work that prevention piece and really fuel that prevention. So that data, I have a whole lot more to go here, but I think for now, Courtney, I'll just shut up and see if you have any questions about that.

Courtney Bullard:

Well, I'll just say that again when we go in as interim Title IX coordinators and we start really working with the school district or an institution to ensure that everything is shored up, their policies, their procedures, their training, their visibility, then yes, reports increase. And that is scary for folks. And also reports are going to increase. So you want to be thinking of it. Let me say it this way, and I don't want to encourage you not to do it. We want you to do it, but we also want you to understand you want the infrastructure to be able to handle increased reports. And sometimes it's a chicken or the egg. You're not going to be able to have all the infrastructure you want in order to get that visibility out there. Because the most important thing is if the visibility's out there, you're getting support and resources for your students and your faculty and staff and you want that now, but also know that as reports increase, that's going to put more strain on your office.

And we do find a lot of times that offices aren't prepared for all of that, which is why you've got folks like us and others that serve in external roles as investigators and decision makers and all of that good stuff. So I don't say that as a deterrent, I just say it as reality is we know that a lot of folks are already struggling to keep up with what they already have. And as you increase that visibility and get that data, you are going to have an increase in reports. That's good. But that's a message to get to your leadership that it's good that we have more reports because that can be turned on its head real fast. Well, suddenly we're having all these issues that we never had before. Well, the likelihood is as Betsy says you're having the issues now, you just don't know about them. And that's the worst place to be.

Betsy Smith:

100%. So I'll just wrap this up a bit for us and tie it with a nice prevention focused bow here. But really that understanding that we get from that data is what fuels that prevention. And when I say fuels that prevention, you're probably like, what does that mean? What do we do with that then? And for me, it's directed training and education and putting in broader remedies. So if we know that we're having certain types of issues, we're able to train our school, our kiddos, our employees, our students at a higher ed institution in certain areas or clubs on these really specific issues that are going on without saying people's names, without calling out specific situations, but really saying, this is what our policy says, this is what it means. This is what happens when those types of behaviors occur. So really tailoring that and then also thinking bigger picture.

What remedies can we put in place? So what oversight can we put in place with our clubs and our organizations, our athletics teams? What cameras do we need to put in place to fuel some prevention? Where can we put staff in different places at a K-12 level in certain hallways or outside certain bathrooms or locker rooms where behaviors are occurring? And at an institution, what can we think about in terms of making sure that our students and employees are actually paying attention to that training? So what can we think about ways or how can we think about ways to change what we're doing in order to make it resonate better with our students and our employees?

Courtney Bullard:

Yes, all the things. We could write dissertations about this. It's a lot.

Betsy Smith:

Other things. Courtney, when are we writing a book?

Courtney Bullard:

I don't know. Well, it's funny. I told my husband last night, I am writing a book, but it's about business. So we're need to write another book about all the things. And we're on it. We have a Title IX compliance workbook that I'm just waiting to tweak whenever the new regs come out. But yeah, there's so much, so many things we could talk about. And some of our newer team members, the other day, actually, one of our newest team members, Stephanie, she was asking about something and she was like, "Y'all need to write a book. Y'all need to write a book. There's just so much." So I think the final things I just want to say for our Title IX coordinators and deputy Title IX coordinators on the ground is something Betsy and I are even talking about this morning. The work is hard, it's impactful, heavy, hard stuff.

And when you're on the ground, you have a lot of different competing pressures with your leadership, with your campus at large, with your student body, and of course your main goal, which is to support complainants and respondents and witnesses going through the process as well. And that can be really tough. And we know that. We see you, we recognize you. We know the attrition rate for Title IX coordinators is pretty bad, worse even in K-12 than higher ed. And we want good people to stay in the role. So we're here to support. We hope that some of these highlights have given you food for thought you go through. Maybe you get some time this holiday season to sort of recharge. That's our hope for you. And you can sit down and let your creative juices flow a little bit and think about ways to be more visible at your campus or your school district.

Betsy Smith:

Absolutely. Let us know what you all need. We're excited to help you in any ways that we can.

Courtney Bullard:

Thanks, Betsy.

Betsy Smith:

Thanks.

Courtney Bullard:

As always you're the best. Thank you. I hope that you took something away from this conversation, even if it's just one thing that you can do to help increase your visibility as a Title IX coordinator at your school district or institution. Betsy is so great at this work, and her passion always shines through every conversation, and I'm sure you could experience that as well as you were listening to us talk today. Please rate and review this podcast, subscribe. I know that we're not always the most consistent with our episode. The object is to have an episode published every other Thursday. So my goal in 2023 is to bring more conversations like this one to you with folks on my team from me, and of course with subject matter experts across the country. Thanks again for tuning in and I will see you next episode.

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