

# ***Anti-Bullying***

## **Scope**

All Massachusetts programs and as adapted in California

## **Policy**

The school is dedicated to providing a safe and enriching environment for all students. Bullying, cyber bullying and retaliation of any kind are strictly prohibited. Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying are prohibited on school grounds, during school sponsored activities, at program residences, in agency vehicles, or through the use of technology. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying or witnesses bullying is also prohibited.

## **Procedure**

1. Massachusetts school programs have adopted the Model for Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as developed by the Department for Elementary and Secondary Education required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O.
2. Definitions
  - a. *Bullying* is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a target that causes the following: physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to target's property, places the target in fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to property, creates a hostile environment at the school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
  - b. *Cyberbullying* is bullying through the use of electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers and the Internet. This includes but is not limited to email, instant messages, text messages and Internet postings.
  - c. A *hostile work environment* is defined as any situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.
  - d. *Retaliation* is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
  - e. *Staff* includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.
  - f. *Target* is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.
3. Leadership

The Administrative Team may include the Executive Director, Director of Family Services, Residential Director, Director of Education, and/or Human Resources Representative. This team is responsible for the following tasks under the plan:

  - i. Bullying Plan implementation
  - ii. Student Education

- iii. Parent involvement and notification
- iv. Staff education
- v. Receiving reports on bullying
- vi. Collecting and analyzing school wide data on bullying to assess problems and to measure outcomes
- vii. Creating a process for recording and tracking incidents

#### 4. Curriculum

The school is committed to utilizing evidenced based approaches to bullying prevention and intervention. Curriculum will be reviewed annually to assess program efficacy as monitored by positive outcomes. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and corresponding curriculum will be utilized. Modifications to the program will be made as necessary based on individualized student needs.

#### 5. Training and Professional Development

The school will provide annual staff training on the Bullying Prevention policies and procedures. Training will include staff duties under the plan, an overview of the steps the leadership team follows upon report of bullying or cyberbullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention program offered to all students. Ongoing professional development will establish a common understanding of the Bullying Prevention Plan including Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying. Increasing appropriate staff responses to bullying and cyberbullying, addressing ways to include key skills on Individualized Education Programs when necessary will also be addressed. Certain students groups such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender and homeless students will also be discussed along with specific steps to create a safe and supportive environment for the more vulnerable populations within the school. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between aggressor, target and witnesses to the bullying or cyberbullying will be presented along with possible hot spots+within the school environment that will be identified in identifying areas of concern and whether more adult supervision is required and/or staff training is needed.

#### 6. Access to Resources and Services

The school will provide supports and services necessary to prevent, intervene early and respond effectively to bullying and cyberbullying. Training on the dynamics bullying and cyberbullying awareness and identification, prevention, response to bullying and on-line safety will be provided annually to all staff, parents and guardians. Parent/guardian notification will include resources for families, including referrals to appropriate services, to address the unique needs of aggressors, targets, and family members of those students. On-site counseling will be available for students, both targets and aggressors, and discipline will be given in accordance with the school's discipline policy. In addition, all students will participate in bullying curriculum at least annually, as well as ongoing monitoring. The policy will be posted on the May Institute's website and will be presented to families/guardians at a Parent Advisory Council meeting and included in the Family Guidebook.

#### 7. Academic and Non-Academic Activities

Instruction will include evidence-based curriculum, Bullying Prevention in Positive Behavior Support. The school will modify the curriculum as needed to meet the individual needs of all students. This specific curriculum emphasizes teaching social responsibility skills; introduction to forms of bullying, including cyber bullying; rewarding

appropriate behavior; response to bullying; impact of bullying; and administrative responsibilities. Teaching methods include using scripts and role playing, modeling appropriate responses, teaching in the moment, and ongoing review. Parents/guardians will be provided with ongoing information so that they can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school's plan.

#### 8. Reporting and Responding to Incidences of Bullying

- a. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or other involved parties, orally or in writing. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the designated Administrator-on-Call any instance of bullying or retaliation. Reports made by students, parents/guardians, or other individuals may be made anonymously to ensure the protection of individuals involved during an investigation. The school will train employees on the reporting procedure and have available incident report forms. Anonymous reports will also be referred to the Administrator-on-Call for processing.
- b. The Administrator-on-Call and Senior Directors will immediately investigate reports of bullying from current and/or former students. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Senior Director in coordination any other designated staff will notify the parent/guardian, sending district, and when applicable, local law enforcement. If the Executive Director or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found during the investigation, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's Discipline Code.
- c. If the Executive Director or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.
- d. Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Executive Director or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to: creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a safe person for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The Executive Director or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.
- e. The Executive Director or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation of a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.
- f. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Executive Director or designee will promptly notify the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Executive Director or designee contacts parents/guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00. When speaking to

parents/guardians, the Executive Director or their designee will discuss the action taken and will get their input for preventing further acts of bullying.

- g. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Executive Director or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Executive Director will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Executive Director or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. In making this determination, the Executive Director will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or sending district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the Executive Director or designee deems appropriate.
- h. The Executive Director or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the Executive Director or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Executive Director or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Executive Director or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

#### 9. Collaborating with Families

- a. Parent workshops will include a presentation focusing on reinforcing the prevention curricula at home, online safety/cyber-bullying strategies parents can take. As additional resources become available, the school will coordinate the distribution of those resources to parents. To date, information presentations regarding this plan have been made to the Parent Advisory Council. All information regarding this plan and related information will be made available in the Family/Student Guidebook.
- b. Communicating with families and providing resources are essential aspects of effective collaboration to prevent and respond to bullying. Each year the school will inform parents/guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will publish written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's Internet safety policy via the Family/Student Guidebook. All notices and information made available to parents/guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents/guardians.

#### 10. Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the philosophy of the school, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents

the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies. In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

**Applicable Standards**

Massachusetts DESE 603 CMR 49.00

Massachusetts General Laws c. 71, § 37H; O(d); (e)(1) and (2)