

CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



960 Washington Street, Canton, MA 02021
Telephone: 781-821-5060
Fax: 781-575-6500
www.cantonma.org



Derek F. Folan, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

To develop students who are competent and creative thinkers, curious and confident learners, and compassionate citizens.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS	p. 2-3
II.	LEADERSHIP.....	p. 3-5
III.	ASSESSING NEEDS AND RESOURCES.....	p. 5
IV.	PREVENTION	p. 5
	A. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	p. 6
	B. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.....	p. 7-8
	C. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES/COMMUNITY	p. 8
	D. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES.....	p. 8-9
V.	INTERVENTION	p. 10
	A. REPORTING COMPLAINTS OF BULLYING AND RETALIATION.....	p. 10
	B. PRE-INVESTIGATION/ENSURING STUDENT SAFETY.....	p. 10
	C. COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION	p. 11-12
	D. DISCIPLINARY ACTION/RESPONSES TO BULLYING	p. 12-13
	E. FALSE ACCUSATIONS/RETALIATION	p. 13-14
VI.	PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM.....	p. 14
VII.	RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS.....	p. 14

APPENDIX A(Printable):	<u>SUSPICION OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT REPORTING FORM</u>
APPENDIX A(Digital Form):	<u>SUSPICION OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT REPORTING FORM</u>
APPENDIX B (Admin Use Only):	<u>BULLYING AND HARASSMENT INVESTIGATION FORM</u>
APPENDIX C (Admin Use Only):	<u>CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING</u>

I. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

The Canton Public Schools (CPS) are committed to providing our students with a safe and encouraging learning environment. Promoting and encouraging each person in our educational family to be their best every day is at the core of our educational foundation. Our goal is to encourage, educate, and motivate our students to make positive daily decisions and develop into happy and productive members of society. Education, collaboration, and communication, along with appropriate corresponding expectations, is the cornerstone of CPS' efforts to create comprehensive safe environments for our students to learn, play, and grow. A safe and encouraging environment is the right of every student.

The CPS strictly enforces a prohibition against bullying, including without limitation, cyberbullying, of any of its students by anyone and also strictly enforces a prohibition against retaliation of any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- a) On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school District or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school District or school, and
- b) At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school District or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

CPS is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent bullying or harassment of any kind. CPS Code of Conduct addresses procedures should a student be found in violation of bullying or harassment of a staff member. In collaboration with school and community partners, the CPS have developed this comprehensive Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) to ensure that our students learn to treat others with respect in a safe learning environment free from any form of bullying or other type of harassment. Originally drafted in 2010, Canton's BPIP was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians.

CPS actively involves representatives from a variety of constituencies to assist with BPIP review and enhancement, and to assist the BPIP Committee with planned needs assessments, working groups, task forces, and public meetings.

DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is a student or member of a school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation towards a student.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself /herself/theirself or of damage to his/her/their property;
- iii. Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;

- iv. Infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bystander is a student(s) or staff member who participates in the bullying incident(s) via observation or spectatorship.

Cyberbullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include:

- i. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or
- ii. The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v) of the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more person, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions in (i) - (v), in the definition of bullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a 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.

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.

School 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.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Upstander is a student(s) or staff member who actively chooses to remove or support the target in some form during a bullying incident.

II. LEADERSHIP

CPS recognizes that leadership at every level plays a critical role in developing and implementing the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of whole school /District and community efforts to promote a positive school climate. The CPS administration and staff plays a pivotal role in teaching students to be civil and respectful to one another. CPS recognizes and embraces the notion that leadership can and will emanate from our School Committee, administration, staff, student body, and community members. However, Canton's educational leaders are responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on strategies to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

The Principal of each school is responsible for the implementation and oversight of BPIP with support from the District Administration and the District-wide BPIP Committee.

The 2023-2024 BPIP Committee Members:

Adam Hughes, Director of Wellness K-12
Lauren Pushard, District Nurse Leader
Meghan Byrne, Director of Student Services
Stephanie Shapiro, Title IX, Civil Rights Coordinator
Dr. Dan Muse, School Physician
Laura Arboleda, School Committee Member
Martha Lawless, Director of Food Services
Heather Lazaro, Health Teacher at Luce
Andrea Duda, Health Teacher at Hansen
Sheila O’Sullivan, Health Teacher at JFK
Renee Bousquet, Health Teacher at GMS
Bonnie Bousquet, Health Teacher at CHS

The following school leaders are responsible for the planning and oversight of the BPIP:

- The Principal in each building or his/her/their designee is the administrator responsible for receiving reports of alleged bullying. In addition, the Principal or designee is responsible for maintaining and updating the student and staff handbooks for his/her/their building and any applicable codes of conduct, to make clear that bullying of students by school staff or other students will not be tolerated.
- Each school building in Canton has and maintains an established group of individuals responsible for working with and developing supports for targets and aggressors, as well as identifying and meeting the needs of those students who have been identified as at-risk. (These groups are named differently at each school). Each group is composed of administration, school counselors and school nursing staff, and meets once weekly, or once per seven day cycle. This group works collaboratively to address a student’s needs and to review intervention options/attempts in light of the student’s academic, discipline and social/emotional history.
- The BPIP Committee and the Wellness Departments from each school, are responsible for recommending the curricula the school or District will use and teachers are responsible for implementation once that curricula is approved. CPS provides PreK-12 Wellness programming which includes evidence-based bullying prevention.
- The Administrative Team is responsible for creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors.
- The Administrative team, in conjunction with the BPIP Committee is responsible for collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes.
- Members of the BPIP Committee, as well as select members from each school, work collaboratively to review and revise policies and protocols to address Bullying Prevention and Intervention. The BPIP is reviewed annually and revised as necessary based on available data reflecting the efficacy of the policy. In addition, the BPIP Committee works with the Title IX Coordinator to review and revise necessary guidelines outlined in the Bullying Prevention Policy when there are changes or updates in the law.
- The Technology Department has developed and distributed an Internet Safety Policy which it is responsible

for reviewing and updating as necessary.

- The BPIP Committee provides student, parent and faculty educational programs and professional development about bullying prevention and intervention. All invested individuals (students, parents, and staff) will be educated about the reporting and disciplinary process. The vision of the BPIP Committee is for all members of the school community to have full awareness of the reporting and potential disciplinary process, and for all staff to be able to appropriately identify and document incidents of possible bullying.

III. ASSESSING NEEDS AND RESOURCES

The BPIP is the District’s blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and staff, have assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This “mapping” process assists CPS in identifying resource gaps and areas of need. Based on these findings, our schools have revised and strengthened policies and procedures; established partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities for the present and future.

Data Collection

In addition to the collection of bullying data which is reported annually, at least once every four years CPS will administer a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. The District reports the results in accordance with the requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Similar tools to the student survey may be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs.

Upon completion of the survey to all schools in the District, the BPIP Committee reviews building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying, including any “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses. Particular attention is paid to data involving vulnerable populations. This information helps to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and assists with decision-making around prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

IV. PREVENTION

The CPS implements a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to promoting positive behavior and school climate. We recognize that the social/emotional, physical, and mental well-being of every student is paramount to each student’s ability to learn. With this philosophy firmly in place, the CPS strives to educate our students, staff, and community regarding the need to promote and support positive social skills and norms. Our school community relies on a partnership among students, staff and families to create a healthy and safe environment.

At the start of each school year, the District provides students and parents/guardians, in age appropriate terms and in the languages which are most prevalent among the students, parents or guardians, annual written notice of the relevant student-related sections of BPIP. In addition, the District takes the following steps to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying and harassment.

A. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Annual Staff Training on BPIP

The CPS provides annual training for all staff. Annual training includes staff duties and responsibilities under the BPIP to ensure a safe and welcoming school environment. This includes an overview of the steps each building Principal or designee follows upon receipt of a report of possible bullying or retaliation, as well as an overview of the bullying prevention curriculum for students at all grades throughout the District. District staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired.

Ongoing Professional Development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development builds the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of professional development for the CPS system and each school building is informed by research and includes information on:

- a) Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- b) Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- c) Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- d) Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- e) Information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- f) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development also addresses ways to prevent and respond to incidents that may be bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This includes a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the CPS for professional development include:

- a) Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- b) Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- c) Building respectful relationships and communicating with families;
- d) Constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- e) Using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- f) Applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- g) Teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- h) Engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- i) Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students; and
- j) Engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of BPIP to create awareness and help distinguish between acceptable managerial or supervisory behaviors designed to correct misconduct or instill order, and bullying behaviors.

Written Notice to Staff

The CPS provides all staff with annual written notice of BPIP by publishing information about it, including sections

related to staff duties, in the school Code of Conduct.

B. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Canton Public Schools offers and implements age-appropriate evidence-based social, emotional and bully prevention K-12 curricula, as well as activities designed to promote and encourage safety and respect throughout the District.

The Canton Public Schools also sends staff members to various Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) workshops to provide staff with the appropriate tools and information to understand, prevent, and intervene with bullying behaviors. All staff members receive training regarding the Bully Prevention and Intervention Law and its implications for CPS students.

Activities and Programs

- a) Bullying Prevention and Intervention Curricula
- b) School Crisis Response/Intervention Teams
- c) Building Incident Management Teams
- d) Building Specials or At-Risk Teams
- e) High School (Mentor) Programs
 - Link Leaders
 - Student Council
 - Best Buddies
 - National Honor Society
 - Canton Character Crew
 - Canton Students Embracing Diversity (CSED)
 - Active Minds
 - Unified Sports (Basketball and Track)
- f) Middle School (Mentor) Programs
 - Student Council
 - Student Leadership Council
 - Jr. Canton Character Crew
 - PAWSitivity
 - Unified Sports (Basketball)
- g) Elementary (Mentor) Programs
 - Team Building Motto
 - SHINE Core Values (Luce)
 - Take Time To SHINE Student Recognition (Luce)
 - Student Council (Luce)
 - Bucket Filler (Hansen)
 - Great Kindness Challenge (Hansen)

In addition, the BPIP Committee provides information on and directs staff and parents to a wide variety of Bullying Prevention and Intervention resources, including:

- a) Health & Human Services: www.Mass.gov
- b) Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: www.doe.mass.edu
- c) MARC: www.marccenter.org
- d) ADL (Anti-Defamation League): www.adl.org
- e) www.Stopbullyingnow.org
- f) www.Casel.org

Technology Use

Technology that is integrated into school curriculum fosters information retrieval skills, encourages critical thinking skills, collaboration and provides educational opportunities for both students and staff. Access to and use of CPS Technology (including equipment, programs, internet, etc.), for students and staff in Canton, is a privilege, not a right. Along with this privilege, come certain responsibilities for all users. Access to CPS Technology is provided for educational purposes only. All users must conform to the terms and conditions established by the District's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). All students and staff within the Canton Public Schools must read and sign this policy; students must also have their parents and/or guardians read and sign the policy. No access to or use of District technology will be provided to any student or staff member who fails to sign and return the policy.

C. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES/COMMUNITY

Canton Public Schools is committed to engaging and collaborating with students' families and the community in order to increase the capacity of the District's schools to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration.

Each year, parents and guardians are informed of the bullying prevention efforts of their student's school, the dynamics of bullying and online safety and cyberbullying, the potential consequences that can occur if a student or member of the school staff engaged in bullying and the process for reporting complaints of bullying or retaliation. In addition, CPS offers education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and social competency curricula being used in their student's school so that they can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school and/or District's efforts. The programs are offered in collaboration with the CAPT, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and any other relevant organization. There is a timely notification system in place to ensure awareness of all parent and community programs/presentations.

All notices and information made available to parents or guardians are provided in hardcopy and electronic formats, and are available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. BPIP and related information is posted on the CPS' website. Notification of presentations is published in the local print media, as well as on Cable Access. In addition, other electronic communication (emails, texting, etc.) will be used whenever possible.

D. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The goal of the CPS is to provide strategies, support, and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance our capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, the services mentioned below reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and aggressors.

Identifying Resources

CPS regularly reviews its capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families. The members of the BPIP Committee as well as the school District's leadership annually review the current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments. We focus on early interventions and intensive services when warranted. The process of mapping resources is an ongoing, dynamic process and allows us to develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps.

Counseling and Other Services

The CPS is committed to ensuring that the emotional needs of both bullying targets and of aggressors are addressed. All students (K-12) have access to counseling staff and services within each building (school counselors, school psychologists, school adjustment counselors, and nurses). These professionals:

- Develop safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying;
- Work with students to develop their social skills as a way of preventing bullying through the promotion of positive communication skills;
- Intervene and address the aggressors of bullying, focusing on the function of the behavior and address techniques to redirect this behavior;
- When deemed necessary, counseling staff will implement behavioral intervention plans for specific students identified as aggressors; and
- Incorporate culturally and linguistically appropriate resources as individual student needs are identified.

Students with Disabilities

CPS recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

The CPS provide support to students whose vulnerability is brought to the attention of a teacher, school counselor or administrator through observation or direct report from a student, staff member or parent or guardian. This support may be in the form of counseling, education to support both the student's ability to report bullying and his/her/their skills, knowledge, and strategies to respond to bullying or harassment.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Special Education teams throughout the District work collaboratively to address situations in which students with cognitive, social, emotional, or physical disabilities may be vulnerable to bullying or harassment. If a student's disability is causing them to exhibit behaviors which are making them particularly vulnerable to harassment by their peers, or to fail to understand appropriate social interaction, then the issues are addressed in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP Team will ensure that all measures are taken to develop the student's skills to respond to and avoid situations in which the student may be bullied or harassed. The Team provides clear and developmentally appropriate education that in turn works towards effectively mitigating the instances and effects of bullying. This includes, but is not limited to including provisions, plans and goals as it relates to bullying in each student's IEP.

Referral to Outside Services

The Director of Student Services in concert with building Principals or their designees identify and develop specific protocols for crisis prevention and intervention which become an integral component of the therapeutic approach when addressing bullying in the Canton Public Schools. If there is a need for community based linkages or other resources the Counseling Department has bridged its resources to include others. Such resources include, but are not limited to:

- Riverside Mental Health
- New Life Counseling and Wellness
- Local hospitals
- Bournemouth Health Systems
- South Bay Mental Health

V. INTERVENTION

A. REPORTING COMPLAINTS OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION

Anyone, including a parent or guardian, student, or school staff member, can report bullying or retaliation. Reports can be made in writing, electronically, or orally to the Principal or another staff member, or reports may be made anonymously. All school staff (including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities or paraprofessionals) are required to immediately report any instance of bullying, suspicion of bullying or retaliation they witness or become aware of to their building Principal using the CPS Suspicion of Bullying and Harassment Reporting Form (Appendix A). The requirement to report to the Principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or District policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

The District has made a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including a Suspicion of Bullying and Harassment Reporting Form. This form is available on the District's website and at each school in the District. In addition, each building Principal is responsible for identifying and publicizing to students, staff and parents/guardians, the additional reporting resources available in his/her/their building.

Use of the District's Suspicion of Bullying and Harassment Reporting Form is NOT required as a condition of making a report. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from any staff member to complete a written report. Students are provided with practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the Principal or designee.

If a reported bullying incident involves the Principal or designee as the alleged aggressor, the report can be made in writing or orally to the Superintendent or designee who shall be responsible for investigating the report and taking other necessary steps as outlined by BPIP. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee Chair shall be responsible for investigating the report, and taking other necessary steps as outlined by BPIP.

B. PRE-INVESTIGATION/ENSURING STUDENT SAFETY

Before fully investigating the allegations of alleged bullying or retaliation, the Principal 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 not be 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 alleged aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The Principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Principal or designee will also take steps to implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation, a student who has reported alleged bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed alleged bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of alleged bullying or retaliation of or by a student.

Any student who reports suspicion of bullying from a member of the school staff is extended protections during and after the investigation. This may include but is not limited to a safety plan, access to school counseling, schedule adjustments, and access to a safe space for support throughout the school day as needed.

BPIP FY23

[*Table of Contents*](#)

C. COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION

Investigation

The Principal or designee investigates, promptly, all reports of alleged bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

The investigation may include an interview with the student, parent/guardian, staff members or community member who filed the complaint, the student alleged to be a victim of bullying or retaliation, the student(s) or staff member(s) alleged to have committed the bullying or retaliation, witnesses to any alleged incidents or others as necessary. The Principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful, and that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the Principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her/their obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation using the District's Bullying & Harassment Investigation Form (Appendix B).

A staff member who is the subject of a complaint of a serious nature is informed promptly and will be afforded the opportunity to present the facts as he/she/they sees them, in accordance with District policies and procedures, including any applicable collective bargaining agreements. Procedures for investigating reports of alleged bullying or retaliation by school staff is consistent with District policies and procedures for investigations of other alleged misconduct by staff. If necessary, the Principal or designee consults with legal counsel about such procedures.

Determinations

The Principal or designee makes a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The Principal or designee will:

- a) Determine what remedial action is required, if any, and
- b) Determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal or designee may choose to consult with the appropriate personnel, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, if the aggressor is a student, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development. In addition, it is determined if a referral needs to be made to the Civil Rights Compliance Officer.

The Principal or designee promptly notifies the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor, if the aggressor is a student, about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further such acts and restore the student's sense of safety. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student and personnel records, the Principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

Obligations to Notify Others

a. Notice to Parents or Guardians

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal or designee promptly notifies the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor, if the aggressor is a student, of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice is consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

The Principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination. (www.doe.mass.edu/psm).

b. Notice to Another School or District

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school District, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications are in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c. Notice to Law Enforcement

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice is 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 Principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he/she/they has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the Principal will, consistent with BPIP and with applicable school or District policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the Principal or designee deems appropriate.

D. DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND RESPONSES TO BULLYING

Taking Disciplinary Action

If it is determined that bullying or other inappropriate conduct has been committed, the Principal or designee takes action that is appropriate under the circumstances. When a student is determined to have engaged in bullying or retaliation and the Principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action is determined on the basis of facts found by the Principal or designee, 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 may include: requiring the aggressor to work with school personnel on improving behavior; a recommendation for counseling or other therapeutic interventions; disciplinary consequences up to and including court involvement; or disciplinary consequences consistent with the school's policies and Code of Conduct up to and including expulsion (Appendix C).

When a staff member is determined to have engaged in bullying or retaliation and disciplinary action is under consideration, appropriate due process is provided. Any disciplinary action imposed is based upon facts found by the designated school official and appropriate standards and expectations in light of the employee's role and responsibilities.

Discipline for staff who are found to have engaged in bullying may include disciplinary action up to and including termination and/or court involvement.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

Responses to Bullying

Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or District use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. (M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v)). Skill-building approaches that the Principal or designee may consider for students who have been victims of bullying or retaliation, or for students who are found to have engaged in bullying or retaliation may include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/District's anti-bullying curricula;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals;
- Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- Making a referral for evaluation.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Principal 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 Principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times, less structured times (recess, lunch, etc.) 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 Principal 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 Principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement those supportive measures immediately.

E. RETALIATION/FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Anyone found to have engaged in bullying is reminded about the prohibition against retaliation and that acts of retaliation result in disciplinary action. This includes retaliation against the student or staff person who reported the bullying or retaliation, the student or staff member who witnessed the bullying or retaliation, or the student or staff member who contributed reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

False Accusations

If the Principal or designee determines that a student or staff member knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student or staff person may be subject to disciplinary action.

VI. PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the District may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: www.doe.mass.edu/psm, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700.

Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent's office.

VII. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or District, 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, ancestry, national origin, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in BPIP 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 BPIP is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or District to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H½, or 37H¾, other applicable laws, or local school or District policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether BPIP covers the behavior.

Adopted: November 19, 2010

Revised: June 2015

Revised: August 2017

Revised: March 2021

Revised: April 2023