

BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING,
HARRASSMENT, OR INTIMIDATION

Effective: August 17, 2017

I. Announcement/Dissemination of Information

- A. Principals/supervisors will provide annual written notice of the general provisions of this policy that states bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, or retaliation are prohibited in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). This notice will be provided to students, parents, employees, and service providers in their school/offices at the beginning of each school year, to new hires under their supervision throughout the year, and to new students and their parents upon registration.
- B. Principals/supervisors will provide additional notification by:
 - 1. Providing announcements over the school public address system.
 - 2. Publishing a link to the policy in school newsletters; on the school website; and in student/employee handbooks.
 - 3. Posting in offices, classrooms, and other commonly used areas.
 - 4. Providing this policy in hard copy to any student, employee, parent, or service provider upon request.
- C. Principals/supervisors will annually ensure that students, employees, parents, and service providers are aware of the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation (BHI) Reporting Form and how to access it in hard copy and online. The BHI Reporting Form will be readily available and accessible to students, employees, and parents. At a minimum, BHI Reporting Forms will be placed in the main office, staff workroom, the school counseling office, the media center, the health services office, and online. The Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Complaint Form for employees and service providers can be accessed by contacting the Equity Assurance Manager or can be found on the school system's website.

II. Prevention Procedures

- A. The HCPSS will provide professional development to ensure that administrators and all employees increase their awareness of the prevalence, causes and consequences of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation and to increase the use of evidenced-based positive behavior supports in these areas.

Information will be provided for new employees hired at any time during the school year.

- B. Administrators and all employees will implement schoolwide evidence-based bullying prevention and intervention strategies using positive behavioral supports as part of school improvement efforts to address safe, engaging, and supportive environments. Components will include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - 1. Creating a culture of peer support and mutual respect.
 - 2. Defined behavioral expectations.
 - 3. A plan for teaching behavioral expectations including understanding the impact of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation.
 - 4. An on-going system for recognizing appropriate behaviors.
 - 5. A system for responding to problem behavior.
 - 6. The continuous collection and analysis of data to identify and implement strategies for maintaining and/or improving a positive school climate.
- C. Elementary classroom/secondary health education teachers will implement the curriculum regarding prevention and intervention of bullying for all students in pre-kindergarten through grade nine by teaching the Essential Health Education Curriculum.
- D. School-based employees will provide lessons on prevention and intervention of bullying for all students. These lessons will include:
 - 1. Information about reporting systems such as the BHI Reporting Form or online reporting.
 - 2. Information related to potential consequences such as those defined in Grace's Law.
 - 3. Social/emotional and health/safety education pertaining to bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation through strategies such as: Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports, Restorative Practices, Strength Based Education, Growth Mindset, and Student Voice.
- E. Principals will ensure that collaboration occurs with families and the community to inform parents about the prevalence, causes and consequences of bullying and its impact on public health. This information can be communicated through newsletters, PTA presentations, parent information nights, and other school activities.

- F. Administrators and school-based employees will collect, analyze, and use school-specific data on the number of incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation to guide school improvement efforts that address safe, engaging, and supportive environments.
- G. All employees are responsible for completing professional development provided by the HCPSS on how to respond to students, parents, employees, and service providers regarding bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation.
- H. The Equity Assurance Manager will document employee complaints received on bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation.

III. Intervention

- A. Principals will ensure a continuum of positive behavior supports are implemented as part of their schoolwide behavioral plan in order to develop and sustain a positive school culture that enhances effective teaching and learning.
- B. Principals/designees or central office administrators will provide appropriate school-based assistance to students, parents, employees, and service providers who have been affected by behavior prohibited in this policy.
- C. A student or employee who violates this policy may be required to participate in appropriate counseling/intervention designated by the school administrator/supervisor designed to increase the student or employee's understanding of the offense and its impact on others.
- D. Student Services/Alternative Education employees, trained in individual counseling, will provide counseling, education, and intervention for students who have been found in violation of this policy. In addition, support/counseling may be provided for the student, the target/victim, or the bystander who has been victimized by bullying behaviors. Education/counseling will include, but is not limited to teaching/counseling for:
 - 1. Mutual respect
 - 2. Replacement behaviors
 - 3. Anger management
 - 4. Impulse control
 - 5. Empathy
 - 6. Cultural proficiency/diversity training
 - 7. Assertiveness training
 - 8. Healthy relationships
 - 9. Resilience
- E. When an incident is deemed to be bullying, mediation (an intervention used to bring two or more parties together to resolve a dispute) between the target/victim and offender is prohibited.

- F. Schools will collaborate, as needed, with community and mental health resources to assist students who continue to be involved in bullying behaviors as perpetrators, targets/victims, or witnesses, and whose mental or physical health, safety, or academic performance has been impaired.

IV. Reporting Procedures

A. Student Reporting

1. The principal will maintain a school culture, in which students, employees and families may complete a BHI Reporting Form or report an incident online without fear of retaliation.
2. The principal/designee will ensure all students know the location of the form (media center, health room, front office, counselor's office, etc.). The BHI Reporting Form may also be accessed electronically on the school system's website.
3. The principal/designee will ensure all students know how to report an incident using online reporting as an alternative to completing a BHI Reporting Form.
4. When a student reports that he/she is currently the target/victim of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, the employee will:
 - a. Respond quickly and appropriately to intervene;
 - b. Report the incident to a school administrator or a mental health professional; and
 - c. Notify the school counselor and/or school psychologist.
5. If a student wishes to discuss the incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation with an employee, the employee will make an effort to provide the student with a practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate way of doing so.
6. Student reports will be documented using the BHI Reporting Form in the data management system and a copy of the report will be provided to the target/victim parent.
7. The student, employee, parent of a student, a close adult relative of a student, or bystander, will complete and submit the BHI Reporting Form to an administrator in person, by mail, or electronically, as soon as bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation is known or suspected. In the event the reporting party does not complete a BHI Reporting Form the school administrator will take the appropriate steps to address the incident.

8. A student, parent of a student, a close relative of a student, and/or bystander will be provided assistance from an employee, if needed, to complete the BHI Reporting Form at school.
9. Upon receipt of a BHI Reporting Form or any other report of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, the principal/designee will begin the investigation process within two school days. Every effort will be made to notify the target/victim parent immediately, but no later than one school day, of the report. Parents of the accused will be notified of the investigation process in a timely manner.
10. The principal/designee will ensure the information from any report of known or suspected bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation and the subsequent investigation is entered into the designated data management system using the same process for entering hard copy HCPSS BHI reports.

B. Employee and Service Provider Reporting

1. Principal/supervisor will maintain a school/workplace culture, in which employees or service providers may complete a Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Complaint Form without fear of retaliation.
2. The Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Complaint Form for employees and service providers can be accessed by contacting the Equity Assurance Manager or can be found on the school system's website.
3. Employees and service providers who feel they have been bullied, harassed, or intimidated will report, either orally or in writing, any such incidents promptly to an administrator/supervisor or to the Equity Assurance Manager, as appropriate.
 - a. If the alleged bully is the employee or service provider's immediate supervisor, the employee or service provider may report the alleged incident to the Equity Assurance Manager.
 - b. Employees or service providers will fill out the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Complaint Form.
4. School-based administrators and supervisors will forward complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation from employees or service providers to the Equity Assurance Manager.
5. If an employee or service provider wish to discuss the incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation with the administrator/supervisor or the Equity Assurance Manager, the administrator/supervisor or the Equity Assurance Manager will make an effort to provide the employee with a practical, safe, private, and appropriate way of doing so.

V. Investigation Procedures

A. Student Procedures

1. School administrators will begin the investigation within two school days after receipt of the BHI Reporting Form in compliance with Maryland's Model Policy To Address Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation.
2. School administrators will make every effort to notify the target/victim parent immediately but no later than one school day of the report. The parents of the individual(s) who has/have been accused of participating in the incident will be notified in a timely manner.
3. The school administrator will conduct an adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of the complaint, which may include interviewing the complainant and witnesses along with the opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence. The school administrator will provide notice to both sets of parents in writing of the outcome of the complaint and the basis for the decision within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of complaint by the school administrator, excluding extenuating circumstances. Due to confidentiality, specific disciplinary corrective measures are not to be discussed.

A school administrator will investigate the alleged incident and where bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and/or intimidation has been found appropriate steps will be taken to try to preclude such action from occurring again. Appropriate steps will be taken even if a student, an employee, a parent, or a close adult relative does not complete the BHI Reporting Form. An administrator will complete the BHI Reporting Form in the HCPSS data system for documentation and reporting purposes.

4. School administrators will comply with due process rights, which include:
 - a. Notifying the accused of the allegations.
 - b. Providing an explanation of the evidence if the accused denies the allegations.
 - c. Allowing the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations and encouraging them to provide a written response, when appropriate.
 - d. Notifying the parent of the accused promptly, in writing, of the violation and disciplinary consequence.
5. School administrators will strive to maintain the confidentiality of the target/victim, the accused and the witnesses to the extent possible.

6. School administrators will inform all parties involved that they are prohibited from discussing or sharing any information regarding the incident in question, with the exception of their parents, appropriate school-based employee, legal counsel, law enforcement personnel, or healthcare professional.
7. The accused will be informed that retaliation, bullying, cyberbullying harassment, or intimidation against the target/victim or bystander/witness is strictly prohibited and that progressive consequences will occur if the activity continues.
8. The school administrator will create a written record of the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, or hazing incident and any disciplinary actions taken, as well as the statements of the victim, witnesses, and accused. Discussions with all parties will be documented as soon as possible after the event. Any material records or evidence will be retained for a criminal investigation or prosecution resulting from the incident.
9. After the investigation, Student Support Services employee will provide appropriate counseling support to the target/victim and accused within two weeks. If during the counseling session(s) it is determined that the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation continues, it will be reported to the school administrator.
10. Any students and/or parents having concerns regarding the application of these procedures may refer to the Resolving School Concerns and Disagreements process on the HCPSS website or in the HCPSS Student & Parent Handbook. Individuals may also contact School Safety Specialist with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) at 410-767-0311.

B. Employees and Service Provider Procedures

1. School administrators/supervisors will collaborate with the Equity Assurance Manager within two school days after receipt of the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Complaint Form. Either the school administrator or the Equity Assurance Manager will begin the investigation.
2. School administrators/supervisors or Equity Assurance Manager will notify in a timely manner the target/victim, individual(s) who has/have been accused of participating in the incident that investigated action has been taken. Due to confidentiality, specific disciplinary corrective measures are not to be discussed.
3. School administrators/supervisors or the Equity Assurance Manager will comply with due process rights, which include:
 - a. Notifying the accused of the allegations.

- b. Providing an explanation of the evidence if the accused denies the allegations.
 - c. Allowing the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations and encouraging them to provide a written response, when appropriate.
4. School administrators/supervisors or Equity Assurance Manager will strive to maintain the confidentiality of the target/victim, the accused and the witnesses to the extent possible.
5. School administrators/supervisors or Equity Assurance Manager will inform all parties involved that they are prohibited from discussing or sharing any information regarding the incident in question, with the exception appropriate school-based employee, union representative, legal counsel, or law enforcement personnel.
6. The accused will be informed that retaliation, bullying, cyberbullying harassment, or intimidation against the target/victim or bystander/witness is strictly prohibited and that progressive consequences will occur if the activity continues.
7. School administrators/supervisors or Equity Assurance Manager will create a written record of the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, incident and any disciplinary actions taken, as well as the statements of the victim, witnesses, and accused. Discussions with all parties will be documented as soon as possible after the event. Any material records or evidence will be kept while a criminal investigation or prosecution resulting from the incident is ongoing.
8. After the investigation, school administrators/supervisors or Equity Assurance Manager may recommend supports in Section VII.B. below.
9. The school administrator/supervisor or Equity Assurance Manager and target/victim will schedule a meeting two weeks after the conclusion of the investigation to confer that there has been resolution to the reported incident.

VI. Violations of Policy

A. Student Violations

1. Any school administrator who believes that a student has violated this policy must also consider the following: Policy 1010 Discrimination, Policy 1020 Sexual Discrimination, Policy 1030 Child Abuse and Neglect, Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools, Policy 8080 Responsible use of Technology and Social Media, Policy 9060 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Compliance: Section 504, or Policy 9200 Student Discipline, the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct, or the HCPSS Threat Management Procedures.

2. School administrators will comply with due process rights, which include:
 - a. Notifying the accused of the allegations.
 - b. Providing an explanation of the evidence if the accused denies the allegations.
 - c. Allowing the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations and encouraging them to provide a written response, when appropriate.
 - d. Notifying the parent of the accused promptly, in writing, of the violation and the disciplinary consequence.
3. If, after an investigation, the administrator determines that bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation did occur, the following procedures should be followed in accordance with Maryland's Model Policy to Address Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation:
 - a. The administrator/designee will promptly implement one or more of the corrective actions outlined on the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Incident School Investigation Form, consistent with the consequences outlined in the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct.
 - b. Separate conferences with the target/victim and offender will occur within two weeks after the investigation to determine whether the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation has continued and whether additional consequences need to be implemented.
 - c. A follow-up conference will be held with the target/victim four weeks after the initial follow-up conference to determine if the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation has ceased.
 - d. Communication with the parents of the target/victim and offender will continue until the issue is resolved.
 - e. The principal will ensure that the information recorded on the BHI Reporting Form and the information on the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Incident School Investigation Form is entered into the bullying database on the HCPSS student data system.
 - f. The BHI Reporting Form will be maintained in accordance with Policy 9050 Student Records.
4. It is a violation of this policy for students to be engaged in retaliation, consequences and/or remedial actions will be applied.

5. The Office of Student Services will annually report bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation data to the MSDE in accordance with Maryland's Model Policy to Address Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation.
6. For acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation that are considered delinquent or criminal acts, the administrator/designee will promptly report these acts to the responsible law enforcement agencies and the MSDE according to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13A.08.01.15).
7. For acts of cyberbullying that are considered criminal, the administrator/designee will promptly report the incident to the responsible law enforcement agencies to determine if Grace's law has been violated. (The Annotated Code of Maryland, Criminal Law Article, §3-805)
8. Administrators will investigate any alleged incident and take corrective action as appropriate, even if a student, employee, parent, or a close adult relative does not complete the BHI Reporting Form.
9. Gang related activity, as defined in the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct and Policy 9290 Gangs, Gang Activity, and Similar Destructive or Delinquent Group Behavior as it relates to bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, is considered a violation of this policy.
10. For acts of sexual harassment, sexual assault and/or sexual violence the administrator will promptly follow Policy 1020 Sexual Discrimination which addresses these offences in accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 ensuring the rights of the victim are protected.

B. Employee and Service Provider Violations

1. Any administrator/supervisor who believes that an employee or service provider has violated this policy will also consider whether the behavior constitutes a violation of Policy 1000 Civility, Policy 1010 Discrimination, Policy 1020 Sexual Discrimination, Policy 1030 Child Abuse and Neglect, Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools, or Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media.
2. When it is reported that an incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation has occurred, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. An employee or service provider suspected of violating this policy will be referred to the appropriate school administrator/supervisor or Equity Assurance Manager.
 - b. The school administrator/supervisor will collaborate with the Equity Assurance Manager. Either the school administrator/supervisor or

Equity Assurance Manager will promptly conduct an investigation, and will notify the victim and the accused, in writing, of the results of the investigation.

- c. If the investigation reveals that a violation has occurred, the school administrator/supervisor will take appropriate action in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline and relevant master agreements if the employee is a member of a bargaining unit. Action against a service provider will be taken in accordance with relevant school system policies and other appropriate state and federal laws.
- d. The offender will be counseled and notified of his/her rights, in writing, of the violation and of the disciplinary consequences.

VII. Supports

- A. Support services available to the student exhibiting bullying behaviors, the target/victim, witness or bystander will be implemented as appropriate based on context, situation, age, and severity. Such supports may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. School System
 - a. Counseling
 - b. Conflict resolution
 - c. Restorative practices
 - d. Problem-solving skills training
 - e. Social skills training, including anger management/impulse control
 - f. Peer support groups
 - g. Schedule modifications
 - h. Collaboration with school-based problem solving teams.
 - 2. Community/Family
 - a. Public or private community-based mental health services
 - b. Community mediations
 - c. Department of Juvenile Services
 - d. Department of Social Services
 - e. Law enforcement agencies
 - f. Health Department programs
 - g. Youth development organizations
 - h. Faith-based services.
- B. Supports and services available for employees may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. School System

- a. Appropriate school administrator/supervisor
- b. Appropriate administrative directors
- c. Equity Assurance Manager
- d. Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

2. Community/Family

- a. Public or private community-based mental health services
- b. Law enforcement agencies
- c. Health Department programs
- d. Community mediations
- e. Faith-based services.

VIII. History

ADOPTED: June 11, 2009

REVIEWED:

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