



I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and nurturing school environment that values diversity and commonality. The Board is also committed to fostering a climate where individuals are valued and their safety and rights are protected. To that end, the Board prohibits acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation because they compromise the learning environment and well-being of students, staff, and community.

The Board recognizes that school system staff must be knowledgeable regarding bullying and victimization in order to promote an environment where opportunities for bullying do not occur.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish expectations for maintaining a safe and respectful school climate or workplace where bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation are not tolerated. It also provides standards for identifying and preventing bullying behavior, as well as intervening and supporting students and staff who are exhibiting bullying behavior or who are targets/victims of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation.

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Bullying – Intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, or written conduct, or an intentional electronic communication that creates a hostile educational environment by substantially interfering with a student’s or staff member’s educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, or with their physical or psychological well-being and is:
- motivated by an actual or a perceived personal characteristic including race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, familial status, or physical or mental ability or disability; or,
 - threatening or seriously intimidating; and,
 - occurs on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus; or,
 - substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school or workplace.

- B. Community – The society at large which includes, but is not limited to families, businesses, faith communities, government agencies, nonprofit service organizations, other organizations, and individuals.
- C. Cyberbullying – Harassing, humiliating, intimidating, and/or threatening others on the Internet or via cell phones and other electronic communication (e.g., emails, web pages, instant messaging).
- D. Electronic communication – A communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including but not limited to a telephone, cellular phone, computer, or pager.
- E. Employee – Any individual employed by the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).
- F. Harassment – A sufficiently severe action or persistent, pervasive pattern of actions or statements, directed at an identifiable individual or group, that is intended to be, or which a reasonable person would perceive as, ridiculing or demeaning.
- G. Hazing – Participation in any intentional or reckless act directed against another for the purpose of initiation into, affiliation with, or maintenance of membership in an organization. Hazing is considered to be a form of bullying; hazing includes, but is not limited to, any action taken or situation created that directly or indirectly embarrasses, humiliates, harasses, ridicules, intimidates, or causes harm or mental or physical discomfort to another.
- H. Intimidation – Subjection to intentional action that seriously threatens and induces a sense of fear and/or inferiority which adversely affects one’s ability to participate in or benefit from the educational or work setting.
- I. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the child or vulnerable adult:
 - 1. Biological parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 2. Adoptive parent – A person who has legally adopted the child or vulnerable adult, and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 3. Custodian – A person or an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the child or vulnerable adult and granted parental rights and privileges.

4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the child or vulnerable adult and granted parental rights and privileges.
 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody or control over the child or vulnerable adult, but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian.
 6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a State agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by section 5-507 of the Family Law Article.
- J. Retaliation – The act or process of threatening or otherwise penalizing a person for reporting an alleged violation of policy or for participating in an investigation of an alleged violation.
- K. School Property – Any property owned or leased by the HCPSS. The concept of property shall extend to school activities such as field trips, use of parks and recreation facilities, proms, etc. This means that when a facility is scheduled by the school system for student use, it will be considered an extension of school property.
- L. School-related Activity – Any school system activity, whether held on or off school property, in which a student directly participates (e.g. school field trip, athletic event, or class/graduation activity), or in which the student does not directly participate but represents the school or student body simply by being there (e.g. spectator at a school event).
- M. Service Providers – Individuals who provide services to the HCPSS, either through contract or volunteer service, when those services involve access to students, such as substitute teachers, mentors, chaperones, bus drivers, and individuals who participate in partnership programs.

IV. Standards

- A. The HCPSS will assure that the school environment is free from incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, or intimidation. The prohibition of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, or intimidation in schools and reprisal and retaliation against individuals who report acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, or intimidation, as well as standard consequences for policy violations, will be a part of school-wide efforts to maintain positive school climates.
- B. The HCPSS will comply with the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.

- C. All schools will follow established procedures for prevention and intervention.
- D. The prevention and intervention of bullying and harassment will be delivered to all students in pre-kindergarten through grade nine as identified in the Essential Health Education Curriculum.
- E. The Office of Student Services will provide annual professional development for employees on the substance of this policy. This professional development must provide prevention education, designed to model and teach positive relationship building and appropriate interpersonal communication. This responsibility also includes educating students, staff, service providers, and families about the dangers that result when individuals are bullied or are targets/victims of bullying, and strategies for intervening when these incidents do occur.
- F. All staff will comply with the expectations for safe school environments in related policies.
- G. Consequences for violations of this policy will be administered according to applicable school system policies (Policy 7030 Employee Discipline, Policy 9200 Discipline, the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct, and all applicable state and federal laws).
- H. Violations of this policy are cumulative. Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, or retaliation against anyone who has reported these behaviors is prohibited.
- I. Students, employees, and others engaging in these behaviors on school property or at their workplace or at school-related activities are subject to disciplinary and/or legal action.
- J. Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation data will be compiled and reported annually to the Board.

V. Compliance

- A. Students, parents, employees, and service providers are responsible for reporting incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, and retaliation.
- B. The Superintendent will ensure compliance with the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.
- C. The Superintendent/Designee will ensure that students, parents, employees, and service providers are notified of the provisions of this policy annually.

- D. Supervisors are responsible for notifying those under their supervision of the provisions of this policy.
- E. The Superintendent/Designee and/or school administrators shall ensure that all illegal behaviors are reported to the appropriate social service agencies, law enforcement agencies, and the Maryland State Department of Education.
- F. School principals/supervisors are responsible for ensuring that professional development occurs annually.
- G. School principals/supervisors are responsible for implementing school-wide/workplace procedures for prevention and intervention of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, or retaliation.
- H. School principals are responsible for complying with the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 with regard to investigating incidents of bullying and taking corrective action as appropriate.
- I. School principals, supervisors, or the Director of Student Services/Designees are responsible for providing appropriate assistance to students, parents, employees, and service providers who have been affected by behavior prohibited in this policy.
- J. The school administrator or Superintendent/Designee is responsible for any action taken in response to a violation of this policy.
- K. The Office of Student Services is responsible for compiling and reporting bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation data to the Board.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop appropriate procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - Annotated Code 7-424.1
 - COMAR 13A.01.04.03
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.15
 - Family Law Article 5-507
 - Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 1000 Civility

Policy 1010	Discrimination
Policy 1020	Sexual Harassment
Policy 1030	Child Abuse and Neglect
Policy 1040	Safe School Environments
Policy 7030	Employee Discipline
Policy 8080	Acceptable Use of Technology
Policy 9020	Students' Rights and Responsibilities
Policy 9050	Student Records and Confidentiality
Policy 9200	Discipline
Policy 9280	Students Charged with Community or Reportable Offenses
Policy 10000	Parent, Family, and Community Involvement

- C. Other
- Master Agreement Between the Board of Education and the Howard County Administrators Association
 - Master Agreement Between the Board of Education and the Howard County Education Association
 - Student Code of Conduct
 - Threat Management Procedures
 - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Incident School Investigation Form*
 - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form*

VIII. History

ADOPTED: June 11, 2009

REVIEWED:

MODIFIED: June 12, 2014

August 14, 2014

REVISED:

EFFECTIVE: August 14, 2014

I. Announcement/Dissemination of Information

- A. Principals must provide annual written notice that bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, or retaliation are prohibited in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). This notice must be provided to students, parents, employees, and service providers at the beginning of each school year, to new hires throughout the year, and to new students and their parents upon registration.

Supervisors are responsible for notifying those under their supervision.

- B. Principals must provide annual notice of the general provisions of this policy to all students, staff, parents, and service providers in their schools. Supervisors are responsible for notifying those under their supervision. Notification may be:
1. Given via announcement over the school public address system
 2. Published in school newsletters, on the school system website, and/or in student/employee handbooks
 3. Posted in offices, classrooms, and other commonly used areas
 4. Provided to new students and parents through the registration process.
- C. Principals are responsible for ensuring that Safe School Act Reporting Forms are available and accessible to students, staff, and parents. At a minimum, forms will be placed in the main office, the school counseling office, the media center, and the health services office.

II. Prevention Procedures

- A. The Office of Student Services will provide professional development to ensure that administrators and all staff 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 must be provided for new staff hired at any time during the school year.
- B. Administrators and all staff will implement schoolwide evidence-based anti-bullying programs using positive behavioral supports and as part of school

improvement efforts to address safe and nurturing environments. Components of the program will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Defined behavioral expectations
 2. A plan for teaching behavioral expectations
 3. An on-going system for recognizing appropriate behaviors
 4. A system for responding to problem behavior
 5. 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 for the prevention and intervention of bullying for all students in pre-kindergarten through grade nine by teaching the Essential Health Education Curriculum.
- D. Staff will address social/emotional and health/safety education pertaining to bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, through content integration in curricular areas using relevant existing objectives from the essential curricula.
- E. Principals will ensure that students are involved in activities which address bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, or intimidation and in creating a culture of peer support and mutual respect.
- F. 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.
- G. Administrators and staff will collect, analyze, and use school-specific data on the number of incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation to guide school improvement efforts to address safe and nurturing environments.
- H. The Equity Assurance Coordinator will document staff complaints received on bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation and render findings.

III. Intervention

- A. Principals will ensure that professional development is provided to school staff on how to respond appropriately to students who bully, are bullied, and how to empower bystanders.

- 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 staff member who violates this policy may be required to participate in appropriate counseling/intervention designated by the school administrator and designed to increase the student or staff member's understanding of the offense and its impact on others.
- D. Student Services/Alternative Education staff, trained in individual counseling, will provide counseling, education, and intervention for students who have been found in violation of this policy, and support/counseling for the child, the target/victim or the bystander who has been victimized by bullying behaviors. Education/counseling will include, but is not limited to:
 - 1. Teaching/counseling for replacement behaviors, anger management, impulse control, and tolerance, empathy, and diversity training
 - 2. Teaching/counseling for assertiveness training, healthy relationships and resilience.
- E. Schools will include a continuum of positive behavior supports as part of their schoolwide behavioral plan.
- 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. When a student reports that he/she is currently the target/victim of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, the staff member will respond quickly and appropriately to intervene and report the incident to a school administrator.
 - 2. If a student wishes to discuss the incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation with a staff member, the staff member will make an effort to provide the student with a practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate way of doing so.
 - 3. Student reports will be documented using the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form*.

4. A student may request assistance from a staff member to complete the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form* at school.
5. The student, a staff member, parent or close adult relative should complete and submit the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form* to an administrator in person, by mail, or electronically.

B. Employee and Service Provider Reporting

1. Staff members who have been bullied, harassed, or intimidated will report any such incidents promptly to an administrator/supervisor or the Equity Assurance Coordinator, as appropriate. These reports may be oral or in writing.
2. School-based administrators and supervisors must forward complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation from employees or service providers to the Equity Assurance Coordinator.

V. **Investigation Procedures**

- A. School principals will comply with the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 with regard to the prompt investigation of incidents of bullying by taking action within two school days after receipt of the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form*.
- B. Neither the target/victim nor witnesses will be promised confidentiality at the onset of an investigation as it cannot be predicted what will be discovered as a result of the investigation. They should be informed that the information discussed and recorded will be confined to “need to know” status.
- C. School administrators will immediately notify parents of the target/victim and the parents of the offender of the incident. They will notify parents of the victim and the offender of the incident in a timely manner that corrective action has been taken; due to confidentiality, specific disciplinary corrective measures are not to be discussed.
- D. The offender will be informed that retaliation against the target/victim or bystander is strictly prohibited and that progressive consequences will occur if the activity continues.
- E. An administrator/supervisor will promptly conduct an investigation of any complaint of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation by an employee or service provider in consultation with the Office of Equity Assurance.

- F. Any students, parents/legal guardians, or staff members having inquiries regarding the application of these procedures should contact the school principal, as outlined in the Resolving School Concerns and Complaints formal process or the Director of Student Services, 410-313-6662. Individuals may also contact Charles J. Buckler, Branch Director, Student Services and Alternative Programs or Dominic M. Romano, School Safety Specialist with Maryland State Department of Education at 410-767-0311.

VI. Violations of Policy

A. Student Violations

1. Any individual who believes that a student has violated this policy must also consider whether the behavior constitutes a violation of Policy 1010 Discrimination, Policy 1020 Sexual Harassment, Policy 1030 Child Abuse and Neglect, Policy 1040 Safe School Environment, Policy 8080 Acceptable use of Computer Technology, or Policy 9200 Discipline, the HCPSS Threat Management Procedures, or the Student Code of Conduct.
2. If, after an investigation, the administrator determines that bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation did occur, the following procedures should be followed in accordance with the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005:
 - 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. 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. The principal will determine who will conduct these conferences.
 - c. The principal will ensure that the information recorded on the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation 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 and reported monthly to the Office of Student Services.

- d. *The Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Form* will be maintained in accordance with Policy 9050 Student Records and Confidentiality.
3. School administrators will comply with due process rights, which include:
 - a. Notifying the alleged offender of the allegations
 - b. Providing an explanation of the evidence if the alleged offender denies the allegations
 - c. Allowing the alleged offender an opportunity to respond to the allegations and encouraging them to provide a written response, when appropriate
 - d. Notifying the parent promptly, in writing, of the violation and disciplinary consequence when the behavior warrants reallocation of the student's time (such as detention, exclusion, suspension, or expulsion).
4. The Office of Student Services will annually report bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation data to the Maryland State Department of Education in accordance with the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.
5. An administrator must investigate the alleged incident and take corrective action as appropriate, even if students, staff, parents, or other close adult relatives are reluctant to complete the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form*.
6. Gang related activity, as defined in the Student Code of Conduct and as it relates to bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, is considered a violation of this policy.
7. For students engaged in retaliation, consequences and/or remedial actions will be applied.
8. For acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation that are considered reportable offenses, the administrator/designee shall promptly report these acts to the responsible law enforcement agencies and the Maryland State Department of Education according to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13A.08.01.15).
9. The school administrator/designee will contact any student who has been the object of or affected by conduct prohibited in this policy so that appropriate assistance may be offered.

B. Employee and Service Provider Violations

1. Any individual who believes that an employee or service provider has violated this policy must also consider whether the behavior constitutes a violation of Policy 1000 Civility, Policy 1010 Discrimination, Policy 1020 Sexual Harassment, Policy 1030 Child Abuse and Neglect, Policy 1040 Safe School Environments, or Policy 8080 Acceptable use of Computer Technology.
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 Superintendent/Designee or an appropriate supervisor.
 - b. The Superintendent/Designee or supervisor will promptly conduct an investigation and address the behavior.
 - c. If the investigation reveals that a violation has occurred, the Superintendent/Designee or the supervisor will take appropriate action. Disciplinary action against an employee, if appropriate, will be taken in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Discipline. 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 notified, in writing, of the violation and of the disciplinary consequences.

VII. Supports

- A. Support services available to the student exhibiting bullying behaviors, or to the target/victim, witness or bystander should 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. Problem-solving skills training
 - d. Social skills training, including anger management/impulse control
 - e. Peer support groups
 - f. Schedule modifications
 - g. Targeted use of school staff

2. Community/Family

- a. Public or private community-based mental health services
- b. Faith-based services
- c. Health Department programs
- d. Youth development organizations
- e. Community mediations
- f. Department of Juvenile Services
- g. Department of Social Services
- h. Law enforcement agencies

B. Support services available for staff may include, but are not limited to:

1. School System

- a. Appropriate school Administrator/Supervisor
- b. Appropriate Administrative Directors
- c. Equity Assurance Coordinator
- d. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

2. Community

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

VIII. History

ADOPTED: June 11, 2009

REVIEWED:

MODIFIED: June 12, 2014

August 14, 2014

REVISED: November 5, 2009

EFFECTIVE: August 14, 2014