

# **Avon Public Schools**

## **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was created in response to the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, in consultation with state agencies, school personnel, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties. It parallels the *Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework*, and is designed to be used by the school and district to promote a safe and positive school environment. The plan applies to students and members of school staff, including, but not limited to educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals. Please note that in this Plan we use the word “target” instead of “victim” and “aggressor” instead of “perpetrator.”

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## I. LEADERSHIP

*Leadership at all levels has played a critical role in developing and implementing the Avon Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("the Plan") in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leadership includes teachers, support personnel, and principals in each building. The central office staff provides for resources so that building based personnel can teach students the skills of civility and respect for individual differences. Leadership is responsible for setting priorities and for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying. Building based leaders and district leaders will involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing and implementing the Plan through a public comment period.*

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, this plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation included a notice and a public comment period before this plan was adopted by the school committee. This plan was sent to district and building administrators for their review. Additionally, the building administrators shared the plan with their staff and their parent organizations for the purpose of input. The plan was referred to in the administrators' newsletters, was put on the website, and communicated through the electronic messaging system soliciting input from the staff, parents and community.
- B. Assessing needs and resources. The plan is the schools' and 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, 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 assisted the schools and the district in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, the schools and the district revised and developed policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities. This information also helped to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and informed decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.
- C. Planning and oversight. This plan identifies the school or district leaders responsible for the following tasks under the plan as the building and district administrators. They are responsible for: 1) receiving reports on bullying; 2) collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors; 4) planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 5) planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use; 7) developing new or revising current policies and protocols under

the plan, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them; 8) amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; 9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and 10) reviewing and updating the plan each year, or more frequently, if necessary.

- D. Developing priority statements. Priority statements communicate within this plan the schools' or district's vision in creating and implementing its bullying prevention and intervention strategies. The following are the priority statements of the Avon Public Schools:

The Avon Public Schools expect that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The Avon Public Schools is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The school or district will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the schools and district are committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal and building administration is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan.

## **II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*This plan reflects the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O to provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals. This plan states the content and frequency of staff training and ongoing professional development as determined by the schools' and district's needs, and lists other topics included in these staff programs. The training is based on needs and concerns identified by school and district staff.*

*This plan reflects the six topics that must be included in professional development as required by the law. .*

- A. Annual staff training on the plan: Annual training for all school staff on this plan will include staff duties under this plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or 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, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years. This training is conducted during the two new staff orientation days held just prior to the start of the new school year. Additionally, all mandated training powerpoints including the training associated with this plan are available online.
- B. 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 school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
  - (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
  - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
  - (iv) 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;
  - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
  - (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

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

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

C. Written notice to staff: The school or district provides all staff with an annual written notice of the plan. The plan is also available electronically on the district website and is referred to each year in the administrators' newsletters.

### III. 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. This plan describes the strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the schools' and district's capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets and aggressors. This plan includes a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets, and family members of those students. These locally established strategies are reflected in this school or district plan.*

- A. Identifying resources: This plan includes the schools' and district's process for identifying its capacity to provide counseling and other services for targets, aggressors, and their families. This process includes a review of current staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. This mapping of resources helps the schools and the district to develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. The Butler Elementary School's resources include Responsive Classroom and Great Body Shop. Grades seven through twelve will adopt the MARC curriculum and materials from TeachingTolerance.org. The Child Study Teams and the Resource Teams in both buildings meet on a regular basis and work with agencies to provide services. The Child Study Team and the Resource Teams meet on a regular basis and on a case by case basis, to identify existing and needed resources.
- B. Counseling and other services: The plan identifies the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school and district. Resources are developed, and linkages are established with community based organizations, including Community Service Agencies (CSAs) for Medicaid eligible students. In addition, this plan identifies staff and service providers who assist schools in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, providing social skills programs to prevent bullying,

and offering education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. Those staff members include but are not limited to the classroom teachers, school psychologists and guidance counselors, school administration, and school nurses. The Avon Public Schools uses behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula to address the issues described above.

- C. Students with disabilities: As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.
- D. Referral to outside services: When appropriate the schools and the district will refer a students and/or family to outside services. The protocol for this referral will be the result of the child study team meeting and the referral will be made by the school psychologist, the building principal or his/her designee. This referral is intended to help students and their families access appropriate and timely services. Current local referral protocols will be evaluated to assess their relevance to this plan, and will be revised as needed.

#### **IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

*The law requires each school or district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the schools' or district's curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development. Published guidelines for implementing social and emotional learning curricula will be developed by the Department of Education for the schools and districts by June 30, 2011. Other resources are currently available on the Department's website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/bullying/>. This plan includes specific information about local priorities and approaches that will be used, and how schools and the district will integrate this plan into the schools' and/or district's curricula. Responsive Classroom and the Great Body Shop will continue to be used in the classroom at the elementary level. The MARC curriculum and materials from [teachingtolerance.org](http://teachingtolerance.org) will be used in grades seven through twelve.*

- A. Specific bullying prevention approaches: Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:
- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
  - empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
  - helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
  - emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
  - enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful

- communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. This plan will be review with students annually by the classroom teachers at the elementary level and in advisory at the middle high school level.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts: The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interests and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

## **V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

*To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, the schools and the district have put in place policies and procedures for receiving and responding to reports of bullying or retaliation. These policies and procedures will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur. This plan describes procedures for staff reporting of incidents, processes for communicating to students and families how reports can be made (including anonymous reports), and procedures to be followed by the principal or designee once a report is made.*

- A. Reporting bullying or retaliation: Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may

be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community may include, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form<sup>1</sup> and Bullying Report.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

#### 1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. 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.

#### 2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The schools and district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. 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 a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided 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.

### B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

#### 1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for Incident Reporting Form.

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 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 implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation. (Include locally established student safety planning policies and procedures here.)

## 2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians: Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor 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 will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- 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 will be 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 will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the plan 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.

C. Investigation: The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of 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.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses 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 practical, and given his/her 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.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

D. Determinations: The principal or designee will make 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: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, 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.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. 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 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.

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.

E. Responses to Bullying: *This section of the plan is intended to enumerate the school's or district's chosen strategies for building students' skills, and other individualized interventions that the school or district may take in response to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation.*

1. 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 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 guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social 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 an evaluation.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be 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 will be consistent with the plan and with the school's or district's code of conduct.

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.

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

3. 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 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 them immediately.

## **VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

*This plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of the school or district to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. This plan includes provisions for informing parents or guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the school district or school including: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; and (iii) online safety and cyberbullying. Parents and guardians must also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, in the language(s) most prevalent among the parents or guardians. School- or district-specific approaches to collaboration take into account age, climate, socio-economic factors, linguistic, and cultural make-up of students and the parents.*

- A. Parent education and resources: The school or district will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the Parent Council, Parent Groups, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.
- B. Notification requirements: Each year the school or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the plan and related information on its website.

## **VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

*This plan includes a statement prohibiting bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The statement in this plan is also included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook. The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying.*

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- (i) 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

- (ii) 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.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## **VIII. 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 Quality (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu) or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's office.

## **IX. DEFINITIONS**

*Several of the following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as noted below.*

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

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- 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 or herself or of damage to his or her 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.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

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.

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.

## **X. 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 the public school or in obtaining the advantages, privilege, or course of study of the public school based on religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the plan covers the behavior.

**Appendix A**  
**BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM**

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:** This line may be left blank if an anonymous report is being made (Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. **Check whether you are the:** ☐ **Target of the behavior** ☐ **Reporter (not the target)**

3. **Check whether you are a:** ☐ **Student** ☐ **Staff member (specify role)** \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Parent** ☐ **Administrator** ☐ **Other (specify)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your contact information/telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **If student, state your school:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

5. **If staff member, state your school or work site:** \_\_\_\_\_

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6. **Information about the Incident:**

**Name of Target (of behavior):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date(s) of Incident(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time When Incident(s) Occurred:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible):** \_\_\_\_\_

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7. **Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ • Student • Staff • Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ • Student • Staff • Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ • Student • Staff • Other \_\_\_\_\_

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8. **Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.**

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FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10. Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. INVESTIGATION**

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Interviews:

<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed aggressor	Name: _____	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed target	Name: _____	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed witnesses	Name: _____	Date: _____
	Name: _____	Date: _____

4. Any prior documented Incidents by the aggressor? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION ☐ Yes ☐ No

Summary of Investigation:

---

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

**III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION**

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

☐ YES

☐ NO

☐ Bullying

☐ Incident documented as

only \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Retaliation

☐ Discipline referral

**2. Contacts:**

☐ Target's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Law Enforcement Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Action Taken:**

☐ Loss of Privileges ☐ Detention ☐ Suspension

☐ Community Service ☐ Education ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Describe Safety Planning:**

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal: Date \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(If principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B  
Parent Communication Form

Date:

Dear

Your child was involved in an incident in school today. We believe it is important to share this information with you.

**(What was reported)**

The incident has been investigated and will be monitored. Due to reasons of confidentiality, students' names and disciplinary actions cannot be revealed.

Please sign and return this letter to school in an envelope addressed to me as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal/Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix C:  
Process of Reporting, Investigation, and Follow-up

**Step One: Complete Incident Report Form**

**If a staff member or other adult witnesses or reports an incident:**

- Staff member completes incident report and gives to designated administrative staff member

**If a student reports incident to staff members:**

- Staff member acknowledges student's feelings
- Staff member determines if there is a safety issue that must be addressed immediately
- Staff member completes incident report and gives to designated administrative staff member

**Step Two: Conduct Investigation**

**Interview Target of Bullying:**

- Interview the target first, then the alleged aggressor
- Target and alleged aggressor should be separated
- Do not ask to see target in the alleged aggressor's presence
- Mediation should not be used with bullying situations
- Encourage target to report any additional incidents with the alleged aggressor

**Interview the Student Accused of Bullying:**

- Identify the problem
- Focus more on the alleged aggressor's behavior, protecting the target's confidentiality
- In cases of denial or if further information is needed, interview witnesses
- Document the witnesses accounts
- Make the alleged aggressor aware of consequences of retaliation against target and reporter

**Contact Parent of Target and Alleged Aggressor**

**Step Three: Assign Consequences if needed**

- Assign appropriate consequences
- If the alleged aggressor denies the incident and there is insufficient evidence, tell the alleged aggressor that you will continue to monitor the situation and the behavior of all involved
- Monitor safety of target

**Step Four: Document Incident and Consequences/Follow-up**

- Document outcome of investigation on the Incident Report Form
- Follow up: Provide update to appropriate staff member(s)
- Monitor students' behaviors

- Notify teachers who have contact with target and aggressor