

Harassment and Bullying – Guidelines and Procedures

Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Harassment and Bullying *Guidelines and Procedures*

School Staff Intervention

Any member of the school staff receiving a report of harassment and/or bullying behavior shall address the matter immediately or as soon as feasibly possible.

Depending on the circumstances, the staff member may choose to address and attempt to resolve the matter through his/her own measures. However the staff member chooses to mediate the harassment and/or bullying behavior, the matter should be addressed immediately.

If the behavior is considered to be a form of harassment and/or bullying that has the potential to escalate, the staff person shall refer the matter to the appropriate resources.

At the high school, harassment and/or bullying behavior shall be referred to the offender's assistant principal.

At the middle and elementary schools, harassment and/or bullying behavior shall be referred to the designated administrator assigned to handle student discipline matters.

The principal or designee shall assess the circumstances to determine if the matter should be referred to other sources for intervention and counseling. If a harassment and/or bullying accusation is determined to be credible, the offender should be made aware that his or her behavior towards a fellow student is unacceptable and a violation of the school district's harassment and bullying policies. The principal or designee has the option to refer incidents of harassment and/or bullying to other sources for resolution. The source to which the matter may be referred will depend on the frequency of occurrences and the magnitude of the harassment and/or bullying behavior.

- School Counselors/Social Workers
- School Psychologist
- Child Study Team
- Peer Mediation
- School Resource Officers
- District Administrators
- Out of district social service agencies

It is essential that all reports of harassment and/or bullying behavior that are found to be credible be documented on the district's Harassment and Bullying Reporting Form (please see attached), including any remedial or intervention measures that were initiated by school staff.

When disciplinary action is taken, the Harassment and Bullying Reporting Form will be placed in the offender's student file and the student's computerized discipline file. Victim and offender reports will be maintained and kept at the school site for future reference for determining whether or not a pattern of harassment and/or bullying behavior or abuse exists in regards to the offender or the victim. Refer to the attachment for the Harassment and Bullying Reporting Form.

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School Staff Intervention cont.

If the principal or designee determines that the reported harassment and/or bullying behavior are credible, he or she shall ensure that the parents/guardians of both the victim and the offender are notified in a timely manner. The parents/guardians shall be informed that a harassment and/or bullying incident was reported and that the school administrator has initiated steps to address the issue. Notification to parents/guardians shall be documented in the notification section of the Harassment and Bullying Reporting Form. Refer to the attachment for the Harassment and Bullying Reporting Form.

Consequences for Harassment and/or Bullying Behavior

The principal or designee may discipline a student for harassment and/or bullying behavior if the allegations against the offending student are determined to be credible. The measures of discipline to be administered should be age appropriate and based on the severity of the harassment and/or bullying behavior.

Strategies for Preventing Bullying in the Classroom

1. Provide students with opportunities to talk about harassment and bullying and enlist their support in defining harassment and bullying as unacceptable behavior.
2. Involve students in establishing classroom practices against harassment and bullying. Such practices will include a commitment from all members of the classroom community to not “look the other way” when incidents which involve harassment and/or bullying occur.
3. Provide classroom activities and discussions related to harassment, bullying, and violence, including the harm that they cause and strategies to reduce them.
4. Develop a classroom action plan to ensure that students know what to do when they observe confrontation, harassment, and/or bullying. (*See district resource list.*)
5. Teach cooperation by assigning projects that require collaboration. Such cooperation teaches students how to compromise and how to assert without demanding.

When Bullying and/or Harassment Occur

1. Take immediate action when harassment and/or bullying are observed. All teachers and school staff must let children know that they care and will not allow anyone to be mistreated by taking immediate action and by dealing directly with the bully.
2. Notify the administration of both victims and bullies when an incident is observed or reported, and seek to resolve the problem expeditiously at school. Document notification to parents/guardians on the Harassment and Bullying Reporting Form.
3. Listen receptively to students and parents and refer parents to administrators so that immediate and appropriate school action may be taken.
4. Confront bullies in private. Challenging a bully in front of his/her peers may actually enhance his/her status and lead to further aggression.

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Strategies for Students Dealing with Classmates

Students may not know what to do when they observe a classmate being bullied or experience such victimization themselves. Classroom discussions and activities may help students develop a variety of appropriate actions that they can take when they witness or experience such victimization.

For instance, depending on the situation and their own level of comfort, students may:

1. Seek immediate help from an adult;
2. Report harassment and bullying incidents to school personnel;
3. Speak up and/or offer support to the victim when they see him/her being bullied; for example, picking up the victim's books and handing them to him or her;
4. Support those being hurt with words of kindness;
5. Express disapproval of harassment and bullying behavior by not joining in the laughter, teasing, or spreading of rumors or gossip.

Strategies for Students Dealing with Staff Members:

Students

Any student who feels that he or she has been the victim of bullying or harassment should report this to any teacher, administrator, guidance counselor, nurse, Principal, Assistant Principal, or Dean of Students. If the adult feels he/she cannot help resolve the situation, or needs further advice, this adult will refer the complaint to the Principal, Assistant Principal, or Dean of Students. The Principal, Assistant Principal, or Dean of Students will review and investigate the complaint.

If the complaint from the student is about a staff member, the Principal, Assistant Principal, or Dean of Students will use his/her discretion to determine whether or not the student can continue in his/her current setting during the school day while the investigation takes place.

During the investigation process the Principal, Assistant Principal, or Dean of Students will ensure the safety of the student and may choose one or more methods to do so. Two examples include: putting a Teaching Assistant in the classroom where the staff member and student will be together; putting the staff member on leave with pay during the investigation.

Determination Stage

The person accepting the complaint will make an initial determination whether bullying or harassment exists. If he/she determines that it does not exist, then he/she may explore other options for resolving the issue.

If a determination is made that it does exist, the person making the allegations will be encouraged to write out, if possible, the allegations explaining the impact this experience has had on him/her. The complaint will then be advanced to "Stage 1: Building-based Investigation and Resolution."

Stage 1: Building-based Investigation and Resolution

Within two (2) school days, unless there are extenuating circumstances of receiving a referral, the Principal, Assistant Principal, or supervisor will meet with the person alleged to be the subject of bullying or harassment to discuss the matter and begin the investigation. After conducting an appropriate investigation, the person investigating will determine the severity of the behavior.

Resolution of the situation may or may not occur as a result of this stage of the process. If all parties

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involved with the situation feel that a resolution has been achieved, no further action will be taken. However, if any of the parties or the person investigating feel that resolution has not been achieved; participants will be encouraged to continue to seek resolution at this stage. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved, the complaint will be referred to the Superintendent of Schools for further investigation and action towards resolution.

Stage 2: Superintendent's Investigation and Recommendations

If the complaint is referred to the Superintendent of Schools before it is resolved, the Superintendent shall fully investigate the complaint, issue appropriate findings and recommendations, and take appropriate actions within a reasonable time (within 30 days). Parties will be given an opportunity to submit additional relevant information.

The Superintendent will prepare a written report containing:

- the facts and circumstances of the incident(s);
- a summary of the investigation process;
- a description of any actions already taken or proposed by school personnel.

Copies of this report will be given to the parties involved (except for information that would be in violation of state or federal law) within approximately 5 school days after the Superintendent's investigation is completed. Copies will be kept in the student's file and in the discipline/complaints notebook for the student's grade level.

An Individual's Rights Under State and Federal Law

In addition to the above, the complainant may pursue his/her rights under the law and file a formal complaint with the government agencies below. The agencies have a 6-month time period for filing a complaint.

Massachusetts Commission
Against Discrimination
1 Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108
617-727-3990

United States Equal Employment
Opportunity Commission
10 Congress Street – 10th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
617-565-3200

Source:

Preventing Bullying

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