

MODEL POLICY ON
BULLYING
FOR SCHOOLS IN DUPAGE COUNTY

Preamble

An Anti-Bullying task force was convened in DuPage County under the Chairmanship of the Honorable James E. Ryan and co-chaired by Dr. Darlene Ruscitti, DuPage Regional Superintendant of Schools and the Honorable Joseph E. Birkett, DuPage State's Attorney. The purpose of this task force includes the creation of a model policy on Bullying to be used by all schools in DuPage County.

The purpose of such a Model Policy is to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that no student will be subject to any bullying and to otherwise secure a safe, orderly and respectful environment that promotes teaching and learning. This Model Policy also includes a definition of Bullying that was developed by the DuPage County Anti-Bullying Task Force and that will ensure consistency in the enforcement of the Bullying Policy in all educational environments in the County. All Task Force participants, including the school district, the State's Attorney and the Regional Office of Education, agree to cooperate with each other in the implementation of this Policy and continued review of this Policy as may be needed. The partners further agree that system wide education regarding the issue of Bullying, its behaviors and consequences is an essential component to protecting our children.

A feature of this Policy is the Committee Comments to each section. The purpose of these Comments is to provide practical examples to assist in the interpretation and application of the Policy.

I. The Illinois School Code

The Illinois General Assembly finds that "a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with students' ability to learn and participate in school activities....Because of the negative outcomes associated with bullying in schools, the General Assembly finds that school districts and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools should educate students, parents, and school district personnel about what behaviors constitute prohibited bullying." 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7

and

"Every school district shall create and maintain a policy on bullying and must communicate its policy to students and their parents on an annual basis."

II. Bullying Defined

Bullying is any type of conduct that may:

1. Reflect a coercive **imbalance of power**; AND
2. Is purposeful and **repeated**; AND
3. Places an individual in **reasonable** fear of **substantial** detrimental effect to his or her person or property or to otherwise substantially interfere in participating in any activity.

Committee Comments

Conduct includes physical acts, such as physical contact with another, stalking, sexual assault and destruction or damage to property of another. Conduct ALSO includes written and electronic communication in any medium, including the internet, as well as verbal threats made to another or blackmail, or demands for protection money. Non-verbal threats or intimidation such as aggressive or menacing gestures may also be considered conduct for purposes of this policy.

In addition to that conduct described above, examples of conduct that may constitute bullying include the following:

Blocking access to school property or facilities;

Stealing or hiding or otherwise defacing books, backpacks or other personal possessions;

Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking put-downs, or demeaning humor relating to a student's race, color, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics, whether or not the student actually possesses them, that could reasonably be expected to result in the disruption of school activities or that results in a hostile educational environment for the student.

Conduct that would not ordinarily be considered bullying for purposes of this policy include:

Mere teasing

“talking trash”

Trading of insults

The expression of ideas or beliefs (expressions protected by the First Amendment) so long as such expression is not lewd or profane.

Each school district may set rules or policies for civility, courtesy and responsible behavior to address conduct of this type.

III. Bullying is prohibited

Bullying is NOT acceptable and is strictly prohibited. Bullying conduct that is covered by this policy is conduct that occurs on school property, while students are being transported to or from school, at a school sanctioned event, with any fellow student at any time or the conduct would impede the educational environment regardless of where the conduct occurs.

Any student who engages in bullying shall be subject to any appropriate discipline, including suspension or expulsion and any criminal sanction. A student's bullying conduct may also be addressed through any other behavioral interventions.

Any student who is a bystander to any bullying conduct and who fails to take any action to discourage the bullying conduct shall also be subject to appropriate discipline. No student shall be retaliated against for reporting such conduct. Any student who is determined to have falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to appropriate discipline.

Committee Comments

The highest risk location for bullying occurs:

- On the school bus
- Walking to and from school
- School playground
- Cafeteria
- Locker room
- Bathrooms
- Internet and cellular phones

This Policy applies to school bullying that may occur at any of these locations.

For purposes of this Policy, a **bystander** to bullying is a witness to bullying conduct by aiding or abetting the bully. This aiding and abetting includes standing idly by, looking away or otherwise actively encouraging the bully.

Responding to bullying: In determining the appropriate response/discipline to students who engage in bullying behavior, the school's administration should consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type, frequency and any pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incidents occurred, and any other relevant circumstances.

IV. Report and Investigation

The School shall develop a reporting procedure which shall include, to the extent possible, a written report. Anyone who witnesses any conduct that could constitute bullying shall make such report as soon as possible to any school staff member. This report shall then be submitted to the principal who shall immediately conduct a thorough investigation of the alleged incident, and thereafter, impose appropriate discipline or intervention.

The police and State's Attorney shall be immediately notified of all incidents involving bodily harm, property damage or any conduct which would be a violation of the criminal laws. The investigation of any such bullying conduct shall proceed with the consent and in cooperation with the police and law enforcement.

V. Notification / Training

Students and Parents and guardians shall be notified of this Policy annually through receipt of the school's Handbook. The Policy is also posted on the school's website.

The school shall include a program on bullying prevention and character instruction appropriate to all grade levels. Such a prevention program includes incorporating student social and emotional development as required by state law.

All partners to this agreement understand the importance of the most current and up-to-date information on issues relating to bullying and agree to utilize their best efforts in participating in training and sharing information on this important topic.

Committee Comments

The Committee recommends that the Task Force develop an "Anti-Bullying Pledge" that all students, parents and all school personnel shall sign at the beginning of each school year.