

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING – ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

This procedure is intended as guidance for the school principal or superintendent's designee to address an alleged bullying incident. It provides definitions as well as steps for reporting, responding to, and remediating allegations of bullying.

Behavior alleged to be based on a targeted student's actual or perceived race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation (including gender identity and expression), religion or disability should be addressed under the Student Harassment and Sexual Harassment procedure (ACAA).

A. Definitions

The following terms are defined in Maine Public Law, Chapter 659 and {20-A MRSA § 6554}:

Bullying

"Bullying" includes, but is not limited to a written, oral or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a student or students that

1. Has, or a reasonable person would expect it to have, the effect of
 - a) Physically harming a student or damaging a student's property; or
 - b) Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to his/her property;OR
2. Interferes with the rights of a student by:
 - a) Creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment for the student; or
 - b) Interfering with the student's academic performance or ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by the school; ~~or~~OR
3. Is based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, physical or mental disability, gender, sexual orientation, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based on a student's association with a person with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, and that has the effect described in sub paragraph 1 or 2 above.

Cyberbullying

"Cyberbullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted by the use of any electronic device, including, but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, text messaging device or personal digital assistant.

Retaliation

“Retaliation means” an act or gesture against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. “Retaliation” can also knowingly false reporting of bullying.

School Grounds

“School grounds” means a school building; property on which a school building or facility is located; and property that is owned, leased or used by a school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training. “School grounds” also includes school-related transportation vehicles.

Alternative Discipline

“Alternative discipline” means disciplinary action other than suspension or expulsion from school that is designed to correct and address the root causes of a student’s specific misbehavior while retaining the student in class or school, or restorative school practices to repair the harm done to relationships and persons from the student’s misbehavior.

B. Bullying Reports

Bullying or suspected bullying is reportable in person or in writing (including anonymously) to school personnel using R.S.U. No. 67’s Reporting Form (JICK-E1).

School staff, coaches and advisors for extracurricular and co-curricular activities are required to report alleged incidents of bullying to the school principal or other school personnel designated by the superintendent. Any other adult working or volunteering in a school will be encouraged to promptly report observed or suspected alleged incidents of bullying to the building principal or school personnel designated by the superintendent.

Students who believe they have been bullied or are aware of incidents of bullying are strongly encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or school administrator.

Parents/guardians and other adults who believe that an incident of bullying has occurred are encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or school administrator.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of bullying are prohibited. Any student who is determined to have knowingly falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Reports of alleged bullying may be made anonymously, except by school staff, coaches and advisors, but in no instance will ~~no~~ disciplinary action be taken against any person or organization affiliated with the schools solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The school principal or superintendent's designee will forward a copy of the completed Reporting form to the superintendent.

C. Safety Measures

The school principal or superintendent's designee will communicate to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied the measures being taken to ensure the safety of the student who was believed to have been bullied and to prevent further acts of bullying.

These measures are documented on the Responding Form (JICK-E2).

D. Responding/Investigation

The school principal or superintendent's designee will:

- Ensure that all reports of alleged bullying are investigated and responded to promptly and that documentation of the investigation is provided to the Superintendent within a reasonable period of time using the Responding Form (JICK-E2).
- Inform parent(s) or guardians of the student(s) who was alleged to have bullied AND of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied that a report of an alleged incident of bullying has been made;
- Communicate to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student(s) who was believed to have been bullied the measures being taken to ensure the safety of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied and to prevent further acts of bullying;
- Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of the students involved the findings of the investigation and actions to be taken;
- Communicate with local or state law enforcement agency if it's believed that the pursuit of criminal charges or a civil action under the Maine Civil Rights Act may be appropriate.

E. Remediation

If it is determined that there is a substantiated incident of bullying, the school principal or superintendent's designee will:

- Determine the specific nature(s) of the incident, alternative discipline actions, and appropriate consequences;
- Complete Remediation Form (JICK-E3);
- Provide a copy of the Remediation Form to the superintendent; and

- Assure that the substantiated incident of bullying is reported to the Maine Department of Education.

F. Appeals

The parent(s) or guardian(s) and student must be notified of the right to appeal the school principal's or superintendent's designees' decision related to taking or not taking remedial action as identified in the appeals procedure as established by the school board.

Legal Reference: 20-A § 6554(2)(A)

Cross Reference: ACAA-R – Student Harassment and Sexual Harassment Procedure
JICK – Bullying
JRA-R – Student Education Records and Student Information

Adopted: January 2, 2013

Revised: October 20, 2020