

# Bullying Procedural Plan

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School Districts take the welfare of students seriously. Any time a school system employee has reasonable cause to believe that a student is involved in bully/victim behavior, the following responsibilities and procedures should be considered.

Schools shall make every effort to in-service school employees on bullying protocol yearly. After identifying bully/victim behavior the following questions should be considered:

1. Is the bullying behavior repeated against the same person?
2. Does the victim appear to be a weaker individual?
3. Is the bullying student more powerful than the student being bullied?
4. Is a group of students ganging up on a single student?
5. Are the bullying behaviors on-going, repeated, and over time? Is there a pattern of behavior?
6. Does the person being bullied exemplify someone who has poor social skills?
7. Has the person being bullied asked the students to stop bullying? When and how often?
8. Has the student reported bullying to others (staff, parents, students)?
9. Is the student alone when the bullying is taking place?
10. Does the person being bullied have few or no friends?
11. Is the person being bullied hard to like (provocative)?
12. Does the person being bullied have a number of absences or tardies?
13. Does the person being bullied visit and complain to the nurse?
14. Does the student being bullied provoke other students after being victimized?
15. Could the person being bullied be a bullying person or a provocative victim who was once bullied and now bullies as a way of staying safe?
16. Is the person being bullied less popular than the bullying student(s)?

17. Is the bullying behavior more covert or overt?

18. Are *uninvolved* students victimizing by sending a messenger to do the bullying?

When a person being bullied threatens others or brings a weapon to school to defend himself, questions should be asked to ascertain why the student feels the need to threaten others.

When a student is being bullied, it is imperative to develop a safety plan identifying where the bullying is taking place and preventing it from reoccurring. Additionally, it is important to

1. Meet with the person being bullied and the person doing the bullying separately on an on-going basis to monitor the situation. Is it moving into covert behavior?
2. Communicate with each set of parents and identify the behavior as bully/victim behavior. Give specific examples of how bully/victim behavior manifests itself and how the parents can be proactive and cooperative when developing an action plan.
3. With students demonstrating bullying behavior, balance natural and logical consequences with pro-social behaviors. The goal is to channel the anger into pro-social activities such as community service, mentoring, tutoring, doing for others, etc. Some schools have had some success in offering social skill modules in in-school detention settings.
4. Student who are victimized are asked to log behavior. Discuss with the person being bullied that the information will be kept confidential. If the behavior is not life threatening, after a specified time (a few weeks) ask the student to share his/her log with a trusted staff member. The staff member, after reporting the incident to the administration, will assist the student to develop a safety plan. One plan might involve increasing supervision in identified hotspots. In another, a counselor may role-play how students might support the person being bullied.

## **Bullying Protocol**

Questions regarding liability in bullying situations are frequently raised. There appears to be a common law pertaining to the issue of standard of care exercised by school officials who are acting *in loco parentis*. While there is no statute authority, we believe it is the best interest of the educational community to expect school officials to behave as a *reasonable person* while students are legitimately on the premises, participating in extra-curricular activities, in after-school programs, on the school bus, at the school bus

stop, or walking to and from school. If an individual knows or has reason to believe that a student is being bullied repeatedly, and overtime by one or more students, that official has the responsibility to take action as a reasonable person in a *loco parentis* situation.

Failure to act to prevent harm to the student creates the potential for a negligent action against the individual in authority and/or the school system. Suffice it to say, the final decision would be determined by a jury who would consider whether or not failure to act led to injury of the student and if lack of action, supervision, or safety plan constituted negligence. To prevent the possibility of such a situation occurring and the probability of civil action being taken by the parents or guardians of said student against school officials, it is strongly recommended that such an event be addressed by the following actions:

1. Each year the principal should arrange for the staff to be **briefed on bully/victim behaviors**.
2. If a student reports a bully/victim incident, a school official should **intervene immediately** to prevent additional bullying. Remember, **address it as bullying behavior**. It is better to over-react than under-react. Do not dismiss the behavior as tattling if the student reporting is trying to keep another student safe. Also, do not tell the person being bullied to stand up to the person bullying. Research states that the person being bullied is chosen because of perceived weakness so standing up may cause the condition to worsen.
3. When intervening, describe specifics of bullying behavior; refer to posted class rules and natural and logical consequences for bullying.
4. After separating the students, **engage the victim first** and reassure him /her that bullying behavior will not be tolerated. Direct the person being bullied to share what's happening and how he/she feels about it. Ask him/her to log any future bully/victim situations for the purpose of providing documentation. Reassure the person being bullied that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence. Involve the victim in a peer support group, orienting new students, natural helpers, or cooperative learning groups.
5. Then, **confront the perpetrator(s) and give immediate sanctions** for his/her behavior (i.e. isolating the perpetrator from the rest of the class, loss of recess, removing the student from the classroom.) Do not bring the parties together to apologize nor offer mediation. A power imbalance may result in an intimidating situation and fear for the person being bullied.
6. If more than one perpetrator is involved in the bullying incident, **talk with each of the perpetrators separately** beginning with the lead perpetrator. If appropriate, read aloud the bullying incidence report that the person being bullied wrote. Use a no-nonsense, direct style. Reinforce that there will be additional consequences if bullying continues. Expect the perpetrator to minimize and deny his/her actions. Remember to

state the future behavior that you expect the perpetrator(s) to model and express confidence in his/her ability. If the perpetrator continues bullying despite efforts by the school personnel, he/she (and not the victim) should be removed and transferred to another setting. The consequences should set the tone for future occurrences. In many instances, the student responding defensively to bullying is perceived as the student who initiated the conflict.

7. When a student is reported for bullying, a staff member observing the bullying behavior should consult with administration and other teachers, as well as staff, to get a wider reading on the problem, and to alert other adults to the bullying behavior. If possible, a **bullying log** should be made available centrally so that bullying incidents and hotspots can be recorded.

8. Inform the parents of the bully/victim behavior as quickly as possible. A call home the same day is preferable, followed by an appointment at school for the parents, if deemed necessary. Better results are obtained when parents are involved early in a bully/victim situation, before patterns are entrenched and extremely serious. Asking a resource officer to be present in the meeting with a parent who exemplifies bullying behavior might be beneficial. **The parents and school officials should be involved in designing a creative plan of action**, whenever possible. It is recommended, however, not to bring the conflicting parties together.

In summary, when someone reports being bullied, the following skills are suggested:

- a. be a good listener and demonstrate active listening;
- b. restate what the student is saying (*So, you're saying that . . .*);
- c. ask how the student is feeling (*How do you feel about the bullying?*);
- d. ask specifics about the type of bullying and location;
- e. ask if the bullying is **R**epeated, **I**ntentional, and **P**ower-based;
- f. ask how long it has been a pattern of behavior;
- g. ask who had been involved in the bullying and identify any witnesses;
- h. keep the report confidential;
- i. log any future bullying behavior by staff and person being bullied;
- j. confide in other adults about the bullying behavior;
- k. develop an adequate safety plan and observe hotspots for the bullying;
- l. check in daily with the person being bullied and person bullying;
- m. ask the perpetrator to complete a reflection form; and

n. if a student demonstrates any suicidal/homicidal behavior, refer to the counselor immediately.