

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TOLEDO
BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY AND PLAN FOR SCHOOLS

Introduction

The Diocese of Toledo and the Catholic Schools Office believe that all of our Catholic schools must be aware that their purpose is rooted in the mission of the Church and the message of Jesus Christ.

It is essential that a safe, positive and productive educational environment be established where students can achieve the highest academic standards, where no student shall be subjected to bullying, intimidation or harassment.

Pastors, principals, faculty, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and any other school support staff, are to expect that all students and staff behave appropriately and treat others with civility and respect.

Bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated in any of our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Toledo.

A. Bullying by Definition:

Bullying, harassment or intimidation means any of the following: Any intentional written, verbal, electronic (cyber-bullying), physical act, or any other similar behavior that a student or staff member has exhibited toward another student which:

- (1.) Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property.
- (2.) Places another student in reasonable fear of harm or of damage to property.
- (3.) Creates a hostile environment at school for another student.
- (4.) Infringes on the rights of another student at school.
- (5.) Disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school or classroom and alters the conditions of another student's education.
- (6.) Is a form of "retaliation" meaning any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports any misconduct, provides information during an investigation of bullying, witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
- (7.) Is considered electronic bullying (cyber-bullying) meaning bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, or data of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by:
 - a) Wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.
 - b) The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.
 - c) The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

B. Bullying is Prohibited:

- (1.) On school grounds owned/ leased/used by a school or on property immediately adjacent to school grounds.

- (2.) At any school-sponsored or related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds.
- (3.) At a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, when there are possible ramifications for students or adults in the school.
- (4.) At a school bus stop, on a school bus or any other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school.
- (5.) Through the use of technology or electronic device owned, leased or used by a school.
- (6.) Through the use of technology or an electronic device not owned, leased or used by a school if the act or acts in question:
 - a. Create a hostile environment at school for the target.
 - b. Infringe on the rights of the target at school.
 - c. Materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

C. Prevention and Intervention Plan:

On or before October 1, 2012, the Principal, in consultation with teachers, staff, administrators, parents, community representatives, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as Ohio and federal laws, shall be responsible for overseeing the development and establishment of a prevention and intervention anti-bullying plan for their respective building.

The plan shall include the following:

- (1.) Clear procedures for reporting prohibited incidents for students, faculty, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and all other school support staff.
- (2.) A provision that reports of bullying, harassment, intimidation may be made anonymously, so that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- (3.) A requirement that school personnel report prohibited incidents of which they are aware to the school principal or other administrator designated by the principal.
- (4.) In cases where the aggressor or target is not students at this school, information shall be disclosed to the principal or appropriate administrator of the public, private or charter school in which the student is enrolled.
- (5.) A requirement that the custodial parent(s) or guardian(s) of any student involved in a prohibited incident is notified.
- (6.) A procedure for documenting reported incidents, responses to incidents including steps taken to investigate reported incidents.
- (7.) A strategy for protecting a victim or other person from new or additional harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and from retaliation following a report, including a means by which a person may report an incident anonymously.
- (8.) A strategy for providing counseling or outside referral to appropriate services for aggressors, targets and family members of students as needed.
- (9.) A disciplinary procedure for any student guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, that infringes on any student's rights and expressly providing for the possibility of suspension of a student found responsible for harassment, intimidation, or bullying.
- (10.) A range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an aggressor for bullying or retaliation provided that the disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.
- (11.) A statement and a disciplinary procedure prohibiting students from deliberately making false reports of harassment, intimidation, or bullying and for any student responsible for deliberately making a false report.
- (12.) Provisions for informing parents and guardians about the anti-bullying prevention and intervention plan of the school and shall include how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school and the dynamics of any and all forms of bullying.
- (13.) A strategy for introducing the plan to all students/families.

(14.) A strategy to ensure a parent or legal guardian signs off confirming that the plan was read.

D. Plan Review and Updates:

The plan shall be reviewed and updated preferably every year, but at least every two years and the principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the anti-bullying prevention and implementation plan within the school.

E. Training:

Regular training on the plan shall be provided for staff, students, parents, faculty, counselors, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and all other school support staff.

Such anti-bullying training may include, but not be limited to:

- (1.) Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents.
- (2.) Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents.
- (3.) Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target and witnesses to the bullying.
- (4.) 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.
- (5.) Information on cyber-bullying emphasizing Internet safety.

F. Publication and Notice:

The plan shall be posted on the school's website and included in student and employee handbooks.

G. Reporting:

A member of the staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or to the staff member designated in the plan as responsible for receiving such reports.

H. Minimum Required Actions:

If the principal or his/her designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he/she shall:

- (1.) Take appropriate disciplinary action as stated in the plan.
- (2.) Notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor and target and inform them of the disciplinary action and action to be taken to prevent any further acts.

If an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or his/her designee informed of such incident shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he/she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

I. Policy Questions and / or Concerns:

If any staff member has questions concerning this policy, he or she is encouraged to contact the Catholic Schools Office at 419.244.6711.