

Bullying Prevention & Intervention Procedure

Tri County Schools follows these procedures in addressing bullying and harassment

Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the goal of TCS to provide an optimum learning environment in which staff is able to meet both the social/emotional needs of students as well as their educational needs. In doing so, all TCS students are provided with the opportunity to achieve academic success. In order to do this, the environment must feel safe to all students. • This procedure is intended to ensure the safety and well-being of all TCS students and staff. It outlines the procedure to follow when a student or staff feels that a student is being bullied. It ensures that TCS is meeting all of the regulatory and licensing requirement put forth by DESE. • Due to the population of TCS, it is imperative that there be a heightened vigilance for cases of bullying.
Person Responsible	The Director of Educational Programing will ensure that this procedure is followed should an incident of bullying or harassment occur at TCS.
Policy Content	<p>Complaint and Investigation Procedures for Reported Bullying</p> <p>A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation: Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. Reports made by students, parents, guardians, or other individuals who are not school staff members may also be made anonymously, although no student shall be subject to discipline solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint. Tri-County Schools will track a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address. (use of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report.)</p> <p>Tri-County Schools will include a copy of The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form in the beginning of the school year Welcome Back Packets for parents/guardians. The Student Handbook and Agency website will include a copy of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Procedure and reporting form. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form can be made available in the school's main office, the counseling offices, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined to be appropriate by the director or designee. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form will be made available in the primary language of the student's household.</p>

1. Reporting by Staff :

A staff member will promptly report to the director any instances of bullying or retaliation witnessed by the staff member or that is reported to the staff member by a student, parent/guardian, or other individual. The requirement to notify the director shall not, however, limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents/Guardians, and Others:

Tri-County Schools expects students, parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the director. Any individual who wishes to file such a complaint may request, and shall be provided with assistance from a school staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the director. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The filing of a false or fabricated complaint of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is strictly prohibited and shall result in disciplinary action.

B. Procedures for Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

1. Preliminary Determinations:

Upon receiving a complaint, the director or designee will confer with the complainant within 48 hours to obtain an understanding and statement of the alleged facts. If, based on the facts alleged, the director determines that the conduct complained of would not constitute bullying as defined by M.G.L.c.71 370; the director shall document that determination on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form and shall take no action with regard to the complaint. If the director determines that such facts, if true, would constitute bullying, as defined above, the director will commence an investigation of the complaint within 48 hours. Upon commencing an investigation, the director will make a preliminary determination as to the need for immediate interventions to protect the safety of the alleged target. Such interventions may include, but are not limited to, creating a safety plan for the target; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a " safe person" for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule to access the target. The director may take additional steps deemed necessary by the school administration to protect the safety of the target and any witnesses while the investigation is ongoing.

2. Notice to Law Enforcement:

At any point after receiving a report of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, the director will immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency if the director has a reasonable basis to believe that

criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. Notice to law enforcement agencies will be consistent with the requirements of 603CMR49.00 and other applicable state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to student records and privacy. In making this determination, the director may also consult with any other individuals the director or designee deems appropriate.

3. Notice to Another School District:

If the alleged bullying involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the director or designee first informed of the incident will immediately notify by telephone the director or designee of the other school (s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR49.00.

4. Notice to Bus Companies:

If the alleged bullying involves students on a school bus, the director or designee first informed of the incident will immediately notify by telephone the manager or designee of the bus company along with the director or designee of the school district responsible for contracting with the bus company of the incident so that each entity may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

C. Investigation Procedures

1. Investigation:

Upon receipt of a report or complaint that would, if true, constitute bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, the director will commence an investigation within 48 hours. In investigating any such complaint, the director or designee will interview students, staff, and any witnesses to the alleged conduct to the extent practical and consistent with the director's obligation to promptly and thoroughly investigate and address the matter. The director or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process and shall not disclose unnecessary or confidential information to interview subjects. During any such interviews, the director will inform the target, aggressor, and all witnesses that retaliatory treatment of any individual for reporting or cooperating with an investigation of bullying will result in disciplinary action that may include suspension or expulsion from school.

2. Determinations:

Within five (5) schooldays of the director's receipt of the complaint of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation, the director will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the director will determine what remedial action may be required, if any, and determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. The findings and

determinations shall be documented in writing on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Reporting Form. If the director or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student maybe subject to action.

3. Notice of Investigative Findings:

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the director or designee will immediately notify the parents/guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. While prior notice of an investigation shall not be required; the director shall not be precluded from notifying the parents/guardians of a target or aggressor prior to completion of the investigation.

In notifying the parents/guardians of a target or aggressor of an investigation or the director's findings thereon, the director shall maintain the privacy and confidentiality of any individual or child who is not the child of the parents to whom the notice is provided. The director shall ensure that any notice to the parents complies with applicable state regulations including, but not limited to, 603 CMR49.00, and shall not report specific information to the target's parent(s) about the disciplinary action taken against an aggressor unless it involves a "stay order" or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

4. Requests for Reconsideration:

If either the complaining party or the individual against whom the complaint was made is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, that person may request, in writing opening the investigation or reconsideration of the investigative findings. The written request shall state the reasons for request and shall be delivered to the Executive Director of the Northeast Center for Youths and Families within ten (10) school days of the parents/guardians receipt of any such request. The Executive Director or designee shall decide whether or not to reopen the investigation and shall provide written notification of that determination to the appealing party and to the other party involved. The filing of a request for reconsideration or a reopening of the investigation shall not state the imposition of disciplinary sanctions or the implementation of any safety interventions determined to be appropriate by the director.

D. Responses to Bullying

1. Education and Skill Building:

In determining the appropriate response to an incident of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, the director shall consider arrange of responses that balance the need for accountability-with the need to teach appropriate behavior.M.G.L.c.71370 (d) (v). Skill-building approaches that the director or designee may consider include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing a range of academic and non-academic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals
- Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities.

2. Disciplinary Action:

If the director determines that disciplinary action is warranted, the disciplinary sanction will be determined on the basis of facts found by the director, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Students found to have engaged in bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation may be subject to a range of disciplinary consequences including but not limited to reprimand detention, suspension, expulsion of other students as determined by the director. Any such disciplinary sanctions shall be imposed in accordance with the due process requirements of applicable laws regulations and school policies.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others:

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the director shall, in conjunction with relevant school personnel, consider what adjustments or interventions, if any are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of any witnesses. Any such adjustments or interventions to be provided for the target shall be documented in writing in an Individual Safety Plan. Individual Safety Plans shall include, but are not limited to: designating a "safe person"(a staff member whom has regular contact with the target(s), whom the target feels comfortable with, and has direct access to); enhanced vigilance of staff member(s) who have direct contact with the target(s) and perpetrator(s); drop in status level for the perpetrator (s); and the appropriation of information on the course of events on a need-to-know basis with Tri-County Schools staff. Individual Safety Plans will be in writing and added to the student's file.

Training

- All school staff will receive an annual in-service training on this topic.