

Students

Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment

Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to education. Preventing students from engaging in these disruptive behaviors and providing all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment are important Cooperative goals.

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic **is prohibited** in each of the following situations:

1. During any school sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities.
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accesses at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the Cooperative or school, if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph (item #4) applies only when a cooperative administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred; it does not require the Cooperative or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function or program.

Definitions from Section 27-23.7 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7)

Bullying includes *cyber-bullying* and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health.
3. Substantially interfering with the student's academic performance.
4. Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Cyber-bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant message, or facsimile communication. *Cyber-bullying* includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition or *bullying* in this Policy. *Cyber-bullying* also includes the distribution by electronic means of communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic

medium that may be accessed by one or more persons of the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of *bullying* in this Policy.

Restorative measures means a continuum of Cooperative/school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the cooperative, school, and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

School personnel means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in the Cooperative, including without limitation to cooperative administrators, teachers, social workers, school psychologists, nurses, speech therapists, and/or other related service personnel.

Bullying, intimidation, and/or harassment may take various forms, including without limitation: threats, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Bullying Prevention and Response Plan

The Executive Director or designee shall develop and maintain a bullying prevention and response plan that advances the cooperative's goal of providing all students with a safe learning environment free of bullying and harassment. The plan must be consistent with this Policy and the requirements listed below; each numbered requirement, 1-12, corresponds with the same number in the list of required policy components in 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7(b) 1-12.

1. The Cooperative uses the definition of *bullying* as provided in this policy.
2. *Bullying* is contrary to State law and the policy of this Cooperative. However, nothing in this Policy or the Cooperative's bullying prevention and response plan is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution. This policy or the Cooperative's bullying prevention and response plan shall not be interpreted to prevent a victim of bullying from seeking redress under any other Cooperative policy or available law.
3. Students are encouraged to immediately report bullying to school personnel. A report may be made orally or in writing to the Cooperative Complaint Manager or any staff member with whom the student is comfortable. Anyone including staff members and parents/guardians, who has information about actual, suspected, or threatened bullying is encouraged to report it to the Cooperative Complaint Manager or any staff member. Anonymous reports are also accepted by telephone or submitting a written statement to the Cooperative Complaint Manager.

Complaint Managers:

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4. Consistent with federal and State law and rules governing student privacy rights, the Executive Director or designee shall promptly inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student involved in an alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.
5. The Executive Director or designee shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying, including, but not necessarily limited to, completing the following:
 - a. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation with ten (10) school days after the date the report of a bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported bullying incident.
 - b. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
 - c. Notifying the Building Principal or Cooperative administrator or designee of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.
 - d. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the Building Principal or Cooperative administrator or designee to discuss the investigation, the findings if the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The Executive Director or designee shall develop and implement a process to investigate whether a reported incident of bullying is within the permissible scope of the Cooperative's jurisdiction and to provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the Cooperative and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs

6. The Executive Director or designee shall use interventions to address bullying, that may include, but not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.
7. A reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying **is prohibited**. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as an act of *bullying* for the purposes of determining any disciplinary action or other appropriate remedial actions. Disciplinary and/or remedial actions for reprisal or retaliation may include, but are not limited to, participation in restorative measures, loss of privileges, suspension, or expulsion.
8. A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information related to an alleged incident of bullying, even if the Cooperative's investigation concluded that no bullying occurred. However, making an accusation or providing information that a student knows or reasonably should know is false will be treated as an act of *bullying* for the purposes of determining any disciplinary action or other appropriate remedial actions. Disciplinary and/or remedial actions for falsely accusing another person of bullying may include, but are not limited to, participation in restorative measures, loss of privileges, suspension, or expulsion.
9. The Cooperative's bullying prevention and response plan must be based on the engagement of a range of stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians.
10. The Executive Director or designee shall post this Policy on the Cooperative's Internet website, if any, and include it in the student handbook, and where applicable, post it where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school(s). The Policy must also be distributed annually to parents/guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.
11. The Cooperative will conduct a review and re-evaluation of this Policy, and make any necessary and appropriate revisions, every two years. This Policy must be filed with the State Board of Education after being updated. As part of the review and re-evaluation, the Executive Director or

designee shall assess this Policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, without limitation, assessing the following factors:

- a. The frequency of victimization;
- b. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school;
- c. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
- d. The types of bullying utilized; and
- e. Bystander intervention or participation.

The Cooperative may use relevant data and information that it already collects for other purposes in the evaluation. The Executive Director or designee must post the information developed as a result of the evaluation on the Cooperative's Internet website, or if a website is not available, provide the information through other means to Cooperative administrators, Board members, Cooperative personnel, parent/guardians and students.

12. The bullying prevention and response plan must be consistent with Board policies, such as the following:
 - a. 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*. A student may use this policy to complain about bullying.
 - b. 6:60, *Curriculum Content*. Bullying prevention and character instruction is provided in all grades in accordance with State law.
 - c. 6:65, *Student Social and Emotional Development*. Student social and emotional development is incorporated into the Cooperative's educational program as required by State law.
 - d. 7:20, *Harassment of Students Prohibited*. This policy prohibits any person from harassing, intimidating, or bullying a student based on an identified actual or perceived characteristic that is identified in the policy.
 - e. 7:190, *Student Discipline*. This policy prohibits and provides consequences for hazing, bullying, or other aggressive behaviors, or urging other students to engage in such conduct.
 - f. 7:185, *Teen Dating Violence Prohibited*. This Policy prohibits teen dating violence on school property, at school sponsored activities, and in vehicles used for school-provided transportation.
 - g. 7:310, *Restrictions on Publications*. This policy prohibits students from and provides consequences for: (i) accessing and/or distributing at school any written, printed, or electronic material, including material from the Internet, that will cause substantial disruption of the proper and orderly operation and discipline of the school or school activities, and (ii) creating and/or distributing written, printed, or electronic material, including photographs and Internet material and blogs, that causes substantial disruption to school operations or interferes with the right of other students or staff members.
 - h. 6:235, *Access to Electronic Networks*. This policy states that the use of the Cooperative's electronic networks is limited to: (1) support of education and/or research, or (2) a legitimate business use. It subjects any individual to the loss of privileges, disciplinary action, and or appropriate legal actions for violating the Cooperative's Authorization of Electronic Network Access.

This policy is not intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 or 4 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

LEGAL REF.: 405ILCS/49/, Children's Mental Health Act.
105 ILCS 5/10-20.14, 5/24-24, and 5/27-23.7.
23 Ill. Admin.Code §§1.240 and §1.280.

Adopted: May 29, 2012

First Reading (Revision): February 24, 2015

Second Reading (Revision): March 31, 2015

Adopted (Revision): March 31, 2015