

Policy 6.015

Policy on Bullying Behavior

Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) recognizes that it is the responsibility of program personnel to maintain a secure and safe school climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior in school, school-sponsored activities on or off school grounds and transportation to and from school. Therefore, bullying behavior, of any form, will not be tolerated.

Consistent with legislative requirements the C.E.S. Executive Director is authorized to develop and implement a Safe School Climate Plan that contains the essential elements outlined in Public Act 11-232 *An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws*, Public Act 19-166 *An Act Concerning School Climates* and Public Act 21-95, *An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes*.

Bullying takes many forms and may include many different behaviors, such as, but not limited to:

1. Physical violence and attacks;
2. Verbal harassment or taunts, name-calling and use of disparaging language, including disability-, ethnically- or racially-based verbal abuse and gender-based disparaging language;
3. Sexual harassment including unwanted sexual attention or insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct;
4. Harassment, threats and intimidation;
5. Extortion or stealing of money and possessions;
6. Exclusion from the peer group;
7. Using the Internet as a means of harassment and intimidation (i.e., Cyber-bullying).

Adopted by Representative Council on: 10/13/02

Revised by Representative Council on: 9/7/06

Revised by Representative Council on: 10/2/08

Revised by Representative Council on: 11/3/11

Revised by Representative Council on: 11/4/21

Definitions:

“Bullying” is defined as an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive, which (A) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual, (B) places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm or (C) infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school. This definition of “bullying” includes, but is not limited to, written, oral, or electronic communication, or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

“Cyberbullying” - Any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices, or any electronic communications. In order for it to be identified as “cyberbullying” requiring school/program intervention, the students involved must attend school in the same district.

“Positive School Climate” - The quality and character of school life based on patterns of students’, parents’, and guardians’ and school employees’ experiences of school life, including, but not limited to, norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.

“School Employee” - A teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional, or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle, or high school; or any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to, or on behalf of students, enrolled in a public elementary, middle, or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education.

“Off Campus Bullying” - The new law explicitly requires school districts to prohibit bullying which occurs outside of the school setting if such bullying 1) creates a hostile school environment for the victim; 2) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or 3) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

“Harassment” – Any physical or verbal hostility toward someone with legally protected status. Such status pertains to race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, disability (Including past or present history of mental disability), physical disability, learning disability, mental retardation, genetic information, prior criminal conviction, or other lawfully protected status. Such hostility can be severe, persistent, or pervasive.

C.E.S. SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN

Under the direction of the C.E.S. Executive Director, the agency will appoint a safe school climate coordinator effective no later than July 1, 2012 and each school year thereafter. The coordinator's duties include:

- Monitoring and implementing the safe school climate plan;
- Collaborating with the safe school climate specialists on matters pertaining to bullying;
- Providing data to the superintendent, district, and CSDE regarding bullying;
- Meeting at least twice annually with the safe school climate specialists to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's safe school climate plan.

Each C.E.S. school-based program unit will designate a safe school climate specialist, starting no later than July 1, 2012. This specialist will be the program administrator or a designee of the administrator. The specialist's duties include:

- Investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in accordance with the district's safe school climate plan;
- Collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school and act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying, and responding to reports of bullying in the school.
- Coordinate annual in-service training for their respective school-based program unit on the prevention, identification, and response to bullying, and the prevention of youth suicide collaboratively with the Safe School Climate Committee;
- Chair the Safe School Climate Committee in each school-based program unit.

Each C.E.S. school-based program unit will establish a committee (or designate an existing committee) no later than July 1, 2012 that is responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues related to bullying in school, school related activities, on transportation vehicles to and from school sponsored activities. Each school-based program unit administrator must appoint at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school to the committee. Additionally, the committee must include at least one teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees, and medical and mental health personnel assigned to the program. It is recommended that the Safe School Climate Specialist is the chair of the committee. The responsibilities of the Safe School Climate Committee are to:

- Receive copies of completed forms from bullying investigations;
- Identify and address patterns of student bullying;
- Review and amend school practices related to bullying;
- Review and make recommendations to the district's Safe School Climate Coordinator regarding the districts safe school climate plan;
- Educate all school community members (students, school employees, parents/guardians) on issues related to bullying;
- Collaborate with the district's Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data (allegations and verified acts of bullying; school climate assessment results); and
- Perform other duties determined by the principal/program administrator related to the identification, prevention and response to school bullying;

- Any parent/guardian serving on this committee may not have full access to information that would compromise the confidentiality of any individual student(s).

Professional Development

C.E.S. will minimally provide annual in-service training program to all school employees that must include information addressing the prevention of, identification of, and response to bullying, and the prevention of and response to youth suicide. This professional development will be determined by the Safe School Climate Specialists and the Safe School Climate Committee in each school-based program unit. It may also include:

- Classroom management;
- Positive youth development;
- Positive relationship building;
- Managing the cyber-arena;
- Conflict resolution;
- Cultural and gender diversity training;
- Violence prevention;
- Social and emotional learning.

Assessment

Require each school-based program unit on or after July 1, 2012 and at least biannually thereafter, to complete a school climate assessment, and submit the assessment to the CSDE. While required biannually, it is recommended that the assessment is completed annually if prior survey data or bullying data supports a need for improvement. Each program within a unit will contribute data for the unit assessment. The assessment should align with the National School Climate Standards that provide a comprehensive and standards-based approach to overall school climate. C.E.S. will utilize the school climate assessment instruments developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The Safe School Climate Plan will be monitored using the assessment data from these school climate assessment instruments.

The Essential Requirements of the Safe School Climate Plan

The safe school climate plan must:

- Be approved by the C.E.S. Representative Council and submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education no later than January 1, 2012. Within thirty (30) calendar days of C.E.S. Representative Council approval, the plan must be available on the C.E.S. website, and on each individual school/Program websites;
- Be included in each program's publication of rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools, and in all student handbooks;
- Require each school/program to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the plan at the beginning of each school year;
- Prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports, or assists in the investigation of, an act of bullying;
- Prohibit bullying
 - on school grounds;

- at a school-sponsored or school-related activities, whether on or off school grounds;
 - or school bus stop, school bus, or other transportation vehicle owned, leased, or used by C.E.S.;
 - through the use of an electronic device or electronic mobile device owned, leased, or used by the district.
- Prohibit Bullying Outside of the School Setting if bullying
 - creates a hostile environment for the victim
 - infringes on the rights of the victim in school
 - substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school

Reporting Requirements

- Enable students to report acts of bullying to any school employee;
- Provide student mechanisms to anonymously report bullying to any school employee (i.e. Bullying Box);
- Require students and their parents be annually notified of the process for reporting acts of bullying;
- Parents are encouraged to call school employees or school/program administrators if they feel bullying has occurred and will be asked to submit a written request to initiate an investigation;
- School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying must immediately contact the Safe School Climate Specialist not later than one school day and must then submit a written report not later than two school days after making their oral report;
- Safe School Climate Specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying promptly after the receipt of the written report;
- Safe School Climate Specialist must review all anonymous reports provided that no discipline or action be issued solely on the basis of an anonymous report;
- School/program administrators or designee must notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when they believe any act of bullying constitutes criminal conduct;
- Program administrator or designee (e.g. Safe School Climate Specialist) will notify parents/guardians of any student who commits any verified acts of bullying and parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than 48 hours after the completion of the investigation;
- Program administrator or designee (e.g. Safe School Climate Specialist) will invite the parents/guardians of the perpetrator and victim of the bullying to separate meetings to communicate the measures being taken to ensure the student's safety and prevent further acts of bullying;
- Each school/program will document and maintain records related to reports and investigation of bullying using designated log and maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying using designated log (see appendix);
- Verified acts of bullying log must be available to the public in main offices and submitted to the CSDE annually;
- C.E.S. Discipline Policy 6.008 contains guidelines for appropriate disciplinary action related to verified acts of bullying.

Intervention Measures:

The swift and consistent actions of the staff and administrators will contribute to building a social climate in which students feel that they can trust that all adults are involved in their safety. Therefore, consistent steps of intervention must be taken upon awareness of an incident, or continued threatening situation.

Steps for intervention may include the following:

- Intervene immediately to stop the bullying behavior;
- Talk to the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior separately. If there are several students who engaged in bullying behavior, separate them also;
- Inform the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior of the unacceptable nature of the behavior and the consequences imposed through the school discipline plan;
- Inform the parents of both the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior, invite them to at least one meeting to discuss the matter, and construct a plan of action to prevent the reoccurrence;
- If peer mediation is deemed appropriate, give special consideration to the intimidating nature of this situation and preserve a balance of power;
- If students are frequent victims, involve this student in social skills groups, or assertiveness skills development sessions;
- Monitor the behavior of the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior and the victim regularly as intimidation may continue unseen;
- If the bullying circumstances do not change, despite concerted efforts by school staff, consider options such as, change in class assignment, rearrangement of transportation, etc...as consequence, he/she, not the victim, may be removed from the class or situation;
- Develop on a case-by-case basis interventions for students, who repeatedly bully or are bullied repeatedly, such as counseling or discipline.

Prevention Measures:

In order to perpetuate a safe social climate free of bullying, the agency will:

- Implement a program positive behavioral interventions and supports;
- Implement procedures to confront bullying in any form;
- Listen to all parties involved in incidents;
- Investigate as fully as possible all written and anonymous reports;
- Treat all verified acts of bullying that are similar in nature and severity in a consistent fashion;
- Inform parents of both the perpetrators and the victims of bullying incidents and invite them to at least one meeting;
- Promote via grade appropriate bullying prevention curricula the use of a range of teaching and learning styles and strategies that challenge bullying behavior and promote a safe school climate;
- Promote open management styles that facilitate communication and consultation throughout each school setting;
- Maintain an accurate log of verified bullying acts (see appendix);
- Provide annual training in bullying and safe school climates as well as prevention of and response to youth suicide;
- Require Beginning Teachers involved in the C.E.S. TEAM Program to include training regarding the prevention and identification of, and response to, school bullying as well as youth suicide in their Classroom Management and Climate module;
- Promote the use of interventions that are least intrusive and most effective.
- Hold regular discussions about bullying with administration, staff, students, and parents;
- Develop an anonymous method of student reporting of incidents;
- Support victims of bullying by means of individual and peer counseling;
- Initiate efforts to change the behavior of those students who have engaged in bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, reinforcement and sanctions, where appropriate;
- Utilize resources from the CSDE that have been created as part of their state-wide Safe School Climate Resource Network;
- Annually submit a letter to all parents about bullying and reporting procedures (see appendix);
- Designate a week in October where each school-based program unit will conduct safe school climate awareness activities.

Sample Parent Letter

Dear Parents and Families,

In recent years, the Connecticut legislature has passed various laws and amendments concerning bullying behavior in schools. This year the Connecticut Legislature passed a new School Bullying Law with significant changes. Consistent with this legislation, we are asking that parents/guardians immediately inform school personnel (e.g., your child's teacher, program administrator) of suspected bullying behavior directed against your child or another child. Bullying has been re-defined (see reverse side of letter). You may formally notify any school employee in writing or feel free to call either your child's teacher or program administrator if you feel bullying has occurred.

It is also important for you to know that consistent with this legislation your child may report acts of bullying to any school employee including his/her teacher, other educational personnel (e.g., school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker), non-certified staff member (i.e., bus aid, teacher assistant) and /or program administrator. If your child is uncomfortable making such a report, they may anonymously make a report by leaving a note using a bullying box at school. When possible, please encourage your son/daughter to make such reports, if they feel they have been bullied or if they have witnessed another student being bullied. Bullying behavior is prohibited by our student discipline policy/codes of conduct and may lead to counseling or disciplinary action, including suspension from school or in more severe cases, dismissal or expulsion. The law requires us to notify parents/guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed no later than 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. It also requires us to invite parents/guardian of the perpetrator and victim of bullying to separate meetings to discuss acts and to communicate the measures being taken to ensure the student's safety and prevent further acts of bullying.

We are fully aware that incidents of bullying are rarely committed in view of the supervising adults. Victims are most vulnerable in situations beyond the eyes of staff, such as, playground, buses, restrooms, and bus stops. The most likely adult to be informed by a victim is the parent. Parents are often reticent to inform the school due to the student's fear of reprisal. However, without parent input on this, the school personnel are uninformed and therefore, unable to intervene to stop this behavior. It is important that the school staff and the parents continue to work together to protect the safe environment of the school. If there is a custodial parent who does not live at your child's primary residence, please note that the recent law changes require us to make a copy of bullying notices available when requested. Please inform your child's program administrator if you or they would like us to make a copy of this notice available to such a parent and provide us their name and address in case it is not presently part of our records.

We thank you for your understanding of this important matter. Feel free to contact the administrator of your child's program if you have any questions.

Log of Verified Bullying Incidents

The Program Administrator shall maintain a listing of verified acts of bullying and this list shall be available for public inspection upon request

Program: _____

Administrator Completing Form: _____

School Year: _____

ONLY RECORD VERIFIED ACTS OF BULLYING*

This list shall not contain any student personally identifiable information**

	Date(s) of Incident	Specify Details of Bullying Incident	Location(s) of Bullying Acts	Report Made By (e.g. student, parent, teacher, anonymous, other)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

*Since bullying involves repeated acts over time, verified acts of bullying tallied on this log need not represent each separate act unless these specific acts are distinct acts of bullying.

**Do not list names of students involved in bullying incidents on this log, to maintain their confidentiality.

Cooperative Educational Services

Log of Bullying Reports

This listing is to document and maintain records related to reports and investigations of bullying incidents.

Program: _____

Person Completing Form: _____

School Year: _____

This list shall not contain any student personally identifiable information**

	Date(s) of Incident(s)	Specify Details of Incident	Person(s) Investigating	Outcome of Investigation. Include was Bullying Verified*.
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

*For incidents where bullying was verified, please transfer information to Log of Bullying Incidents.

**Do not list names of students involved in bullying incidents on this log, to maintain their confidentiality.