# BBRSD
# Bullying Prevention Plan and Intervention Plan



**Revised March 2026**

## BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION PLAN FOR BBRSD

The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law, and the protection of those rights is of utmost importance and priority to the Berlin-Boylston Public Schools. The District also prohibits bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment of school community members for reasons related and unrelated to their race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, genetic information, homelessness, disability, pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions. The District will also not tolerate retaliation against persons who take action consistent with this Policy.

**Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:**

On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Those individuals who knowingly make a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

**MASSACHUSETTS LAW ABOUT BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING: Link from Mass.gov**

**Bullying and cyberbullying information**

**Massachusetts DESE Guidance : Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy as well as state and federal laws. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and implementation plan within his or her school, except when a reported bullying incident involves the principal or the assistant principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee, or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

**DEFINITIONS**

*Aggressor* is a student or member of the school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

*Bullying* as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. **Bullying is a repeated pattern of behavior that involves a power imbalance.**

*Perpetrator* is defined as a student or member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional.

*Cyberbullying* is defined as 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, data or intelligence 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. Cyber bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying shall also include 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

*Hostile environment* as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

*Retaliation* is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

*Staff* includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

*Target* is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

*For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used it is to denote either bullying or cyberbullying*

## SCOPE OF PROHIBITION OF BULLYING

Bullying shall be prohibited: (i) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school and (ii) at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at

school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

## REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

*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 to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a dedicated mailing address, and an e-mail address.

*Our district recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics*

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians; 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post the Incident Reporting Form on the school's web site. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including but not limited to, educators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, paraprofessionals, administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact

information of the principal or designee, and the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

*Reporting by Staff:* A staff member will report to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

*Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others:* The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a 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 principal or designee, or to the superintendent or designee when the principal or the assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, or to the school committee or designee when the superintendent is the alleged aggressor. **Students, who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying**

*Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.*

**RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION – ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING BY A STUDENT**

*Safety*: Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety

to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, ordering interim disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor 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 and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies under the Student Code of Conduct for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

**Obligations to Notify Others**

1. *Notice to parents or guardians* Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

2. *Notice to Another School or District.* If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal 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 CMR

3. *Notice to Law Enforcement*. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency and the school resource officer. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in

school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the student aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

**INVESTIGATION**

The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved. The principal or designee shall also promptly contact parents or guardians of the alleged target and perpetrator of bullying to inform them of the investigation and to discuss taking action to prevent further acts of bullying.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, regardless of their legal status. They will be obligated to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Support staff shall assess the alleged target's need for protection and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for the target.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation. **The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. At a minimum the Principal or their designee shall contact the**

**parents or guardians as to the status of the investigation on a weekly basis.**

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent

**DETERMINATIONS**

The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

*1. The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardian*s of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. **The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether the allegations were found to be factual, whether a violation of this policy was found, and whether disciplinary action has or shall be taken.** All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

2*. Notice to staff members.* Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the staff member will be promptly notified.

*3. Notice to Another School or District.* If the reported incident 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 principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone

the principal 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 CMR

*4. Notice to Law Enforcement*. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency and the school resource officer. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency.

**RESPONSES TO BULLYING**

*Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building*. Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curriculum;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial 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 at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.
- offer counseling and/or referral to targets. aggressors, and families.

*Taking Disciplinary Action:* If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, 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. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's or district's code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

*Promoting Safety for the Target and Others:* The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. These steps will be customized to meet the needs of the target and necessary procedures will take place to restore the target's safety. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

For more information about the Department of Education Problem Resolution System, please click here. This link includes information about filing a complaint.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

**RETALIATION**

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, a witness or a person with reliable information about the bullying, shall be prohibited.

**TARGET ASSISTANCE**

The school shall provide counseling or a referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and perpetrators affected by the bullying as necessary.

**TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT**

Annual training shall be provided for school staff and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying and cyberbullying. **Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all K to 12 students.**

**PUBLICATION AND NOTICE**

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff and bullying of students by school staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the Berlin-Boylston Public Schools website.

**PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM**

Any parent or guardian wishing to file a complaint and/or concern or seek assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Seconday Education Program Resolution System (PRS). Information can be found at http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs or emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu. Phone calls may be made to 781-338-3700.

**RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H½, 37H3/4,
M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L. c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

REFS.: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan