

Lower Merion School District

Policy No.: 908
Section: COMMUNITY
Title: VOLUNTEERS
Date Adopted: 5/18/2015
Date Last Revised: 2/22/2022; 12/20/21; 2/18/2020

908 VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play an important role in the quality of life of all District students. The District strongly supports the involvement of parents/guardians and community volunteers to enhance both the curricular and extra-curricular experiences in positive and productive ways, while at the same time requiring careful screening and training of volunteers to ensure the safety of our students. The District seeks to provide a variety of opportunities for parent/guardian and community involvement and to strengthen the partnerships between school, home, and community.

A. REQUIRED CERTIFICATIONS

Certain volunteers (as defined in the accompanying Administrative Regulation) are required to obtain FBI, State Police, and Department of Human Services (DHS) certifications (“required certifications”) before being approved for their positions, and will be required to renew those certifications periodically. The Superintendent or designee shall develop and promulgate administrative procedures to implement and communicate this important safety requirement and other requirements for volunteers designed to enhance the involvement of volunteers in the school community.

B. DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT BY AND OF VOLUNTEERS

In order to maintain a school environment which promotes self-worth and respect for the dignity and worth of others, it is the policy of the Lower Merion School District to prohibit all forms of harassment based on membership in designated classifications identified below (referred to as “discriminatory harassment” and more specifically defined below and in the accompanying regulation), to provide education about the problem of discriminatory harassment and to provide guidelines for a prompt and appropriate response to allegations of discriminatory harassment as well as guidelines for a prompt and appropriate remedy of any instance of discriminatory harassment. This policy applies to all students, to all District employees, to all school directors, and to all District contractors and consultants, and to all school volunteers (collectively, “members of school community”). This policy only applies to behavior defined specifically as discriminatory harassment; other policies may apply to other forms of behavior such as any listed at the end of this Policy.

Definitions

“Discriminatory harassment” means verbal, written, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual’s handicap/disability, race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity or national origin when such conduct:

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1. Is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it affects an individual’s performance or creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive working environment; and/or,
2. Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s performance; and/or,
3. Adversely affects an individual’s employment opportunities or other District-related responsibilities.

The term discriminatory harassment includes but is not limited to slurs, jokes, bullying, hazing or other verbal, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual's handicap/disability, race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity or national origin.

“Sexual harassment” is one specific form of discriminatory harassment and refers to any unwelcome sexual attention, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other inappropriate verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of any individual’s employment; submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance; or
 2. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.
- a. Discriminatory Harassment by District Volunteers or Other Members of School Community

Discriminatory harassment is unacceptable conduct in the educational and work environment and is prohibited. It is a violation of this policy for any District volunteer or another member of the school community to harass a District volunteer or another member of the school community.

- b. Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation against an individual who files a good faith complaint in accordance with either the formal or informal procedures, or against an individual who participates in or

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cooperates with an investigation, is prohibited. Such retaliation will result in the same disciplinary action applicable to one who engages in harassment.

Reporting harassment will not affect the reporting individual's status with respect to future volunteer opportunities.

c. Intentionally False Accusations Prohibited

False accusations of harassment can have serious effects on innocent individuals. Therefore, it is prohibited to intentionally falsely accuse an individual of harassment. Such intentionally false accusations will result in disciplinary action.

d. Reporting and Investigating Discriminatory Harassment

The administration shall report the circumstances of discriminatory harassment to law enforcement officials and the district attorney's office as required by law. The Superintendent will conduct an independent investigation and recommend disciplinary action as appropriate.

The Board directs that complaints of discriminatory harassment shall be investigated promptly in accordance with the accompanying administrative regulation, and corrective action shall be taken when allegations are verified. No reprisals or retaliation shall occur as a result of good faith charges of discriminatory harassment.

The District shall inform students, staff, parent/guardians, independent contractors and volunteers that discriminatory harassment of and by employees will not be tolerated, by a variety of methods including publication in handbooks and presentations to students and staff when appropriate.

All members of the school community shall be informed that they may choose to report discriminatory harassment complaints to building principals, teachers, counselors, nurses, administrators or other trusted adult employee. All employees should be trained to refer complaints of discriminatory harassment to the principal or other designated employees.

The Superintendent shall ensure that procedures for resolving complaints involving discriminatory harassment of members of the school community are developed and made part of Administrative Regulation. The procedures shall be distributed periodically

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to all employees and students as applicable and posted in a prominent location in each school building.

e. Confidentiality

In all phases of the complaint resolution process, every reasonable effort shall be made to maintain the confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties, consistent with the District’s responsibility to investigate and address such complaints.

f. Volunteers

A substantiated charge against a District volunteer will subject the volunteer to removal from all volunteer activities.

g. Implementation

The Superintendent is responsible for implementing this policy.

C. MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES WITH STUDENTS

Authority

This policy applies to District employees, volunteers, student teachers, and independent contractors and their employees who interact with students or are present on school grounds. For purposes of this policy, such individuals are referred to collectively as **adults**. The term **adults** as used in this policy, does not include District students who perform services on a volunteer or compensated basis.

All adults shall be expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with District students that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with students, but also precursor grooming and other boundary-blurring behaviors that can lead to more egregious misconduct. In this context, precursor grooming means the targeting of a child by an adult through various modes of communication with the intention of meeting the child to have unlawful or otherwise improper sexual activity.

The Board directs that all adults shall be informed of conduct that is prohibited and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures.

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This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and students and their families that exist independently of the District or to interfere with participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations that include District students.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent shall establish administrative regulations to implement this Policy defining what constitutes prohibited conduct relating to, among other things:

1. Romantic or sexual relationships
2. Prohibited social interactions
3. Prohibited electronic communications

The Superintendent or designee shall annually inform students, parents/guardians, and all adults regarding the contents of this Board policy through employee and student handbooks, posting on the District website, and by other appropriate methods.

The building principal or designee shall be available to answer questions about behaviors or activities that may violate professional boundaries as defined in this policy.

D. CHILD/STUDENT ABUSE

The Board affirms the obligation of District employees, certain independent contractors, and certain school volunteers to assist in identifying possible child abuse as well as the victimization of students.

In addition, the Board sets forth those individuals required to participate in ongoing child abuse recognition and reporting training, as well as procedures for reporting child abuse in compliance with the Child Protective Services Law of 1990 and its amendments.

The Superintendent shall promulgate regulations and/or procedures in accordance with this policy.