

HAZING AND BULLYING (Harassment, Intimidation, and Dating Violence)

The prohibition against hazing, dating violence, harassment, intimidation, or bullying is publicized in student handbooks and in the publications that set the standard of conduct for schools and students in the District. In addition, information regarding the policy is incorporated into employee handbooks and training materials. When the behavior involves allegations of sexual harassment, the Title IX sexual harassment grievance process will be followed, as applicable. When the behavior is sexual harassment, the Title IX sexual harassment grievance process will be followed, if applicable, prior to imposing any discipline that cannot be imposed without resolution of the Title IX process.

School Personnel Responsibilities and Complaint Procedures

Hazing, bullying behavior, and/or dating violence by any student/school personnel in the District is strictly prohibited, and such conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension and/or expulsion from school. Hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence means any intentional written, verbal, graphic, or physical acts, including electronically transmitted acts, either overt or covert, by a student or group of students toward other students/school personnel with the intent to haze, harass, intimidate, injure, threaten, ridicule, or humiliate. Such behaviors are prohibited on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity; in any District publication; through the use of any District-owned or operated communication tools, including but not limited to District e-mail accounts and/or computers; on school-provided transportation or at any official school bus stop.

Hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence can include many different behaviors. Examples of conduct that could constitute prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

1. physical violence and/or attacks;
2. threats, taunts and intimidation through words and/or gestures;
3. extortion, damage, or stealing of money and/or possessions;
4. exclusion from the peer group or spreading rumors;
5. repetitive and hostile behavior with the intent to harm others through the use of information and communication technologies and other web-based/online sites (also known as “cyberbullying”), such as the following:
 - a. posting slurs on websites, social networking sites, blogs or personal online journals;
 - b. sending abusive or threatening e-mails, website postings or comments, and instant messages;
 - c. using camera phones to take embarrassing photographs or videos of students and/or distributing or posting the photos or videos online and
 - d. using websites, social networking sites, blogs, or personal online journals, emails or instant messages to circulate gossip and rumors to other students.
6. excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to internet service providers.

In evaluating whether conduct constitutes hazing or bullying, special attention is paid to the words chosen or the actions taken, whether such conduct occurred in front of others or was communicated to others, how the perpetrator interacted with the victim, and the motivation, either admitted or appropriately inferred.

Teachers and Other School Staff

Teachers and other school staff who witness acts of hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence as defined above, promptly notify the building principal/designee of the event observed, and promptly file a written incident report concerning the events witnessed.

Teachers and other school staff who receive student or parent reports of suspected hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence promptly notify the building principal/designee of such report(s). If the report is a formal, written complaint, the complaint is forwarded to the building principal/designee no later than the next school day. If the report is an informal complaint by a student that is received by a teacher or other professional employee, he/she prepares a written report of the informal complaint that is forwarded to the building principal/designee no later than the next school day.

Complaints

1. Formal Complaints

Students and/or their parents or guardians may file reports regarding suspected hazing, harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or dating violence. The reports should be written. Such written reports must be reasonably specific including person(s) involved; number of times and places of the alleged conduct; the target of suspected harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school staff member or administrator. They are promptly forwarded to the building principal/designee for review and action.

2. Informal Complaints

Students, parents or guardians, and school personnel may make informal complaints of conduct that they consider to be harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator or other school personnel. Such informal complaints must be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of hazing, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, including person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of the prohibited behavior(s) and the names of any potential student or staff witness. The school staff member or administrator who receives the informal complaint promptly documents the complaint in writing, including the above information. This written report by the school staff member and/or administrator is promptly forwarded to the building principal/designee for review and action.

3. Anonymous Complaints

Students who make informal complaints as set forth above may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the school staff member(s) and administrator(s) who receive the complaint. The anonymous complaint is reviewed and reasonable action is taken to address the situation, to the extent such action (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint, and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence.

4. False Complaints

Students are prohibited from deliberately making false complaints of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Students found responsible for deliberately making false reports of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may be subject to a full range of disciplinary consequences.

Intervention Strategies

1. Teachers and Other School Staff

In addition to addressing both informal and formal complaints, school personnel are encouraged to address the issue of hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence in other interactions with students.

School personnel may find opportunities to educate students about harassment, hazing, intimidation, and bullying and help eliminate such prohibited behaviors through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior. School personnel should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the

purpose or effect of ridiculing, humiliating, or intimidating another student/school personnel, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of harassment, hazing, intimidation, or bullying.

2. Administrator Responsibilities

a. Investigation

The principal/designee is notified of any formal or informal complaint of suspected harassment, hazing, intimidation, or bullying. Under the direction of the building principal/designee, all such complaints are investigated promptly. A written report of the investigation is prepared when the investigation is complete. The report includes findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence were verified, and when prohibited acts are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action, is included in the report. Where appropriate, written witness statements are attached to the report.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when a student making an informal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint is limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complaint. Such limitation of the investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged perpetrator), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.

When hazing and/or bullying is based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability, and the behavior creates a hostile environment, the applicable nondiscrimination grievance procedures are implemented where applicable.

b. Nondisciplinary Interventions

When verified acts of hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence are identified early and/or when such verified acts do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of the behavior, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered harassing, hazing, intimidating, and/or bullying.

If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer mediation may be considered. Special care, however, is warranted in referring some cases to peer mediation. A power imbalance may make the process intimidating for the victim and therefore inappropriate. The victim's communication and assertiveness skills may be low and could be further eroded by fear resulting from past intimidation and fear of future intimidation. In such cases, the victim should be given additional support. Alternatively, peer mediation may be deemed inappropriate to address the concern.

c. Disciplinary Interventions

When acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying are verified, and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Discipline procedures will not infringe on any student's rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Anonymous complaints that are not otherwise verified, cannot provide the basis for disciplinary action.

In and out-of-school suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation.

Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before the Board, a committee of the Board, or an impartial hearing officer designated by the Board in accordance with Board policy. This consequence is reserved for serious incidents of harassment, intimidation,

or bullying and/or when past interventions have not been successful in eliminating prohibited behaviors.

Allegations of criminal misconduct are reported to law enforcement, and suspected child abuse is reported to Child Protective Services, per required timelines.

Report to the Custodial Parent or Guardian of the Perpetrator

If, after investigation, acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying by a specific student are verified, the building principal/designee notifies the custodial parent or guardian of the perpetrator, in writing, of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline is included in such notification.

Strategies are developed and implemented to protect students from new or additional harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and from retaliation following reporting of incidents.

Reports to the Victim and His/Her Custodial Parent or Guardian

If, after investigation, acts of bullying or hazing against a specific student are verified, the building principal/designee notifies the custodial parent/guardian of the victim of the finding. In providing such notification, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the perpetrator.

Bullying matters, including the identity of both the charging party and the accused, are kept confidential to the extent possible. Although discipline may be imposed against the accused upon a finding of guilt, retaliation is prohibited.

School administrators shall notify both the custodial parents or guardians of a student who commits acts of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or dating violence and the custodial parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were committed, and shall allow access to any written reports pertaining to the incident, to the extent permitted by law.

Police and Child Protective Services

In addition to, or instead of, filing a complaint through this policy, a complainant may choose to exercise other options including, but not limited to, filing a complaint with outside agencies or filing a private lawsuit. Nothing prohibits a complainant from seeking redress under any other provision of State law or common law that may apply.

The District must also investigate incidents of hazing, bullying, and/or dating violence for the purpose of determining whether there has been a violation of District policy or regulations, even if law enforcement and/or the public children's services are also investigating. All District personnel must cooperate with investigations by outside agencies.

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