

Medford Public Schools



Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan

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Introduction

Medford Public Schools provides a learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying (similar policies exist and define sexual harassment and hazing). Medford Public Schools condemns acts of bullying of any kind. It is a violation of this policy for any student, member of staff, or others to engage in bullying. Bullying is prohibited:

- 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 the school district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the 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 the 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. Nothing herein shall require schools to staff non-school-related activities, functions, or programs.

Bullying is defined as the repeated use (three or more incidents) of a written, verbal, electronic expression, a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, by one or more students or by a member of school [staff](#), 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 a school's education process or orderly operation.

Cyberbullying is included in the above definition of bullying. In addition to all of the above-mentioned criteria, cyberbullying is further defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes but is not limited to any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, video, data, information, or evidence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by such things as electronic mail, internet communications, instant message, text message, apps, social media, or facsimile. Cyberbullying includes:

- the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes another person's identity.
- the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation is a violation of the law.
- the distribution by electronic means of communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that one or more persons may access if the distribution or posting is a violation of the law.

For the purposes of this policy, “Bullying” will be used to broadly include cyberbullying and out-of-school behavior that leads to a hostile school environment in school.

Policy

Medford Public Schools provides a learning environment that is free from bullying. Medford Public Schools does not condone acts of bullying of any kind. Medford Public Schools seeks to promote social activities and actions that foster collaboration and empathy toward all individuals in the community.

Further, students, members of the school staff, and others may not engage in bullying.

Bullying behavior occurring outside of our schools and 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 orderly operation of the school is the purview of Medford Public Schools to act in accordance with this policy.

Bullying investigations may be concluded with a finding of

- Conflict
 - A finding of conflict occurs when the incident is determined to be between two students considered equal in power and within the quarrel or problem.
 - Investigations may reveal that an incident(s) are “conflict” rather than bullying when the incident has not occurred multiple times. OR
- Bullying
 - A finding of bullying is pursuant to the definition above and may occur when the incident is determined to be between two students who are NOT considered to be equal in power within the quarrel or problem. Bullying is abuse and occurs when a socially powerful (e.g., popular or feared) student mentally or physically abuses a weaker (e.g., fearful) student for the purpose of making them afraid and hurt. Bullying is the act of causing hurt, harm, or humiliation
 - Investigations may reveal that an incident(s) are “bullying” when a pattern of behavior is present or when an incident continues repeatedly. OR
- Not Bullying or Conflict

Medford Public Schools prohibits retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Prevention

Medford Public Schools will:

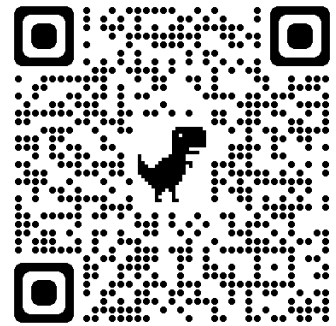
- Provide enhanced support recognizing that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnancy or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics. Medford Public Schools will do this via a variety of events and programming, including but not limited to its integrated approach to Social Emotional Learning in all subjects, assemblies, use of the Responsive Classroom curriculum, Nexus, and participation in the Sandy Hook Promise's Say Something campaign.
- Provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention to students and professional development to build the skills of staff, as required by law. Staff will receive annual training on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Such training may include, but not be limited to:
 - procedures for reporting, responding to, and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation
 - the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation or against someone for making a false accusation of bullying
 - procedures for remedying incidents of bullying and restoring a sense of safety for a victim, and assessing that victim's needs for protection
 - strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation of a person who reports bullying or provides information during an investigation
 - strategies for interventions to stop bullying
 - information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place among an aggressor, a target, and witnesses to bullying
 - information on students who are particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment
 - information on cyberbullying and internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying
 - any notification requirements consistent with state and federal law; a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators, victims, and family members
 - provisions for educating and informing caregivers about bullying and the School District's bullying prevention curriculum
- Provide annual written notice as required by law on the bullying prevention and intervention plan and curriculum. This written notice will include information for caregivers, including but not limited to:
 - description of the grade level curriculum in use regarding bullying prevention
 - definition of bullying and the dynamics and conditions that may lead to acts of bullying

- recognizing and preventing online cyberbullying, overall internet safety, and monitoring the online activity of children at home
- current best practices to reinforce the bullying curriculum at home
- modeling prosocial behavior in dealing with adults and children
- identifying activities/materials that glorify bullying behavior
- communicating with school district leaders if there is concern about bullying behavior
- Ensure district staff is aware that this policy requires that all staff will model interactions with others that demonstrate tolerance and respect for differences, even if the issues being discussed are controversial when acting in the individual's professional capacity or representing Medford Public Schools.
- Post the approved Bullying Prevention and Intervention policy on the Medford Public Schools website.
- Ensure caregivers receive incident report(s) that occur as the result of bullying investigations promptly.

Incident Reporting

Medford Public Schools will:

- Designate a person in each building responsible for receiving bullying reports. In most cases, this will be the school principal. In all cases, the school handbook will list the individual responsible for receiving reports.
- Consider an allegation of bullying as submitted regardless of whether official forms are completed or if the allegation is anonymously reported. An allegation will be investigated as an official bullying report if the allegation is reported to a staff member and includes the below listed minimum information:
 - Name and school of the target student
 - Name and school(s) of aggressors
 - Date and location of the incident(s)
 - Description of the incident that is believed to meet the criteria for bullying behavior
 - Contact information for the reporter (not required but recommended)
- Encourage, but do not require, students and caregivers to use our [approved reporting form](#).
- Complete required bullying forms and collect missing information and signatures when a report of bullying was made that did not use approved forms.



QR 1 - Scan for reporting form

- Require that staff will not ignore bullying-type behaviors. Staff is required to formally report incidents of bullying that they witness or become aware of using the approved forms:
 - on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds
 - at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions, or programs, whether on or off school grounds
 - at school bus stops
 - on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school district
 - through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school district.
- Require staff to follow the same reporting responsibilities of students and caregivers as defined in this section of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Plan.
- Accept and investigate allegations of bullying or retaliation that are made anonymously; however, no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely based on an anonymous report.

Students and Caregivers will:

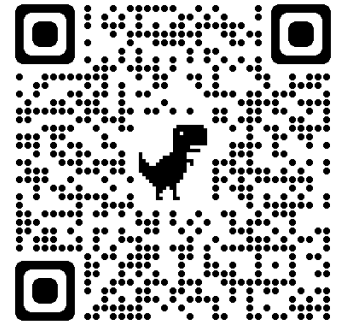
- Report immediately to a trusted adult any bullying incident or situation where they believe they or their child has been the victim of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation. A trusted adult may include teachers, coaches, guidance counselors, nurses, assistant principals, principals, or other school staff.

Investigation

Medford Public Schools will:

- Promptly investigate all reports of bullying. Impacted parties and caregivers will be notified within two business days of receipt of such a report.
- Ensure the Principal oversees all bullying reports that occur as the result of participation in an athletics or extracurricular program. In conjunction with the Athletic Director, Assistant Principals may conduct any number of investigatory steps, but the Principal must agree with and sign off on all findings.
- Remain impartial throughout the course of any investigation. In the event of a conflict of interest, the investigator must disclose the conflict to their immediate supervisor within 24 hours of receipt of the bullying report. Conflict of interest may include family relationships, and supervisor/supervisee relationships, among other possible conflicts.
- Take immediate and necessary action to ensure student safety while any investigation proceeds and will take care to reassure those who report incidents that their involvement will remain confidential wherever possible.

- Document interviews conducted with all relevant parties using [the approved bullying investigation form](#). All notes shall become part of the record of the incident.
- Maintain a central Student Information System (e.g., School Brains) to store incident and investigation forms, determinations, and disciplinary, remediation, and target safety action taken, alphabetically by aggressor and their graduation date.
 - Discipline information, whether written or electronic, is part of the temporary record and will be kept for six years after the graduation of involved students. Temporary records must be destroyed no later than seven years after the graduation of involved students.
- Ensure copies of all Bullying Investigation Forms, Bullying Reporting Forms (if any), Behavioral Remediation Agreements (if any), and Individual Behavior Plans (if any, for repeat offenders only) are placed in the student file, as provided by law.



QR 2 - Scan for investigation form

Decisions and Findings

Medford Public Schools will:

- Act in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010. When the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.
- Complete the following steps if the investigator determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred:
 - notify the police if the principal or designee believes that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator
 - take appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the policies and procedures of Medford Public Schools
 - notify the caregiver(s) of the perpetrator
 - notify the caregiver(s) of the victim, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation
 - provide victims and aggressors with significant opportunities for counseling services.

- This can take the form of in-house trained staff or referrals to outside agencies with experience in these matters. The school district will take action to identify agencies that can be accessed by caregiver(s) as needed to address these matters.
- Complete the following steps if the investigator determines that bullying has not occurred but that the incident warrants action to avoid progression of the relationship to one where bullying occurs:
 - take appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the policies and procedures of Medford Public Schools
 - notify the caregiver(s) of the perpetrator
 - notify the caregiver(s) of the victim, and to the extent consistent with state and federal law, notify them of the action taken to prevent any further escalation
 - provide victims and aggressors with significant opportunities for counseling services.
 - This can take the form of in-house trained staff or referrals to outside agencies with experience in these matters. The school district will take action to identify agencies that can be accessed by caregiver(s) as needed to address these matters.
- Act to create a stable environment for victims and aggressors regardless of whether bullying (as defined by law) or conflict has occurred. See [Intervention Options](#).
- Discipline any student as a consequence of a bullying investigation or who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation per the approved disciplinary policies outlined by the Medford School Committee and as further described in school handbooks. If the false accusations have civil and/or criminal elements, further actions may be referred to appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 - ***Student discipline is governed by Massachusetts General Law and Policies set forth by the Medford School Committee, including but not limited to:***
 - [General Law - Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 37H](#)
 - [General Law - Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 37H1/2](#)
 - [General Law - Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 37H3/4](#)
 - <http://z2policy.ctspublish.com/masc/browse/medfordset/medford/JKD>
 - <http://z2policy.ctspublish.com/masc/browse/medfordset/medford/JKDA>
 - Discipline any staff member who knowingly engages in false accusations of bullying or will be subject to appropriate consequences administered by the school system and/or law enforcement agencies.
- Refer caregivers and community members who knowingly report or provide false information regarding bullying or retaliation to appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Retaliation

Medford Public Schools will:

- Discipline any student who knowingly retaliates against another student as the result of a bullying allegation or investigation per the approved disciplinary policies outlined by the Medford School Committee and as further described in school handbooks. If the retaliation acts have civil and/or criminal elements, further actions may be referred to appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Responsibilities

Medford Public Schools will comply with this policy in its entirety. In addition, to the above-outlined policy, district responsibilities include:

Central Administration

- Develop guidelines for individual school buildings that outline policy compliance and ensure that bullying policies are followed in each school.
- Provide interpretation and translation services for families so that a comprehensive and productive collaboration can occur.
- Advise the Medford School Committee proactively when updates to the policy are required or recommended.
- Conduct annual outreach to caregivers through at least four written communications and two live information sessions each school year.
- Maximize outreach on bullying by utilizing electronic and other media resources.
- Administer a DESE-provided survey on bullying at least once every four years. The survey shall be designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation by students. The Superintendent will present the survey findings to the Medford School Committee and forward a copy to DESE.
- Report bullying incident data to DESE annually as required by law. A copy of the report will be presented to the School Committee and made available to members of the public. The data shall include, but not be limited to:
 - the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation
 - the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying or retaliation
 - the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation
 - any other information required by the department.

Building Leaders

- Take proactive steps to avoid escalation of incidents into bullying behaviors.
- Document incidents of student behavior and treat these incidents with standard school disciplinary procedures.
- Amend handbooks to reflect policy and plan.

School Committee

- Update the plan biennially (every two years).

Procedures For Receipt and Investigation of a Bullying Report

1. Receive a report of bullying as defined by this policy. If official forms were not used to report the behavior, complete them.
2. Review the definition of bullying (see above), ideally with the reporter(s) (e.g., target, friend of the target, caregivers, etc.) present.
 - a. If the incident does not seem to meet the definition, continue to treat the incident(s) with standard school disciplinary or conflict resolution procedures.
 - b. If the incident meets the definition or you have doubts about whether it might be bullying, the administrator or his/her designee should follow the procedures below.
3. Notify the reporter that because the student's actions may constitute bullying, Medford Public Schools has an obligation to investigate and act in a timely manner, including:
 - a. interviewing all students involved
 - b. collecting evidence, including digital or hard copies of electronic communication, web pages, notes, etc.
 - c. reviewing previous disciplinary records of all students involved, notifying caregivers of all students involved.
 - d. notifying the police if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor and applying appropriate disciplinary action.
 - e. notifying the target's caregiver(s) of action taken to prevent further acts of bullying to the extent consistent with state and federal confidentiality laws (note: we cannot share the extent of all disciplinary actions with the target's family).
4. Complete the Medford Public Schools Bullying Investigation Form.
5. Prepare to interview students:
 - a. Review students' discipline and school records (include: IEP, 504s) to see if there are prior similar incidents.
 - b. Consult, as needed, with additional staff (e.g., Special Education Liaison, counselor, nurse).

- c. Determine which additional staff, if any, needs to be present during student interviews and/or decision processes.
 - d. Take reasonable precautions to ensure that students cannot communicate or undermine the investigation (e.g., call all students to the office simultaneously but interview separately).
 - e. Determine which students need to be interviewed. Include target(s), aggressor(s), and bystander(s).
6. Interview all students involved, ideally one at a time.
 - a. Read back to the student a summary of his or her account to ensure the accuracy of your notes.
 - b. If applicable, ask students to provide written statements.
7. If physical injuries occurred and have not been examined, ask nursing to examine the target(s) and aggressor(s).
8. Collect and compile evidence:
 - a. Printouts of blog posts, social networking pages, emails, etc.
 - b. Copies of student notes.
 - c. Nurse report(s).
 - d. Police report(s).
 - e. Written statements.
9. Determine whether bullying has occurred according to the definition outlined in this policy. Alternatively, determine whether conflict has occurred that warrants additional action.
 - a. If no action is required, skip to step 11.
10. If the student has an IEP/504, work with his or her liaison to determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability throughout the remainder of this process.
11. Notify caregivers of the target and aggressor about your determination and to the extent allowed by confidentiality laws. Caregivers will be notified of all actions taken to prevent further bullying or retaliation.
 - a. Do not share student names or disciplinary actions with a third party. Caregiver(s) of targets do NOT have the right to know the name of the aggressor (or disciplinary actions taken against the aggressor). Caregiver(s) of aggressors do not have the right to know the name of the victim.
12. Consult with police if the aggressor used another criminal action (e.g., harassment, stalking, assault/battery). Bullying is covered under the Criminal Harassment sections of Massachusetts General Law.
13. Notify the aggressor of his or her rights and the process to appeal your decision.

14. Working with the aggressor, complete a **Behavioral Remediation Agreement** that includes a warning against retaliation and repeat offenses. It should include disciplinary actions, strategies, and supports to stop the bullying and restore a sense of safety for the target, including steps taken to ensure no retaliation against the targets or reporters. See [Intervention Options](#).
 - a. Aggressors can be required to undergo counseling with an in-house counselor (i.e., authorized school staff) as part of their remediation agreement or behavior plan.
15. Meet with the target, bystander(s), and caregiver(s) to develop a safety plan.
16. Contact other schools, coaches, and staff members (as appropriate) for implementing disciplinary, remediation, and student safety actions.
 - a. School administrators **may not share** information about students with anybody but part or full-time “authorized school personnel” (this includes coaches and contracted service providers). To maximize the privacy and safety of students, Administrators should exercise discretion when informing staff.

Support for Families

- Additional information from DESE regarding bullying, prevention, and intervention can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/>.
- Additional information regarding discipline and students with disabilities can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/discipline/>.
- **Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 370 of Chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): VI. Collaboration with Families 17:** Any caregiver wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu, or individuals can call (781) 338-3700. Hard copies of this information are also available at the Superintendent’s office. The Office of Civil Rights is available to help families. See the information at the following link for additional detail. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-bullying-201410.pdf>

Intervention Options

(This list is not intended to be exhaustive)

Disciplinary Actions

- Admonishment, warning, temporary removal from the classroom
- Loss of privileges
- Classroom or administrative detention
- In-school suspension during the school week or the weekend for students
- Out-of-school suspension
- Legal action
- Consequences for repeat offenses.

Remediation Actions

- Meetings between caregiver(s)
- Counseling
- Education, including strategies for repeating behavior
- Revision of IEP/504, if applicable
- Individual Behavior Plan (for repeat offenders; form is included in this packet)
- Consider referral to special education if you suspect the student has a disability.

Target Safety Actions

- Guidelines for avoiding further unnecessary contact with the target
- Clarification about who will be notified
- Notify staff about the incident and the danger of further contact
- Strategies to avoid further bullying (e.g., script, role-playing, etc.)
- Identifying trusted adults and “safe areas”
- Education about rights to be free of retaliation and reasonable expectations about social consequences for being part of a bullying investigation (e.g., people will talk about it, but they may not retaliate)
- Periodic check-ins
- Whole community meetings
- Identification and empowerment of bystanders
- Education about technology.

Definitions

Definitions copied from Massachusetts General Law are noted.

aggressor. A student or member of school staff who engages in bullying or retaliation.
Herein the use of aggressor and perpetrator should be considered equivalent.

caregiver. An adult with whom a minor resides. See M.G.L. c. 201F, § 1.

hostile environment. 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. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

perpetrator. A student or a member of a school who engages in bullying or retaliation. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

Herein the use of aggressor and perpetrator should be considered equivalent.

retaliation. 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. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

school grounds. Property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased, or used by a school district for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction, or training. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

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.

victim. A student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

Policy Information

First Adopted: December 20, 2010

Last Amended: July 19, 2023

Last Reviewed: July 19, 2023

Review Frequency: two (2) years

Next Review: July 19, 2025

Version: 4

Policy ID: JICFB

Related Policies:

AC, Nondiscrimination

ACAB, Harassment

JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing

Legal References:

Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended

Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

603 CMR 26:00

M.G.L. 71:37O; 265:43, 43A; 268:13B; 269:14A