

Quitman County School District

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Dealing with the issues of bullying and cyber-bullying is a **shared** responsibility involving the school district, individual schools, teachers, students, parents/guardians, and community at large.

We see these primary areas of responsibility for each constituency as follows:

District - The School District Responsibilities Include:

- Developing the mandated plan and reviewing the plan annually for any needed additions, changes or edits
- Developing guidelines for individual school plans and ensuring that bullying policies are followed in each school
- Providing fiscal support for professional development for educators and other staff
- Providing assistance and resources to schools for teachers, parents/guardians, students, and other staff to carry out the plan
- Maximizing outreach on the topic of bullying by utilizing electronic and other media resources

Schools – Each Individual School’s Responsibilities Include:

- Being proactive in taking steps to avoid escalation of incidents into bullying behaviors
- Documenting all incidents of unacceptable student behavior and treating these incidences with standard school disciplinary procedures
- Following the district plan
- Dedicating selected staff to deal with any problematic issues
- Ensuring that professional development is available for all staff (including non-educators) and parents/guardians
- Providing outreach to all constituencies through the use of printed, electronic, and other media resources

Teachers and Other School Staff – All Individuals Working with Students in an Educational Setting are Responsible for:

- Knowing and following the district bullying policy
- Engaging in professional development related to bullying

- Reporting any behavior incidents via protocol established in plan
- Working with students in promoting pro-social behaviors

Students' Responsibilities:

- Knowing and following the district bullying policy
- Demonstrating empathy towards fellow students
- Reporting any incidences of bullying activity and assisting school officials with bringing closure to a problematic situation
- Demonstrating an understanding of the serious harm that bullying causes both the aggressor and the target

Parents' Responsibilities: Parents' and guardians' responsibilities are to reinforce what is being done in the schools:

- Modeling pro-social behavior in dealing with adults and children
- Monitoring children's online activity
- Establishing a home environment that promotes RCSD board policy JDDA - *Bullying/Hazing*
- Engaging in district and school provided educational opportunities related to bullying

Community Responsibilities: Every member of the community is responsible for the following:

- Promoting social activities that foster collaboration and empathy toward all individuals in the community
- Modeling interactions with others that demonstrate tolerance and respect for differences even if the issues being discussed are controversial

QCSD BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING POLICY

QCSD POLICY JDDA: BULLYING

STUDENT COMPLAINTS OF BULLYING OR HARASSING BEHAVIOR

BULLYING OR HARASSING BEHAVIOR

The Board of Trustees of the Quitman County School District prohibits bullying or harassing behavior of students, school employees, or volunteers. The Quitman County School District will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no person or school employee is subjected to bullying or harassing behavior by other students or other school employees.

1. Definitions Bullying or harassing behavior is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic that:
 - (a) places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, or
 - (b) creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's education, including but not limited to educational performance, opportunities, or benefits.

A "hostile environment" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.

The above conduct constitutes bullying if that conduct interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of a school.

Bullying or harassing behavior will not be condoned or tolerated when it takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, or when it takes place off school property when such conduct, in the determination of the school superintendent or principal, renders the offending person's presence a disruption to the

operation of the educational environment of the school or a detriment to the best interest and welfare of the pupils and teacher of such class as a whole.

The District encourages anyone who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student or school employee has been subject to any act of bullying or harassing behavior to report the incident to the appropriate school official. Retaliation or reprisal against any person, including a victim, a witness, or another person, who in good faith provides information concerning an incident of bullying or harassing behavior, is prohibited.

The Quitman County School District recognizes the fundamental right of every student to take “reasonable actions” as may be necessary to defend himself or herself from an attack by another student who has evidenced menacing or threatening behavior through bullying or harassing.

“Reasonable action” includes, but is not limited to, promptly reporting the bullying or harassing behavior to a teacher, principal, counselor, or other school employee.

These procedures shall be appropriately placed in District personnel policy handbooks, school handbooks that include discipline policies and procedures, and any other policy or procedure that deals with student or employee behavior.

The School Board directs the superintendent or designee to design and implement procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing bullying and harassing behaviors.

I. Procedures for Processing a Complaint

Any student, school employee or volunteer who feels he/she has been a victim of bullying or harassing behavior, or has witnessed such or who has reliable information that a student, school employee or volunteer has been subject to bullying or harassing behavior shall immediately report such conduct and the name of the alleged offender to a teacher, principal, counselor or other school official. If a report is made to the teacher or counselor or other school official, such person shall immediately notify the principal who shall immediately notify the superintendent or his/her designee.

The report shall be made promptly but no later than five (5) calendar days after the alleged act or acts occurred and shall be confirmed by letter or in writing to the principal and county superintendent. The school official shall complete a "Bullying/Harassing Behavior" complaint form which shall include the name of the reporting person, the specific nature and date of the misconduct, the names of the victim of the misconduct, the names of any witnesses and any other information that would assist in the investigation of the complaint. All teachers, employees, volunteers or students shall be required to fully cooperate with all school officials investigating the complaint and answer truthfully all inquiries relative thereto. The principal shall provide a form for this purpose. The report shall be given promptly to the principal or superintendent who shall institute an immediate investigation. Complaints against the principal shall be made to the superintendent and complaints against the superintendent shall be made to the board chairman or president.

The complaint shall be investigated promptly. Parents will be notified of the nature of any complaint involving their student. The District official or superintendent's designee will arrange such meetings as may be necessary with all concerned parties within five (5) working days after initial receipt of the complaint by the District. The parties will have an opportunity to submit evidence and a list of witnesses, but formal rules of evidentiary procedure need not be strictly adhered to. All findings related to the complaint will be reduced to writing. The District official conducting the investigation or the superintendent's designee shall notify the victim and parents as appropriate when the investigation is completed and a decision regarding disciplinary action,

as warranted, is determined. Each teacher, principal or employee of the school shall cooperate fully with such investigation and the superintendent or his/her designee and failure to do so shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If the victim is not satisfied with the decision of the district official or the superintendent's designee, he/she may submit a written appeal to the superintendent. Such appeal by the aggrieved party shall be filed within five (5) working days after receipt of the results of the initial decision. The superintendent or his/her designee will arrange such meetings with the victim and other affected parties as deemed necessary to discuss the appeal. The superintendent or his/her designee or assistant superintendent shall provide a written decision to the victim's appeal within ten (10) working days.

If the victim is not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent or his/her designee, a written appeal may be filed with the Board by presentation to the administrative secretary to the superintendent. Such appeal shall be filed in the office of the superintendent within ten (10) working days after receipt of the decision of the superintendent. The Board shall, as soon as convenient or within thirty (30) working days allow the aggrieved party and parents as appropriate to appear before the Board in executive session to present reasons for dissatisfaction with the decision of the superintendent or his/her designee. The Board shall provide a written decision by mail to the appealing party at the appealing parties last known address within thirty (30) working days following the appealing party or victim's appearance before the Board.

At any stage of the proceeding the alleged victim or aggrieved party may be represented by an attorney of his/her own choosing and expense.

Retaliation or reprisal against any person, including a victim, a witness, or another person, who in good faith provides information concerning an incident of bullying or harassing behavior, is prohibited.

REFERENCE: Mississippi Code Ann. §37-11-67 and § 37-11-6

BULLYING OVERVIEW

Mississippi law gives school officials the power to investigate and discipline bullying that occurs on or off school grounds (e.g., cyber bullying from a home computer) if that bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim ("target"), infringes on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of the school, as determined by school administrators.

- **Repeated use** by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (must include at least one of the following)
 - causes **physical or emotional harm** to the target or damage to the target's property
 - places the target in **reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself** or damage to his/her property
 - creates a **hostile environment** at school for the target substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits
 - **infringes on the rights** of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially **disrupts the education process** or the orderly operation of a school
 - incidents involving hazing and intimidation are also prohibited as these can cause bodily danger, physical harm or personal degradation.

A "**hostile environment**" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable

person would agree that it is inappropriate bullying or harassing behavior.

Bullying or harassing behavior will not be condoned or tolerated when it takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or when it takes place off school property when such conduct, in the determination of the school superintendent or principal, renders the offending person's presence in the classroom a disruption to the educational environment of the school or a detriment to the best interest and welfare of the pupils and teacher of such class as a whole.

Note regarding technological/cyber bullying: Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication including, but not limited to:

- the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or
- the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, or
- 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

Additional note: The law does not make bullying a crime; however certain types of bullying behaviors may be criminal (i.e. hazing, stalking)

REMINDERS TO STAFF

Do not ignore bullying type behaviors: Bullies count on adults to ignore bullying behaviors, and this allows them to continue bullying activities. (Steiner, A. 2002)

Intervene immediately; bullying is common, but not benign: Bullies are much more likely

to grow up to have criminal or violent behaviors. Targets of bullies suffer disproportionately from mental health problems, school problems, and social problems. Children who witness bullying spend an inordinate amount of time seeking to avoid it and worrying about it.

Separate alleged bully and target: Do not use mediation or attempt to force them to confront one another.

Bullying is different from conflict: Conflict is an equal-power quarrel or problem between two students. Bullying is repeated abuse; it occurs when a socially powerful (popular or feared) student mentally or physically abuses a weaker (fearful) student, for the purposes of making them afraid and hurt.

Stay neutral and calm: The tone you take with students during investigations will affect your ability to defuse the bullying.

Don't make promises or deals until your investigation is complete

Reassure reporters and the target that they have done the right thing by reporting. Make sure they know they will be protected from retaliation.

Empower aggressors to change: Remind aggressors that they have the power to stop the bullying. Teach them strategies to stop (e.g. "for now, stay off Facebook").

Maintain confidentiality but ACT: It is important to protect reporters from retaliation, but information on bullying **MUST** be acted upon. There are no "off-the record" conversations.

Be objective in your note-taking: Your e-mails and the notes you take in meetings about students could become part of their official record.

Be timely: The faster you talk to all students involved, the less likely that the students will feel social pressure to change their stories.

PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL STAFF RECEIVING/WITNESSING A REPORT OF POTENTIAL BULLYING BEHAVIOR

1. Building administrators have in place a system for staff that facilitates the reporting of any incident of unacceptable student behavior towards another student. All incidents are treated with the standard school disciplinary or conflict resolution procedures.
2. If two or more of these repeated incidents are reported in writing (it is recommended to use the "Bullying Reporting Form" for incident reporting) about any one student and they are found to satisfy the definition of bullying, then the building administrator or his/her designee will begin his or her investigation. The principal or assistant principal will complete the *Bullying Reporting Form* Bully Investigation Form when gathering information related to the alleged incident(s) to determine if bullying has in fact occurred.
3. Review the definition of bullying (see above), ideally with the reporter(s) (e.g., target, friend of target, parent, etc.) present.
 - If incident(s) does not seem to meet the definition, continue to treat the incident(s) with standard school disciplinary or conflict resolution procedures.
 - If the incident(s) meet(s) the definition or you have any doubts about whether it might be bullying, the administrator or his/her designee should follow the procedures below.
4. Notify the reporter. Because the student's actions may constitute bullying, we have an obligation to investigate and take action in a timely manner including:
 - Interviewing all students involved.
 - Collecting evidence, including digital or hard copies of electronic communication, web pages, notes, etc.
 - Reviewing previous disciplinary records of all students involved.
 - Notifying parent(s)/guardian(s) of all students involved in a timely manner.
 - Notifying the police if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.
 - Applying appropriate disciplinary action (In School Suspension (ISS), Out of School Suspension (OSS), Expulsion, etc.).
 - Notifying the target's parent(s)/guardian(s) in a timely manner 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.)

ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

The School Principal or Assistant Principal will be responsible for investigating all bullying complaints and ensuring that parents will be notified that such an investigation is underway.

Investigation

- I. Review ***Bullying Reporting Form or other written report of bullying that was completed by the person or persons alleging bullying behavior has occurred.***
- II. Use ***QCSD Bullying Investigation Form*** (included in this packet).
- III. Prepare to interview students:
 - A. Review student's discipline and school records (include IEP, 504's, etc.) to see if there are prior similar incidents.
 - B. Consult with additional staff to determine if anyone else needs to be present during student interviews and/or decision process.
 - C. Take reasonable precautions to ensure that students are unable to communicate or undermine the investigation (e.g., call all students to the office at the same time, but interview separately).
 - D. Determine which students need to be interviewed. Include target(s), aggressor(s), and bystander(s).
- IV. Interview all students involved, ideally one at a time.
 - A. Read back to the student a summary of his or her account to ensure accuracy of your notes.
 - B. If applicable, ask students to provide written statements.
- V. Collect and compile evidence:
 - A. Printouts of blog posts, social media posts, emails, texts, etc.
 - B. Copies of student notes
 - C. Written statements

Determination

VI. When the investigation is completed, review facts and determine whether or not bullying has occurred.

Response Plan

VII. If the student has an IEP, work with his or her special education teacher to determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. Discipline for bullying of a student with disabilities will comply with applicable requirements under federal law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 USCS Section 1400 et seq.).

VIII. Working with the aggressor, complete a Behavioral Remediation Agreement and or the Individual Behavior Plan (included in the packet) that includes as part of the terms to change the behavior: counseling, conflict resolution action steps, warning against retaliation and repeat offenses. It should also include disciplinary actions, strategies and supports to be used to stop bullying and restore a sense of safety for the target, including steps taken to ensure there is no retaliation against the target(s) or reporter(s). See the table below for a menu of options:

- A. Aggressors can be required (and parents recommended if appropriate) to undergo counseling with an in-house counselor (i.e., authorized school staff) as part of their remediation agreement or behavior plan.
 - B. We can recommend outside counseling and the district will give resources, UNLESS the student has been charged with a felony and/or EXPELLED in which case we can require parent-sponsored counseling as a condition of returning.
- IX. Notify the aggressor of his/her rights and the process to appeal your decision.



Bullying Reporting Form – to be completed by the person alleging bullying behavior has occurred

Quitman County School District is committed to provide a safe environment to all members of our community.

Despite our best intention, incidents between students do occur at times. If you wish to report a disturbing incident between two or more students. Complete this form and return it to the Principal at the student's school. Contact the school for additional information or assistance at any time. Every reported act of bullying will be investigated. Parents of aggressors and targets will be contacted in cases of confirmed bullying.

Date: _____

Name of targeted student:	Name of alleged aggressor(s) (if known):
Age	Age
Grade	Grade
School	School
Name(s) of witness(es) (if known):	
<p>Where did the incident(s) happen (choose all that apply)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On school property • On a school bus • On the way to/from school • At a school-sponsored activity or event off school property • Online/via technology • Other: _____ 	
<p>What best describes what happened (circle all that apply):</p> <p>Teasing Social Exclusion Retaliation Threat/Property Damage</p> <p>Intimidation Sexual Harassment Stalking Physical Violence</p> <p>Public Humiliation Other: _____</p>	
Where did the alleged aggressor(s) say or do? (Include specific date (s), time (s). Attach a separate sheet if necessary)	
<p>Did a physical injury result from this student?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes, but it did not require medical attention • Yes, and it required medical attention 	

Is there any additional information you would like to provide? (Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

Name of Person Reporting Incident(s)

Telephone#

Email:

Print Name:

Signature:

Date

Administrator Action Taken:

Date

- **Attach additional documents if necessary or attach other written account prepared by the person alleging bullying – if this form is not completed by that person**



Quitman County School District

Bullying Investigation Form

To be completed by the principal or his or her designee while conducting investigation

Date: _____

Name of targeted student:	Name of alleged aggressor(s) (if known):
Age	Age
Grade	Grade
School	School
Name(s) of witness(es) (if known):	
<p>Investigation: On School Property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and Attach Bullying Reporting Form Review Students' discipline and school records (include: IEP, 504s) Consult as needed with additional staff (e.g. SPED Liaison, Counselor, Nurse). Include names here: Determine which additional staff, if any, needs to be present during student interviews and/or decision process. Include name here: Conduct student (s) interviews Read back to each student a summary of his or her account to ensure accuracy of your notes If physical injuries occurred, ask nurse to examine target. The following checked items are attached to this report (see next column) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident Reporting Form (if available) Printouts of blog posts, social networking pages, emails, etc. Copies of other evidence Copies of investigator's notes (e.g. transcripts of interview, etc.) Nurse report (s) Police report (s) Written statements from interviewees, reporters, etc.

Determinations: (Check all that apply) Indicates if it was conclude that bullying has or has not occurred.

Repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronics expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (must include at least one of the following)

Determinations: (Check all that apply) Indicate if it was concluded that bullying has or has not occurred.

Repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronics expression or physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (must include at least 1 of the following)

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property.
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or damage to his or her property
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- Infringes on the rights of target at school
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of school
- Involves an imbalance of perceived or real physical or social power between target and aggressor(s)
- Retaliation from reporting of previous incident

Provide brief description of the nature of the bully (if any) attach pages if necessary

Provide a final determination

- Incidents did not meet the standard of bullying
- Bullying has occurred and will be dealt with in-house
- Criminal bullying has occurred and police should be notified of possible criminal charges

Response Plan (if any)

Disciplinary Actions

Remediation Actions:

Behavioral Remediation Agreement attached

Individual Behavior Plan attached (repeat offenders only)

Student Safety Actions – attach pages if necessary:

Notification and Documentation

- Parent(s) / Guardian(s) of the target
- Parent(s) / Guardian(s) of the aggressor
- PowerSchool Info.
- Counselor of target

- Counselor of aggressor
- Special Education teacher/building LSV
- Police (if criminal charges may be pursued)
- Other schools, coaches, and staff members (as appropriate) for implementing the disciplinary, remediation student safety actions. Please describe on additional pages if necessary.

Administrator/Investigator:

Date:

- Attach additional documents if necessary



Quitman County School District

Behavioral Remediation Agreement

Date: _____

Name of Student
Age:
Grade:
School:
Reason for Behavioral Remediation Agreement:
I agree to the following strategies to change my behavior (Ex: meetings with counselor, conflict resolution activities, anger management, self-help videos, etc):
I will need the following support(s) to help me meet the obligations of my agreement:
The consequences if I DON'T meet the expectations are as follows:

By signing below, the parent & student indicate an understanding of plan & consequences listed

Student Signature:	Date:
Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date:
Administrator Signature:	Date:

- Attach additional documents if necessary



Quitman County School District

Individual Behavior Plan

Date: _____

Name of Student	
Age:	
Grade:	
School:	
Reason for Behavior Plan:	
Student Behavior Goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: • Objective: • Objective 	
Student Supports:	
Timeline/Monitoring of Plan and Progress Towards Goals: Daily _____ Team Contact _____ Weekly _____ Team Contact _____	
Termination Form Plan:	
Date of Termination:	
Student Signature	Date:
Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date:
Administrator Signature:	Date:
Plan Coordinator Signature	Date:

- Attach additional documentation if needed

DEFINITIONS

Aggressor- A student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation

Bullying- Bullying or harassing behavior is hereby defined as any pattern of gestures or written, electronic or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, and that (a) places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, or (b) creates or is reasonably certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits. Incidents involving hazing and intimidation are also prohibited as these can cause bodily danger, physical harm or personal degradation. (MS Code 37-11-67)

Cyberbullying- bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the internet. It includes, but is not limited to email, instant messages, text messages, and internet postings

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.

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

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- a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated