

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) and Code of Conduct Information

Dear Tewksbury Families:

Below is some information about HIB and Code of Conduct. We hope this will provide some greater clarity around this law. Please feel free to reach out to our HIB specialists in the school if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Superintendent
Jennifer Shouffler, Ed.D.

Anti Bullying Coordinator - Megan Verderamo (mverderamo@tewksburyschools.org)
Anti Bullying Specialists - Mary Cutri-French-OTS and Sheila Donovan-TES
(mcutrifrench@tewksburyschools.org; sdonovan@tewksburyschools.org)

Definition of Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying

Any gesture, written, verbal or physical act, or electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as ***being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic***; and that, takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds.

The HIB incident must ***substantially disrupt or interfere*** with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and:

- A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property;
- Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
- Creates ***a hostile educational environment*** for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

Code of Conduct

While harassment, intimidation, and bullying exist, not all incidents warrant a HIB investigation. It may be a rule infraction that falls under our Code of Conduct, which can also warrant disciplinary action. The majority of school discipline referrals will involve Code of Conduct violations, while a percentage may also need to be investigated as a potential HIB. It's important for our team to support you and we encourage students and/or families to reach out to your school counselor with any questions or concerns so that they can help you determine the most appropriate response and fully address the issue(s) at hand. We are here to help you understand the law, and we take all incidents seriously whether they involve HIB or not. All incidents, whether they are HIB or not, are fully investigated, and addressed and appropriate remedial measures and/or consequences are given.

Process of a HIB Case

If a **HIB referral form** (click link) has been filled out by a parent, student, or staff member, the Principal, in coordination with the Anti-bullying Specialist, will determine whether to go forward with a HIB investigation. The HIB referral form can also be found on the district website. If the action or incident shows no signs of being motivated by an actual or perceived characteristic, or has no significant disruption to student school day, it may instead be handled solely as a discipline/Code of Conduct issue, rather than a HIB case. If a full HIB investigation ensues, then all parties involved, including witnesses will be interviewed as part of BOE policy to collect and carefully examine the facts of the incident. After the investigation, a determination is made if the incident was harassment, intimidation, or bullying and the final decision is reported to the Superintendent who then shares it with the Board of Education.