

SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF PITTSBURGH

ADMINISTRATIVE
REGULATION

BULLYING / HARASSMENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Step 1 – Reporting

A student or third party (such as a parent/guardian) who believes a student has been subject to conduct that constitutes a violation of the District’s policy prohibiting bullying and harassment is encouraged to immediately report the incident to the student’s school principal or other school employee.

A school employee who suspects or is notified that a student has been subject to conduct that constitutes a violation of this policy shall immediately report the incident to the appropriate school principal.

If the school principal is the subject of a complaint, the student or third party should report the incident to another employee within the school. Reports may also be made directly to the Compliance Officer for Bullying and Harassment. When any employee receives a complaint alleging bullying or harassment against a student by a District employee, a report shall immediately be made to the Office of Human Resources.

Complaints may be received orally or in writing from the complainant. Employees cannot require students and/or third parties to put their complaints in writing prior to beginning an investigation pursuant to these procedures. Similarly, students and/or third parties shall not be mandated to complete a written statement as a part of any bullying/harassment investigation.

Both the parent/guardian of the alleged victim and the parent/guardian of the alleged perpetrator of the conduct must be promptly contacted by the school principal and informed of the nature of the complaint.

Step 2 – Review Nature of Conduct Reported

The school principal shall determine whether the conduct complained of, if true, constitutes bullying and/or harassment defined by the District’s policy. Conduct complained of that does not rise to the level of alleged bullying and/or harassment need not be formally investigated and a Bullying/Harassment packet, as described below, need not be completed. Examples of conduct that need not be investigated by the school principal or designee include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Pestering or bothering of a student that is not severe, persistent or pervasive and does not interfere with the victim student’s academic performance or learning opportunities.
- Conduct that occurs outside of school and does not interfere with the victim student’s education, create a threatening environment, or substantially disrupt the orderly operation

The school principal may consult with the Compliance Officer and the Law Department to determine if the conduct complained of must be investigated pursuant to District policy.

Step 3 – Investigation and Written Report

Upon receiving a complaint of bullying or harassment, the school principal or his/her designee shall immediately conduct a prompt and timely investigation of the alleged conduct. The school principal or designee is directed to complete a Bullying/Harassment Packet evidencing the investigation procedures used, findings of the investigation, and corrective action recommended to prevent recurrence of bullying/harassment, if confirmed. The Bullying/Harassment Packet must be completed ten (10) school days from the date of the complaint. It should include all available documentation of the bullying/harassment investigation, including:

1. Bullying/Harassment Cover Sheet (including demographic information for the student, a brief statement of the nature of the complaint, and a list of packet contents)
2. Bullying/Harassment Complaint Investigation Report Form (**REQUIRED**)
3. Bullying/Harassment Witness Statement(s) (if any have been made in writing)
4. Support Staff Report
5. Bus Driver Statement
6. Complaint of Bullying or Harassment (if in writing)
7. Previous Bullying/Harassment Complaint Investigation Report(s) (if applicable)

The investigation shall consist of individual interviews with the complainant, the accused, and others with knowledge relative to the incident. The investigator shall also evaluate other available information and materials relevant to the investigation. Witnesses may make voluntary statements but are not mandated to do so. If one or more of the students involved in the alleged incident have received the services of school support staff (counselor, school social worker, or other support staff), the Support Staff Report shall also be completed.

The obligation to conduct this investigation shall not be negated by the fact that a criminal investigation of the incident is pending or has been concluded.

The Bullying/Harassment Complaint Investigation Report shall include a summary of the investigation, a determination of whether the complaint has been substantiated as factual and whether it is a violation of this policy, and a recommended disposition of the complaint, including recommended corrective action measures for substantiated complaints.

The completed Bullying/Harassment Packet, including the Complaint Investigation Report, shall be provided to the Compliance Officer via email, fax or in person as soon as practicable after it is completed:

Elena Runco, Compliance Officer for Student Bullying
& Harassment
Office of Student Support Services
341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Room 440
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Phone: (412) 529-3918
Fax: (412) 622-3954
Email: erunco1@pghschools.org

The Compliance Officer will review the Bullying/Harassment Packet, collaborate with the school as necessary to develop appropriate corrective action and/or interventions, and will return the Complaint Investigation Report to the school.

The school shall then provide the completed Complaint Investigation Report to the parent/guardian of the complainant and the parent/guardian of the accused.

Step 4 – District Action

If the investigation results in a finding that the complaint is factual and constitutes a violation of this policy, the District shall take prompt, corrective action to ensure that such conduct ceases and will not recur.

Disciplinary actions shall be consistent with the Code of Student Conduct, Board policies and District procedures, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and state and federal laws.

If it is concluded that a student has knowingly made a false complaint under this policy, such student shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Central Office Investigations

The vast majority of bullying and harassment complaints will be handled at the school level with the Compliance Officer and Law Department providing technical support and assistance. However, cases may arise that warrant an investigation by the Compliance Officer and/or Law Department at the Central Office level. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, when:

1. The principal, school employee or an independent contractor of the District is alleged perpetrator of the conduct.
2. The parent/guardian and child are represented by an attorney in relation to the allegations.
3. Conduct is particularly severe in nature.¹ Examples of severe conduct may include:
 - Sexual assault and/or inappropriate touching of a sexual nature
 - Severe physical violence

¹ The Law Department, in consultation with the school and the Compliance Officer, shall determine which cases are sufficiently severe in nature so as to require investigation at the central office level.

- Victim has been hospitalized or threatened suicide due to the purported incident
- Where the parent/guardian is withholding the student from his or her school program due to the alleged conduct

4. Appeals of school-based determinations

The Law Department, in consultation with the school and the Compliance Officer, shall determine which circumstances necessitate investigation at the Central Office level. No complainant shall be entitled to Central Office handling of their bullying/harassment complaint under District policy or this administrative regulation.

Appeal Procedure

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with a finding of no violation of the policy or with the corrective action recommended in the Bullying/Harassment Complaint Investigation Report, s/he may submit a written appeal to the Compliance Officer within fifteen (15) school days of their receipt of the report.
2. The Compliance Officer shall review the investigation conducted on the school level and may elect to conduct a reasonable investigation of his/her own.
3. The Compliance Officer shall prepare a written response to the appeal within fifteen (15) school days of his/her receipt of the appeal. Copies of the response shall be provided to the complainant, the accused and the school principal who conducted the initial investigation.