

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can a single incident be considered bullying?

Senate Bill 179, otherwise known as David's Law, broadened the definition of bullying in the Texas Education Code. A single significant act can now be constituted as bullying if another criterion is met.

Is teasing bullying?

Teasing usually occurs between friends in a joking manner, not meant to cause harm. If one person becomes offended and asks the other person to stop, the teasing would cease. In incidents of bullying, teasing is one-sided, and the aggressor intends to cause harm to the target with the use of verbal bullying.

Teasing becomes bullying when:

- A power imbalance exists between the students;
- The teasing is repeated;
- The intent is to humiliate, intimidate, or cause fear;
- The teasing continues despite obvious distress or requests to stop;

Why are some situations considered bullying and others are not, even if the behaviors are the same?

ILTexas must follow discipline guidelines outlined in the Texas Education Code. In order for an incident to be coded as bullying in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), Texas Education Agency's data collection system, the behavior must meet all of the state's criteria for bullying (see definitions). Administrators will address the behavior following the ILTexas Student Code of Conduct.

What is the difference between conflict and bullying?

Conflict is a normal part of life and relationships. Conflict occurs when two or more people have a different point of view about something, resulting in mutual disagreement. Emotions may be involved because of the relationship between those experiencing conflict, which could lead to mean words or actions. The main difference between conflict and bullying is that in conflict, a power imbalance does not exist; everyone involved is considered equal in the relationship. Conflict can be resolved in most situations.

What happens after a report has been made?

1. Campus administrators will begin an investigation by interviewing the alleged victim, witnesses, aggressor(s), and obtain written statements and gather any evidence available (pictures, online messages, video footage, etc).
2. Campus administrators will notify parents of the victim, aggressor(s), and witnesses of the investigation.
3. Campus administrators will review all of the information and determine if the behavior meets the definition of bullying, according to the Texas Education Code. The concern could be bullying, conflict, mean behavior, or a misunderstanding.
4. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the victim, aggressor(s) and their parents will be notified of the result of the investigation and any follow-up actions such as disciplinary consequences, safety plan, stay away agreement or other interventions.
5. If bullying is confirmed, administrators will create a stay away agreement and counselors will create a safety plan.
6. Administrators should be notified immediately of any additional incidents.

Why does the school not share information about the consequences assigned to the student(s) who bullied my child?

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that requires confidentiality of student information. Student discipline records are considered protected information. Therefore, the school cannot legally share information about another student. Administrators will follow the ILTexas Student Code of Conduct when issuing consequences for the aggressor(s).