

# ILTexas Bullying Prevention Protocol

The physical and emotional wellbeing of our students is a top priority. ILTexas is committed to providing every student with a safe and supportive learning environment free from bullying and harassment. Reports of harassment, bullying, and cyberbullying are taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated. Harassment, bullying (including cyberbullying), and retaliation are not tolerated and shall result in disciplinary action as defined in the ILTexas Student Code of Conduct. ILTexas will immediately provide for the safety of students, investigate, and address any report or observation of behavior which could be bullying or harassment. In addition, through character education, proactive counseling programming, and the execution of the mission of ILTexas, students are not only given the opportunity to identify these behaviors, but given the skills to avoid bullying and harassment through an emphasis on others before self, servant leadership, and strengthening the mind, body and character.

## What Is Bullying?

Bullying is defined in Section 37.0832 of the Education Code as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that satisfies the applicability requirements below and that:

- Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property.
- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or
- Infringes on the rights of the victim at school and includes cyberbullying.
- David's Law - [David's Law ENGLISH](#)      [David's Law SPANISH](#)

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is defined in Section 37.0832 of the Education Code as bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool. ILTexas has jurisdiction to take disciplinary action regarding:

1. Bullying that occurs on or is delivered to school property or to the site of a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property;
2. Bullying that occurs on a publicly or privately owned school bus or vehicle being used for transportation of students to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity; and
3. Cyberbullying that occurs off school property or outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity if the cyberbullying:
  - a. Interferes with a student's educational opportunities; or
  - b. Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a classroom, school or school-sponsored or school-related activity.

## Retaliation

A person commits an offense if the person intentionally or knowingly harms or threatens to harm another by an unlawful act in retaliation for or on account of the service or status of another as a:

## Harassment

- Harassing conduct may take many forms, including verbal acts and name-calling; graphic and written statements, which may include use of cell phones or the Internet; or other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating. Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents. Harassment creates a hostile environment when the conduct is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school. When such harassment is based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability, it violates the civil rights laws that OCR enforces.

# Types of Bullying

Bullying involves various forms of behavior, such as hitting, name-calling, spreading rumors, or making disparaging posts online. Some are overt and easy to spot, while other actions are covert and make it challenging to identify and intervene. Therefore, it is imperative to notify school personnel. These behaviors alone are not necessarily bullying but must also meet the criteria defined by the state.

## Physical

- Hitting or slapping
- Kicking or tripping
- Destroying property
- Throwing objects at someone
- Spitting

## Verbal

- Name-calling
- Taunting
- Threats
- Demeaning remarks about someone's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation

## Social

- Spreading rumors
- Isolating someone from a peer group
- Damaging someone's reputation
- Sharing personal information
- Public humiliation

## Cyberbullying

- Abusive or hurtful messages, posts, emails, images, or video
- Fake profiles
- Spreading rumors
- Threats

## Warning Signs that a Child is Being Bullied

Research indicates that a culture of silence is associated with bullying, and many children will not tell anyone. A child may not talk about being a target of bullying out of fear or embarrassment, believe it will make the situation worse, do not think anything can be done to stop it, or may not want to be viewed as a tattletale or snitch. There are warning signs that may indicate that a child is experiencing bullying or dealing with another concern that is causing emotional distress.

### Signs may include:

- Not wanting to attend school and giving excuses to avoid going
- Make remarks about disliking school or a student
- May appear anxious, agitated, sad, or fearful before and/or after school
- Ask to change how he/she gets to school (wants to be dropped off instead of riding the bus or may not want to walk)
- Skip a particular class
- Ask to attend a different school, be homeschooled, or take online courses

- Refuse to discuss school
- Unexplained bruises, cuts, or injuries
- Belongings are damaged, stolen, or “lost” frequently
- Difficulty sleeping (insomnia, sleeping too long, or nightmares)
- Change in eating habits
- Somatic symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches
- Change in disposition
- Withdrawn from family and friends
- Stop participating in activities that were once enjoyable
- Get upset when texting, on social media, or online
- Does not have friends

## If you suspect your child is being bullied

- Talk to your child in a calm and supportive manner.
- Reassure your child that it is not his/her fault.
- Gather as much detail as possible.
- Discuss strategies to handle any further incidents.
- Identify trusted adults on campus.
- Monitor technology.
- Block the aggressor(s) on all technology.
- Encourage open communication
- Contact the school and report.
- Seek counseling, if necessary.

Bullying should not be accepted as a normal part of growing up. It is imperative that you take your child seriously. A child who is dismissed when trying to discuss a sensitive topic is likely to refrain from speaking up in the future.

## If you find out your child is the aggressor and is bullying others:

- Talk to your child in a calm and supportive manner.
- Find out why your child is engaging in this type of behavior.
- Determine the support necessary to change behavior and deal with the reason your child is bullying.
- Teach empathy, compassion, and acceptance.
- Be clear about your expectations.
- Give consequences for the behavior.
- Monitor technology if this is the tool used to bully others.
- Collaborate with the school.
- Give positive reinforcement for improved behavior.
- Seek counseling, if necessary.

## Reporting Incidents of Bullying

Students, parents, and staff members may report suspected bullying in various ways. Timely reporting of an incident will allow campus administrators to intervene and take effective action. ILTexas takes all reports of bullying seriously and investigates all allegations promptly to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all students.

- [Bullying Report Form](#) - Report form may be completed and submitted at [iltexas.org](http://iltexas.org) by parents, students, and/or staff.
- School Personnel - Students are the number one priority of all ILTexas staff members. It is always best to report safety issues or incidents of bullying directly to a teacher, counselor, or campus administrator. A student or parent may report an incident of bullying either orally or in writing. If a student or parent does not feel comfortable making a report in person, a report can be submitted using the [Bullying Report Form](#) at [iltexas.org](http://iltexas.org) found under Families and the Bullying Prevention tab.
- Tips may also be submitted using the [Safe Schools Program Anonymous Tip Line](#) link regarding safety and well-being concerns to help prevent school-related incidents that may cause harm to others. Tips may include weapons, suicide or self-harm, illicit drug use, inappropriate relationships, violence, and other concerns for safety and well-being.

## Bullying Protocol Forms

[Bullying Report Form](#)

[Bullying Investigation Form - Stop, Look, and Listen](#)

[Bullying Investigation Flowchart](#)

[Bullying Checklist English](#)

[Bullying Checklist Spanish](#)

[Bullying Report QR Poster](#)

### Resources

[Texas Bullying Laws Video](#)

[A Parent's Guide to Understanding Bullying](#)

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

[Stomp Out Bullying](#)

[PACER'S National Bullying Prevention Center](#)

[Champions Against Bullying](#)

[TEA Standards for Bullying Prevention](#)

## 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). Campus 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, campus administrators will create a Stay Away Agreement and counselors will create a Safety Plan.
6. Campus 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. Campus administrators will follow the ILTexas Student Code of Conduct when issuing consequences for the aggressor(s).

# ILTexas Bullying Prevention

ILTexas has multiple initiatives for bullying prevention.

- Posters throughout our schools with a QR code that links to the Bullying Report Form - Stop Bullying - See It - Say It - Stop It. This report may be completed by students, parents, and/or staff.
- Each ILTexas campus will have a Safe and Supportive School Program (SSSP) committee that addresses bullying in addition to other harmful and threatening behaviors by focusing on prevention efforts and health and wellness initiatives.
- Monthly communication from ILTexas HQ to parents/guardians will be sent out and posted on the website. In order to keep parents informed about ILTexas bullying prevention efforts, the communication will provide resources and tips for preventing and addressing bullying, and foster a collaborative environment between the school and parents. By providing consistent, comprehensive, and supportive communication, ILTexas will effectively engage parents in bullying prevention efforts and create a safer environment for all students.
- Positive school culture and building healthy relationships between students and staff will be measured in alignment with the school and LEA's mission, vision, and values, using an age-appropriate survey that includes relevant questions on bullying, including cyberbullying, that includes appropriate privacy controls in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g). The campus administrators, counselors, and committee will develop and implement action plans based on the survey results that address student concerns regarding bullying, including cyberbullying.
- All staff complete the Bullying Prevention compliance training through Region 10 service center. In addition, campus counselors provide an additional face-to-face bullying prevention training to all staff in August prior to the first day of school.
- Bullying Prevention Classroom Guidance - K-12 Campus Counselors provide bullying prevention classroom guidance in the fall semester and in the spring semester. These presentations are grade level/age appropriate.
- K-2 counselors provide recorded bullying prevention mini-lessons for teachers to play during snack time.
- YES (Youth Equipped to Succeed) Prevention Program - Educational Non-Profit Organization. The programs are age appropriate for each grade level.
- Bullying Prevention Bulletin Board - Campus Counselors create bullying prevention bulletin boards during October for Bullying Prevention Month in a hallway that all grade levels access.
- HOPE Squad (6-12) - Hope Squad is a peer-to-peer suicide & bullying prevention program. Hope Squad members are nominated by their classmates as trustworthy peers and trained by advisors. The program reduces the risk of youth suicide through education, training, and peer intervention.
- Counseling Services Related to Bullying - Counselors provide counseling services for
  - a. The victim
  - b. The aggressor(s)
  - c. Any student who witnessed the bullying or came forward to report the bullying
  - d. Consider schedule changes as needed to remove students from classes with bullies.
- Linewize Alerts Concerning Bullying - When Linewize alerts for bullying are received, administrators take the lead, counselors confirm APs received alert, and provide counseling support as needed.
- Student Observations - Campus Counselors observe student interactions in the hallways and at lunch times to have a better understanding of friend groups and any potential bullying situations.



