



# **BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY**

## **2025-2026**

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

It is the policy of District 149 to provide an educational environment free from bullying, hazing, harassment, and cyberbullying. The plan will be evaluated annually. The School District is committed to protecting its students from any form of physical, verbal, or mental abuse. All Dolton School District 149 Principals and Staff shall work to develop safe, supportive school environments that prevent bullying through:

- Developing supportive school climate strategies, including clear expectations and shared agreements to guide interactions between students and between staff and students.
- Teaching all students social and emotional skills and establishing classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudiced treatment against students.
- Ensuring all students, staff, and stakeholders know what their school plan is regarding bullying and harassment.
- Ensuring all students and staff understand that reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited and the consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation.

### **Responsibilities of Dolton School District 149**

All DSD 149 employees and contractors, including security officers, lunchroom staff, and bus drivers, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

1. Intervene immediately in a matter that is appropriate to the concern and ensure the safety of all people involved;
2. Report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Principal/Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours.
3. Cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Principal/Designee.

### **Responsibilities of Students, Parents, and Guardians**

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Principal/Designee as quickly as practicable. Reports can be made to any Dolton School District 149 Principal/Designee by calling the DSD 149 Principal's Office or District Office at (708) 868-8300. Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Principal/Designee. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

## **Steps for Investigating Bullying Reports**

The Principal or their Designee will provide immediate support to any targeted student(s) to ensure safety. If there are overt or implied risks of safety, follow the steps in the Code of Student Conduct Manual, including immediately notifying the Title IX Coordinator and Complaint Manager. Alleged behaviors targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression should be reported immediately to the Title IX Coordinator, Mr. Gerald Scott for assistance and support at (708) 768-5200 or [scottg@sd149.org](mailto:scottg@sd149.org) and the Complaint Manager, Dr. Mellodie Brown, at (708) 868-8300 or [brownme@sd149.org](mailto:brownme@sd149.org).

1. Notify parents/guardians of all involved students. Within one school day of receipt of a bullying report, the Principal/Designee shall report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications in the District student information system (Skyward). Notifications should be made privately to students directly involved and their parent/legal guardian.
2. Additionally, when incidents have a larger impact on the school community, the Principal/Designee shall provide clear communication to students, staff, and parents to reinforce school-wide expectations and a climate of respect and inclusion.
3. Document all allegations of bullying. Within two school days of receiving a report of bullying, the Principal/Designee will document the allegation in the District student information system (Skyward) as a general incident report and document all notifications made.
4. Investigate. The Principal and/or a Designee, who is knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention, shall perform the investigation. For guidance, contact the Complaint Manager, Dr. Mellodie Brown, at (708) 868-8300 or [brownme@sd149.org](mailto:brownme@sd149.org). Investigation of reported bullying shall be initiated within 5 school days of receipt of a report, documented within the incident report in the District student information system (Skyward), and completed within 10 school days, unless the Principal grants in writing an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Principal/Designee shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved.

### **The investigation shall include:**

- Identifying all involved parties, including the student(s) alleged to have engaged in the bullying behaviors, the alleged target(s), and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
- Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with all involved parties. The alleged target should never be interviewed in public or with the student(s) alleged to have engaged in bullying.

- Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.
- Making a determination whether allegations of bullying are substantiated or not, and documenting the determination. The Principal/Designee shall consider whether the four elements of the bullying definition are met, or if all four elements of bullying are not present, whether the behavior qualifies as another inappropriate behavior listed in the Code of Student Conduct. When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee shall ensure the investigation and findings (whether the report of bullying is substantiated or not substantiated) are documented in the District student information system (Skyward). If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors and/or other inappropriate behaviors listed in the Code of Student Conduct, the Principal/Designee shall prepare a Misconduct Report.
- Notifying all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation. Within one day of making a determination, the Principal/Designee shall notify, in writing, the parents/legal guardian of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Principal/Designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying. When communicating incidents of bullying to the targeted student's parent/guardian, the Principal/Designee should consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential. If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors, the Principal/Designee shall provide the Misconduct Report to all parents/legal guardians, notifying them that the Code of Student Conduct was followed. They may not advise them of specific consequences imposed, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law.
- Restorative measures and interventions will be provided that can be taken to address bullying, which may include, but are not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.

### Appeal Process

Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the Complaint Manager, Dr. Mellodie Brown at (708) 868-8300 or [brownme@sd149.org](mailto:brownme@sd149.org) within 15 calendar days of notification of the Principal's decision. The complaint manager shall render a final determination in accordance with the timeline and procedures set out in the anti-bullying appeal guidelines established. Principals or their Designees may further their investigation, reconsider the consequence(s), direct the imposition of other consequence(s), or deny the appeal.

The Complaint Manager shall notify the party requesting the appeal and the Principal that its decision is final and shall document that notification in the Incident Report in the District student

information system (Skyward). Consequences for Dolton School District 149 Employees and Contractors when it is determined that they were aware that bullying and discriminatory behavior was taking place but failed to report it, those employees/contractors will be considered to have violated this Policy.

The Complaint Manager shall make recommendations for the Board to consider employee discipline for such violations, referring to any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Remedies for offending contractors should be imposed according to their Board contracts.

Notice and Dissemination of Requirements Principals shall follow the requirements established by the Bullying Policy on the District's/school's website, in the school building, as well as disseminating and presenting this Policy to school staff as part of pre-school-year professional development.

Training and Professional Development Staff Professional development will be offered to build the skills of all DSD 149 employees, contractors, and volunteers to implement this Policy.

The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Developmentally appropriate incidents of bullying and discriminatory behavior to intervene immediately and effectively to stop them;
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target, and witness to the bullying and bias-based, and discriminatory behavior;
3. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bullying behavior; and
4. Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

### **Definitions**

**Bullying** means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the students' person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including, without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence,

theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

**Hazing:** Hazing is any act that subjects a student to electronic, written, physical, or verbal harassment, mental or physical discomfort, intimidation, embarrassment, ridicule, or demeaning activity committed by an individual student or group of students for the purpose of initiation, maintaining membership, or holding office in any organization, club, or athletic team.

**Harassment:** Harassment includes any unwelcome electronic, written, physical, or verbal conduct, contact, or communication that is motivated by or related to individual characteristics such as race, color, national origin, gender, economic status, disability, religion, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation and that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment. Although harassment that creates a hostile environment may take many different forms, some examples include name-calling and other derogatory comments, jokes, gestures or looks, posting or distribution of derogatory pictures, notes or graffiti, blocking, pushing, hitting, or other forms of physical aggression. Where harassment is sexual, it may also include such conduct as persistent unwelcome attempts to interact with someone, spreading of rumors, aggressive physical contact such as kissing, touching, or pulling at clothes in a sexual way.

**Sexual Harassment:** Sexual Harassment also includes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors when such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the receipt of educational or other school-related benefits, or such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for educational or other school-related decisions affecting that individual.

### **Cyber Bullying**

In an effort to encourage students to come forward and report incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation, Dolton School District 149 has implemented the Cyberbullying/Bullying Quick Tip notification system through the School Messenger App. Whether it is physical or verbal, whether it is done online or offline, or whether it happens before, during, or after school, one thing is for certain: bullying is wrong. The purpose of this program is to create an anonymous, two-way means for students, parents, guardians, and others to report incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation, and more.

**Cyberbullying** means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog 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 if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes 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 if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying.

**Sexting:** Sexting is electronically distributing or disseminating any material that depicts another minor nude or engaged in any sexual or lewd conduct. Electronic transfers include transfers via computer or any other electronic communication device, including cellular phones. It is a violation of Illinois Law for a minor under the age of 18 to electronically distribute or disseminate any material that depicts another minor nude or engaged in any sexual or lewd conduct. The District prohibits students from engaging in sexting, including possessing sexually explicit photographs or images on any electronic device, regardless of whether the depiction violates State Law. Any cellular phone or other electronic device may be searched upon reasonable suspicion of sexting. All students involved in sexting may be disciplined. In all cases where sexting is suspected, school administrators will contact the police.

**Threats:** A statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action upon an individual or institution.

### **Complaints**

A student who feels he or she has been bullied, hazed, harassed, or cyberbullied should inform a School District staff member. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or his/her designee. All other members of the school community, including students, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this Policy. There are no express time limits for initiating complaints under this Board policy. However, every effort should be made to bring complaints to the attention of appropriate authorities as soon as possible, while memories are fresh and witnesses continue to be available. Complaints will be investigated. If it is determined that a violation has occurred, prompt corrective action will be taken.

During the investigation, confidentiality will be maintained to the utmost extent possible. Complainants will be offered counseling and other assistance when appropriate and will be informed of the results of any investigation. After all building-level interventions have been exhausted, students or parents of students may file a formal written complaint of discrimination or harassment with the Associate Superintendent's Office/Complaint Manager, Dr. Mellodie Brown, at [brownme@sd149.org](mailto:brownme@sd149.org).