

Carbondale Community High School

Bullying Prevention and Response Plan

2025–2026 School Year

Background

Carbondale Community High School is committed to fostering a safe, caring, and positive learning environment that supports the academic and personal growth of all students. Every member of the school community shares responsibility for maintaining the physical and emotional safety of others.

Bullying, harassment, and intimidation are violations of school policy and will not be tolerated. This plan outlines the practices and procedures CCHS will use to prevent, identify, investigate, and respond to bullying behaviors.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms: physical, verbal, emotional, relational, or cyberbullying. It may be direct or indirect, blatant or subtle.

Under Illinois law, bullying is defined as:

“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(s) in reasonable fear of harm to person or property;
- (2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on physical or mental health;
- (3) Substantially interfering with academic performance; or
- (4) Substantially interfering with the ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or privileges.”

—105 ILCS 5/27-23.7(b)

Conduct that may constitute bullying includes:

- **Physical acts:** unwanted or inappropriate physical contact, stalking, sexual assault, or destruction of property.
- **Written or electronic communication:** any medium (phones, computers, websites, social media, text messages, email) used to transmit harmful or intimidating content.

- **Verbal aggression:** threats, blackmail, demands for protection, or intimidation.
- **Relational aggression:** social exclusion, rumor spreading, or damaging someone's reputation.
- **Off-campus behavior:** if it creates, or can reasonably be expected to create, a significant disruption at school or school-sponsored activities.

Additional examples may include:

- Blocking access to school property or facilities
- Stealing, hiding, or defacing books, backpacks, or personal possessions
- Repeated taunting, name-calling, belittling, or demeaning remarks related to race, color, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics—real or perceived—that create a hostile educational environment

Conduct that would **not** ordinarily be considered acts of bullying behavior includes:

- Mere teasing
 - “talking trash”
 - Trading of insults
 - The expression of ideas or beliefs (expressions protected by the First Amendment), so long as such expression is not lewd, profane, or intended to intimidate or harass another.
-

I. Prevention of Bullying

1. Strengthen School Climate

- Utilize data from 5 Essentials Survey.
- Use data to implement action steps that support emotional safety, inclusivity, and positive relationships among students.

2. Preventive Education

- Provide annual student instruction regarding bullying, digital citizenship, empathy, and reporting procedures as part of Freshman Orientation, class meetings, the CCHS handbook and the school website.
- Provide staff training on:
 - Recognizing early signs of aggression
 - Trauma-informed responses
 - De-escalation strategies
 - Monitoring high-risk areas (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, school buses)

II. Identifying Bullying

1. Increase Visibility of Reporting Options

Post bullying reporting procedure in the following locations:

- School buildings
- Student handbooks
- District website

2. Staff Expectations and Training

- All new hires will receive training on bullying and bullying response. Bullying prevention will also be a part of the district's regular training calendar.
- Staff must:
 - Recognize signs of interpersonal aggression
 - Accept and forward reports professionally
 - Avoid promising confidentiality
 - Follow required referral and documentation procedures

3. Parent/Guardian Communication

- Bullying reporting procedures and prevention information will be communicated to parents/guardians through the student handbook and school website.

4. Student Reporting Procedures

Students may report bullying:

- To any staff member
- To an administrator or school counselor
- By completing the Report Form for Bullying (digital)
- Through anonymous reporting (online form, hotline 618-457-3371, ext. 217)

All reports—anonymous or not—must be taken seriously and investigated.

III. Investigating Bullying Reports

1. Parent/Guardian Notification (Within 24 Hours)

Within 24 hours of the school administration learning of a bullying incident, the parents/guardians of the victim must be notified of:

- The reported incident
- Any threats or behavior indicating self-harm or harm to others
- Immediate steps being taken

All available contact methods (phone, email, emergency contacts) must be attempted.

2. Investigation Process

Investigations must be prompt, thorough, and impartial.

Steps include:

1. Review the report form for bullying if applicable.
2. Begin the investigation as soon as possible—preferably the same day.
3. Document all interviews, observations, and evidence.
4. Maintain confidentiality as required by law.
5. Evaluate whether conduct meets the legal and policy definition of bullying.

3. Determining Findings

Investigators will:

- Determine and document whether bullying occurred
- Evaluate the risk of escalation or potential threats
- Develop safety and support plans when necessary

4. Response & Follow-Up

Possible responses include:

- Disciplinary action per board policy
- Restorative practices when appropriate
- Counseling for the aggressor(s) and/or target(s)
- No contact contracts signed
- Increased supervision in high-risk areas
- Parent/guardian meetings
- Referral to mental health professionals when concerning behavior patterns are identified

Administrators must follow up with involved students to ensure resolution, safety, and protection from retaliation.

IV. Alignment With Threat Assessment Procedures

Interpersonal aggression is often a precursor to threats of school violence. Therefore:

- Any bullying incident involving threats, escalating aggression, references to weapons, or self-harm must be immediately referred to the Threat Assessment Team.
 - Threat assessment procedures will operate in tandem with, or parallel to, the bullying investigation.
-

V. Documentation & Recordkeeping

- Administration will maintain records of incidents.
- Records will be monitored to identify patterns of repeated aggression or victimization.