# MT. DIABLO
## UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mental Health & Wellness Series:

# WHEN IS IT BULLYING?

## A Parents Guide

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# LCAP Goals: LCAP 2026-27

1. All students will receive a high quality education in a safe and welcoming environment with high expectations and rigorous instruction in the California State Standards that prepare them for college and career. All students will demonstrate growth meeting standards in English, English language development, and mathematics.

2. Highly qualified, culturally proficient, and responsive staff will create a safe and engaging learning environment respectful of all students' backgrounds ensuring they are college and career ready when they graduate. There will be an increase in the percentage of classrooms where standards-based instruction is being observed.

3. Families and community members will be informed, and empowered as partners with Mt. Diablo Unified to support student learning and improve student outcomes.
There will be an increase in the percentage of families reporting that they feel they are an active partner with the school in educating their child.

4. Focal scholars, specifically African American students, Foster Youth, students experiencing homelessness, students with IEPs and multilingual students, will experience culturally responsive practices and be provided rigorous instruction within an educational environment that builds trust and inclusive partnerships between the students, families and staff. All student groups will demonstrate growth meeting standards in English, English language development, and mathematics.

5. **All students at Crossroads High School and Olympic High School will demonstrate a 3% increase in attendance rate and a 3% increase in on-pace graduation rate by June 2027, leading to an increase of 3% in graduation rates. All students at Glenbrook Academy will demonstrate a 3% increase in attendance rate and a 3% increase in on-pace graduation rate by June 2027. All students at Sunrise will demonstrate a 3% increase in attendance rate and a 5% reduction in suspension rate by June 2027.**

# What We Will Cover

- What Bullying is
- Factors to Determine Violation of Bullying/Harassment Policy
- District Policies and Procedures
- The Mental Health Connection
- Warning Signs
- How to Respond
- Where to Get Help

# Bullying is common, and it's rising

**19%**

Of U.S high school students were bullied at school in 2023, up from 15% in 2021.

**1 in 5**

Students ages 12-18 report being bullied, and it starts well before middle school.

**2x**

Teens who are bullied are about twice as likely to have symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Overall teen sadness and hopelessness dipped slightly (42% -> 40%) between 2021 and 2023. Bullying moved the other way.

Sources: CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2023); National Center for Education Statistics; CDC National Health Interview Survey

What Bullying is

# Three things make it bullying

"Unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance" and is repeated, or likely to be repeated, over time.

## ON PURPOSE

Meant to hurt, scare, embarrass, or exclude

## REPEATED

Happens more than once, or is likely to happen again

## POWER IMBALANCE

Size, popularity, numbers, or secrets used to control

Sources: StopBullying.gov (U.S Department of Health and Human Services)

What Bullying is

# California Law

Under state law, bullying is severe or pervasive physical or verbal conduct, in person or online, directed at a student.

"Electronic acts" count: texts, posts, Images, videos or fake profiles that Impersonate a student.

Puts a student in fear of harm to self or property

**MENTAL HEALTH**
Substantially harms physical or mental health

Substantially interferes with schoolwork

Keeps student from taking part in school activities

Source: California Education Code §48900(r)

What Bullying is

# Bullying and Harassment

## BOARD POLICIES

- Board Policy 5131.2: Bullying
- Board Policy 5145.3: Nondiscrimination/Harassment

## ADMINISTRATORS DUTIES

- Educate
- Intervene
- Investigation
- Communicate
- Corrective Action
- Restore

## EXAMPLES

**Unwelcome/intentional/malicious:**

- ***Physical bullying*** - hitting, biting, shoving, kicking, shoving, spitting, etc
- ***Social/Relationship bullying*** - rumors, exclusion, blackmailing, peer pressure, etc.
- ***Teasing based on protected class*** or to create harm, fear, or intimidation.
- ***Cyberbullying*** - intentional harm through electronic impersonation, unwanted comments or content, etc
- ***Hazing*** - unwanted actions or harm in order to join team or club.

- ***Physical Sexual Harassment*** that is not severe, pervasive ***and*** objectively offensive; ie: single breast grab, etc
- ***Verbal or Visual Sexual Harassment-*** sexual jokes, pictures, graffiti, catcalling, commenting on another's body, etc.



# Factors to Determine Violation of Bullying/Harassment Policy

## Bullying

- Severe or pervasive
- Targeting of a student
- Power imbalance
- Intent of aggressor
- Involving physical or emotional juries

## Harassment

- When bullying behavior directed at the target is also based on a protected class, that behavior is then defined as harassment.
- Protected class include, race, color, religion, sex, age, disability and national origin.

# Investigation Process

**What is bullying?**

Severe or ongoing actions (verbal, physical, written, or electronic) that:
- Cause fear or harm
- Affect mental or physical health
- Interfere with academics or school participation

**What is Harassment?**

Unwelcome conduct based on race, gender, disability, etc., that disrupts education or creates a hostile environment. Includes threats or intimidation.

**Reporting Bullying or Harassment**

Report to: Your school site administrator
Provide: What happened, who was involved, and when

**When the School Intervenes**

- Incident occurred at school, during a school event, or through district programs (in-person or virtual)
- Off-campus incidents (e.g., cyberbullying) that disrupt learning

## Investigation Process:

- Report Received: School staff begin an investigation and may offer support during the process.
- Investigation: Admin interviews involved parties and reviews evidence (e.g., messages, screenshots).
- Findings: Admin determines if policies were violated.
- Supports/Discipline: May include counseling, schedule changes, or discipline.
- Outcome Notice: Families are notified of the results.

## Supportive Measures May Include:

- Wellness check-ins
- Academic accommodations
- Seating changes
- Counseling referrals

**Filing a Complaint**

You may file a Uniform Complaint at any time regarding bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

**Contacts:**

- Title IX/Civil Rights Officer: Kristy Avila | AvilaK@mdusd.org
- Student Services: Melissa Brennan | BrennanM@mdusd.org
- Rachel Chang, Ed.D. | ChangR@mdusd.org
- Call: (925) 682-8000 x4068

**Resources:**

- Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Uniform Complaint Procedures

# Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP)

A **Uniform Complaint** is a **formal written complaint** filed under the **Uniform Complaint Procedures**, which are used to resolve specific types of issues such as:

- Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying based on race, gender, disability, etc.
  Violations of federal or state laws and regulations
- **Allegations of noncompliance:**
  a. Bullying
  b. Retaliation

*The Board encourages the early, informal resolution of complaints whenever possible and appropriate.*

# BULLYING IS AN ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE.

Like other childhood adversity, it can shape a child's mental and physical health long after the bullying stops. The good news: caring adults make a real difference.

# Every Child Involved Can Be Affected

## Kids who are bullied

- Depression and anxiety
- Sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem
- Changes in sleep and eating
- Losing interest in favorite activities
- Lower grades, missed school

## Kids who bully

- Higher risk of alcohol and drug use
- Fights, school problems, dropping out
- Kids who bully and are bullied face the highest risk of anxiety and depression

## Kids who witness it

- More anxiety and depression
- Fear of being the next target
- Guilt about not stepping in
- More likely to miss or skip school

Sources: StopBullying.gov, “Effects of Bullying”; CDC

# Bullying and Suicide: What to Know

### It’s a risk factor, not a single cause

Bullying alone does not cause suicide, but it can make an already hard situation much worse.

### Risk builds when stressors stack up

Depression, problems at home, or past trauma combined with bullying raise concern.

### Support is protective

A trusted adult at home and at school helps kids get through it.

**If you’re worried, ask directly**

“Are you thinking about hurting yourself or ending your life?” Asking does not put the idea in their head.

**988**

Call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any time. In an emergency call 911.

# What To Watch for at Home

**Your child may be bullied:**

- Unexplained injuries, lost or damaged belongings
- Headaches, stomach aches, or “feeling sick” before school
- Changes in eating or sleep; nightmares
- Falling grades, not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends; avoiding social situations
- Helplessness, low self-esteem, self-harm

**Your child may be bullying others:**

- Physical or verbal fights; growing aggression
- Friends who bully others
- Frequent trips to the principal's office
- Unexplained extra money or new things
- Blames others; won't take responsibility
- Very focused on popularity or reputation

Source: StopBullying.gov, “Warning Signs for Bullying”

# Starting the Conversation

**“What was the best part of your day? The hardest part?**

**“Who do you sit with at lunch? Who do you wish you could sit with?**

**“Is anyone at school or online making you feel bad about yourself?”**

**“What would you do if you saw someone getting picked on?”**

**Pick low-pressure moments**
Car rides, walks, bedtime

**Listen more than you talk**
Resist jumping in to fix it

**Stay Calm**
Your reaction teaches them whether it’s safe to tell you next time

**Make it a habit**
Short, regular check-ins beat one big talk

# If Your Child is Being Bullied

1. **Listen and believe:** Thank them for tell you and make it clear it's not their fault.
2. **Write it down.** Dates, places, who was involved, what happened. Save screenshots.
3. **Contact the school.** Share the facts in writing and ask what happens next and when.
4. **Don't encourage fighting back.** Retaliation can get your child hurt or in trouble with school.
5. **Protect their mental health.** Keep routines, check in often, and involve the school counselor, wellness administrator or your pediatrician.

# If Your Child is the One Bullying

**Stay calm and firm**
Make it clear the behavior isn't okay, and explain why.

**Get curious**
Stress, peer pressure, or being bullied themselves can drive it.

**Stay calm and firm**
Repairing harm and making amends builds empathy.

**Work with the school**
Agree on one plan so expectations match at home and school.

**Model respect**
Kids learn how to treat others from how adults treat each other.

**Get them support**
Kids who bully often need mental health help too.

# Partnering with Your School

## Your child's rights in California

Staff must step in. School staff who see bullying must intervene when it's safe to do so.

Complaints get investigated. Districts must have a clear process to report and investigate bullying, with timelines.

Support for every student. Targets, witnesses, and students who bully can be referred to counseling or restorative programs.

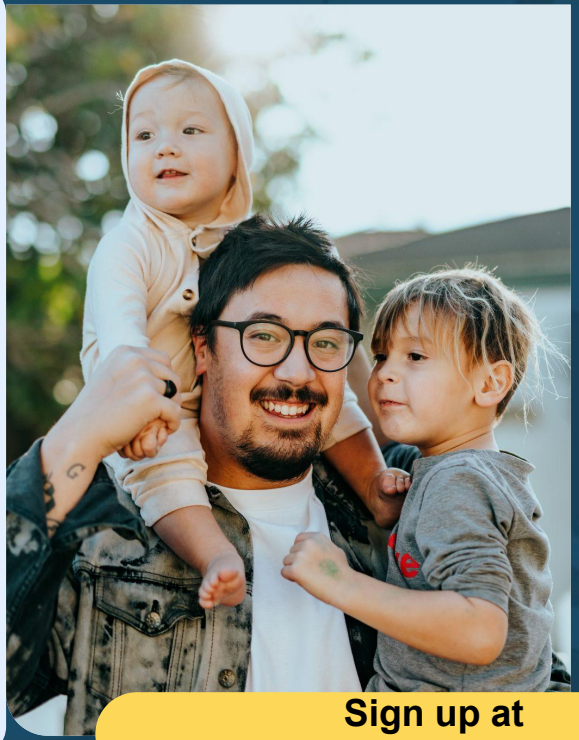
Sources: California Education Code §234.1 (Seth's Law), §48900(r), §48900.9

# Resources for Families

BrightLife Kids
A CalHOPE program by Brightline

Launched January 1, 2024, BrightLife Kids provides free behavioral health coaching to all California families with kids ages 0–17.
**No costs attached. No insurance required. No referrals needed.**

- Live, virtual 1:1 coaching sessions and secure chat
- Bilingual (English/Spanish) coaches + live translation services in 17 Medi-Cal languages
- Coach Specialists to manage complex needs and provide referrals to community resources
- On-demand digital tools tailored to age and concerns
- Online peer communities



**Learn more at brightlife.kids/ca**

**Sign up at https://brightlife.kids/MDUSD**

# Resources for Families




**Sign up at https://solunaapp.com/**

# Resources for Families

**Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) – Wellness in Schools Program (WISP)**
Provides mental health navigation, local community support links, and parent guidance for managing school-related stressors and safety issues.

- **Website:** cccoe.k12.ca.us

**Contra Costa Crisis Center & 211 Service**Free 24/7 confidential help in over 150 languages connecting families to local youth counseling, mental health resources, and crisis intervention.

- **Phone:** Dial 2-1-1 or call 1-800-830-5380
- **Text:** Text "HOPE" to 20121

**Contra Costa Behavioral Health Access Line** Free 24/7 county-run mental health access line providing immediate screening and referrals for children and teens experiencing severe anxiety, distress, or depression due to bullying.

- **Phone:** 1-888-678-7277

# Resources for Families

**Vigilant Parent Initiative (Contra Costa DA's Office)** Free workshops and educational materials for parents regarding online safety, cyberbullying, and digital harassment.

- **Phone:** 925-957-8603

# Key Takeaways

**Know What Bullying Is:** Bullying is intentional, happens repeatedly, and involves a power imbalance. It is legally considered **harassment** when it targets identity factors like race, gender, religion, or disability.

**Watch for Warning Signs:** Look out for unexplained bumps or bruises, missing items, sudden stomach aches, falling grades, or reluctance to go to school.

**Talk Often in Low-Pressure Moments:** Check in during car rides, walks, or bedtime. Focus on listening and staying calm so your child feels safe opening up.

**If Your Child Experience Bullying:**

- Reassure them that it is not their fault.
- Keep a clear record of dates, times, and saved screenshots.
- Contact your school administration in writing (and avoid telling them to fight back).

# Key Takeaways

**If Your Child Exhibits Bullying Behavior:** Stay calm and firm. Work together with the school on a shared plan, and focus on helping them build empathy and address underlying stress.

**Lean On District Support:**

- District staff are required by California law to intervene.
- Schools can provide safety accommodations, schedule changes, wellness check-ins, and counseling support.
- Parents always have the right to submit a formal report or complaint.

**Prioritize Mental Health:** You are your child's most important support system. If you are ever worried about your child's immediate safety or mental health, reach out to school counselors or call/text the **988 Lifeline** anytime.

# Q & A

# Thank you!

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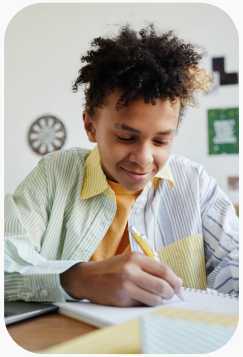


# Factors to Determine Violation of Bullying/Harassment Policy

## Distinguishing Student Conflict v. Bullying

- Severe or pervasive
- Targeting of a student
- Power imbalance
- Intent of aggressor
- Involving physical or emotional juries

## Harassment

- When bullying behavior directed at the target is also based on a protected class, that behavior is then defined as harassment.
- Protected class include, race, color, religion, sex, age, disability and national origin.

# What are your next steps?

1. **Safety Measures**
   a. Change in class
   b. Inform Staff
   c. No contact order
   d. Wellness support
2. **Investigate**
3. **Policy Violation?**
4. **Discipline**
5. **Educate**

**AR 5131.2 Bullying**

***Within 2 business days of receiving a report of bullying, the principal must notify the District compliance officer.**

***When a report of bullying is submitted, the principal or a district compliance officer shall inform the student or parent/guardian of the right to file a formal written complaint in accordance with AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures**