

# **City on a Hill Charter Public Schools**

## ***Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan***

City on a Hill Charter Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, in school- related activities, or that occurs outside of school and creates a hostile school environment for the targeted student. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to restore a safe learning environment for students who are bullied and to prevent further bullying or harassment by students who are identified as perpetrators of bullying.

City on a Hill Charter Public Schools' Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation that may compromise the safe learning environment for any student. City on a Hill is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to address and prevent bullying and harassment within our school. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for preventing, intervening and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation.

### **PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Students are held accountable for behavior outside of school and school events between other members of the City on a Hill community.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

### **DEFINITIONS**

***Aggressor*** is a student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional, who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

***Bullying***, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, or paraprofessional, of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property

- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Cyberbullying** is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

**Hostile environment**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

**Retaliation** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**Staff** includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, custodians, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

**Target** is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

### ***Reporting bullying or retaliation***

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously.

The schools have made a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to:

- Incident Report Form (included at the end of this document, available in the schools' main offices, the counseling offices and online at [www.cityonahill.org](http://www.cityonahill.org))
- Voicemail box: 617-445-1515 x532
- Mailing addresses:
  - CoaH I - 58 Circuit Street, Roxbury, MA 02119
  - CoaH II - 1725 Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester, MA 02124
  - CoaH New Bedford - TBD
- E-mail address: [incidentreport@cityonahill.org](mailto:incidentreport@cityonahill.org)

Use of the Incident Report Form is not required as a condition of making a report. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report.

### **Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation**

Upon receiving a complaint, the principal or designee will confer with the complainant to obtain an understanding and statement of the alleged facts. If based on the facts alleged, the principal determines that the conduct complained of would not constitute bullying as defined by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and school policies, the principal or designee shall document that determination on the Incident Reporting Form and shall take no further action with regard to the complaint. If the Principal or designee determines that such facts, if true, would constitute bullying, as defined above, the principal or designee will promptly commence an investigation of the complaint.

***Responses to Bullying:***

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality in each investigation. When appropriate and with mutual agreement from the students and adults involved, efforts will be made to informally resolve issues before relying on the formal procedures outlined below. Every student involved in the process may have access to an adult advisor during and after the process.

***Informal Procedure:***

Following an initial investigation, it may be possible to resolve a complaint through a voluntary conversation between a complaining party and the alleged aggressor which would be facilitated by the principal or designee. If both the complaining party and the alleged aggressor feel that a resolution has been achieved, then the conversation may remain confidential and no further action need be taken. The results of an informal investigation shall be reported to the principal. Consistent with state and federal law (FERPA), parents or guardians of the students involved will be notified of the incident and whether or not a resolution had been reached. If the complaining party, the alleged aggressor or the complaint official chooses not to utilize the informal procedure, or feels that the informal procedure is inadequate or has been unsuccessful, she/he may proceed to the formal procedure. The formal procedure is available for all complaints.

In addition, school officials may take immediate steps, at their discretion, to protect the complaining party, alleged aggressor, and/or witnesses pending completion of an investigation of alleged bullying and may make any suitable referrals for assistance to appropriate persons or agencies.

***Taking Disciplinary Action.***

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct as outlined in the Student Handbook.

The federal Individuals with the Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline, govern discipline procedures for students with disabilities.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

***Promoting Safety for the Target and Others.***

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed

bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. Strategies that the principal or designee may use include but are not limited to: increasing adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur, creating a personal safety plan, pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in classrooms or at lunch.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

#### ***Notification of Local Law Enforcement.***

City on a Hill Charter Public Schools is committed to maintaining an educational environment free from all forms of bullying behavior. City on a Hill Charter Public Schools shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law. Referral to the Boston Police Department may be made, where appropriate, when the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

The principal shall notify law enforcement if bullying or retaliation (as provided in the bullying prevention and intervention plan) occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21.

#### **Students with disabilities**

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.