

Venerini Academy
Worcester, MA
Diocese of Worcester

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan



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A. INTRODUCTION

Based upon the model Bully Prevention and Intervention Plan required under M.G.L. c. 71, 72, 73, 74 & 370 and drafted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in consultation with state agencies, school personnel, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties, the following Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for Venerini Academy is the proposed plan to effectively address bullying in our community while actively engaging our community as partners in effectively responding to bullying.

“Harassment”, including “Bullying”, and “Cyber-bullying”, means a repeated unwelcome written, electronic, verbal, or physical communication, act or gesture which: reasonably causes a student or staff member to feel coerced, intimidated, harassed, or threatened and may cause: a reasonable person to suffer physical or emotional harm, damage to a student’s or staff member’s property, or a disruptive or hostile school environment. The behavior must interfere with a student’s academic performance or ability to learn, to participate in or benefit from services, activities, or privileges.

The new law requires all school districts, charter schools, non-public schools, approved private special education day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to develop and adopt bullying prevention and intervention plans. Plans must meet the requirements of the law and should follow local policies and procedures. Non-public schools are required to give notice and provide a comment period for families that have a child attending the school. This public process will strengthen the collaborative approach that is required to build successful prevention and intervention programs.

Dealing with bullying in schools is a delicate and challenging situation. Sometimes children will continue to bully, even after being warned or disciplined and getting children that are victims of bullying to report it, is an even greater challenge. School systems can prevent bullying by not only having a written policy but by actually consistently enforcing their policy. Preventing and dealing with bullying today is complex and requires a collaborative effort from various professionals to address it. Because of the complexities associated with bullying, we will always need more clarification on certain issues when developing a policy of this nature.

B. DEFINITIONS

- *Perpetrator* is a student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation
- *Bullying*, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, 72, 73, 74 & 370, is the repeated use by one or more students or by 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:
 1. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
 2. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
 3. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
 4. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 5. materially and substantially disrupts the education process of the orderly operation of a school.
- The plan shall apply to students and members of a school staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.
- *Cyber-bullying* 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.C.L. c 71 & 370 for the legal definition of cyber-bullying.

- *Hostile environment*, as defined in M.G. L. c. 71, & 370, 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 or staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
- *Victim* a student or staff member against whom Bullying or Retaliation has been perpetrated.

C. PRIORITY STATEMENT

The School expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. The school is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The school is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. The school will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, or during school-related activities. The school will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety.

D. ASSESSING NEEDS AND RESOURCES

This Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is the Diocese of Worcester's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, each school leader, with input from families and staff, will assess the adequacy of current programs; review current policies and procedures; review available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services.

An assessment plan for the academic year includes: (1) the surveying of students, staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety issues; and (2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and "hot spots" in the school building, on school grounds, or on school buses). This information helps to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

The "Plan" should describe the methods the school will use to conduct needs assessments, including timelines and leadership roles and oversight responsibilities including, but not limited to: (1) receiving reports on bullying; (2) collecting and analyzing building and/or school-wide data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; (3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to victims and aggressors; (4) planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; (5) planning supports that respond to the needs of victims and perpetrator; (6) choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use; (7) developing new or revising current policies and

protocols under the “Plan”, including an Internet safety policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation of them; (8) amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct accordingly; (9) leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and (10) reviewing and updating the “Plan” each year, or more frequently.

E. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, 72, 73, 74 & 370, the Diocese of Worcester Bully Prevention and Intervention Plan (“Plan”) provides ongoing professional development for all staff.

1. Annual Staff Training on the “Plan”

Annual training for all school staff on the “Plan” will include staff duties under the “Plan”, an overview of the steps that the administration will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

2. Ongoing Professional Development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, & 370, the content of school-wide and district-wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- a) Developmentally (or age) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- b) Developmentally (or age) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- c) The complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an perpetrator, victim, and witnesses to the bullying;
- d) Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- e) The incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
- f) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

Additional professional development will focus on:

- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- Building relationships and communicating with families;
- Constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- Using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- Applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- Teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
 - Engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

3. Written Notice to Staff

Venerini Academy will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the “Plan” by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school handbook, and the code of conduct.

F. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climate at Venerini Academy is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of victims, perpetrator, families, and others are addressed. In order to enhance our school’s capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to bullying, available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of victims and aggressors.

G. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The law requires each school or district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

H. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

1. 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 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 school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including an Incident Reporting Form.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school will: (1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students, and parents or guardians; (2) make it available in the school’s main office; and (3) post it on the school’s website.

At the beginning of each school year, Venerini Academy will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the administration, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks.

a) Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

b) Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The school expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged perpetrator 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. Students will be provided practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee.

2. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

a) Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged victim and/or to protect the alleged victim from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the victim and/or the perpetrator in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the victim, and altering the perpetrator’s schedule and access to the victim. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal 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.

b) Obligations to Notify Others

i. Notice to Parents or Guardians

Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

ii. Notice to Another School or District

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the administration first informed of the incident will promptly notify, by telephone, the administration or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

iii. Notice to Law Enforcement

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the “Plan” and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the administration or designee deems appropriate.

3. Investigation

The principal will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegations(s) and the ages of the students involved. During the investigation the principal will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The administration will remind the alleged perpetrator, victim, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, or other staff members as determined by the principal or designee. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

4. Determinations

The principal will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the victim is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: (1) determine what remedial action is required, if any and (2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students’ teacher(s); and the victim’s or perpetrator’s parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the victim and the perpetrator about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target’s parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a “stay away” order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

5. Disciplinary Action

If the administration decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal, 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 or district’s code of conduct.

6. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the victim’s sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee

may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. 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 victim 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.

I. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Effective plans will include strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of the school or district to prevent and respond to bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. The law requires the district or school "Plan" to include provisions for informing parents or guardians about the bullying prevention and intervention curricula used by the school district or school including: (1) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (2) the dynamics of bullying; and (3) online safety and cyber-bullying. Parents and guardians must also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

1. Parent Education and Resources

Each school will offer an education program for parents and guardians that is focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the school or district.

2. Notification Requirements

Each year each school will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will be included in a school communication and will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety.

J. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The law requires each "Plan" to include a statement prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The statement must be included in the "Plan" and included in the student code of conduct, the student handbook, and the staff handbook. The following statement is incorporated directly from M.G.L. c. 71, 72, 73, 74, & 370(b), and describes the law's requirements for the prohibition of bullying. Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, 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, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school.
- at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology, including through the World Wide Web/Internet or use of 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.

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.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, 72, 73, 74 & 370, nothing in this "Plan" requires the district or school to staff any non school related activities, functions, or programs.

Exhibit A

Diocese of Worcester

Venerini Academy

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form

1. Name of person filing the report: _____ Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. You are the: Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

3. You are a: Staff Member Administrator Student
 Other (please specify) _____

4. If you are a staff member, please state your role at time of incident: _____

5. Information about incident:

Name of Target: _____

Name of Aggressor: _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: (Please be as specific as possible). _____

6. Witnesses: (Please list the people who saw the incident or have information about it.)

Name: _____ Student ___ Staff ___ Other

Name: _____ Student ___ Staff ___ Other

Name: _____ Student ___ Staff ___ Other

7. Describe the details of the incident (including names of the people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said – include specific words used.) Please use additional space if necessary.

8. Signature of person filing this report: _____

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form

Interview Information Form

Date of Incident: _____

Aggressor:

Target:

Witness:

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

For Administrative Use Only

9. Form given to: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Investigation: Date forwarded to Principal: _____

1. Investigator(s): _____ Position(s): _____

2. Interviews:

Interviewed Aggressor: Name _____ Date _____

Interviewed Target: Name _____ Date _____

Interviewed Witnesses: Name _____ Date _____

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor? Yes No

If yes, have the incidents involved the target previously? Yes No

Any previous incidents with findings of bullying or retaliation? Yes No

4. Summary of Investigation: Please use additional paper and attach as needed.

Conclusion:

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

Yes: Bullying Retaliation (circle one)

No: Incident documented as _____

2. Contacts:

Target's Parents/Guardian Name _____ Date _____

Aggressor's Parents/Guardian Name _____ Date _____

Law Enforcement Name _____ Date _____ Other Name

_____ Date _____ 3. Action taken:

Loss of Privileges - Specify

_____ Suspension In School

_____ Out of School _____

Expulsion

Other (specify)

Follow up with target scheduled for _____ Initial and date when completed _____

Follow up with aggressor schedule for _____ Initial and date when completed _____

Principal's Signature _____ Date _____