



# Safe & Caring Schools

## PROCEDURE 3

Bullying Intervention Protocol

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### Introduction

In response to the concerns of bullying behaviours among children and youth in our society, the Department of Education, in collaboration with school districts, has developed a definition of bullying and a protocol for reporting and responding to bullying behaviour. There is a difference between bullying and other forms of inappropriate and aggressive behaviours. Some bullying behaviours are criminal. Whether criminal or not, these behaviours always have a significant impact.

This *Bullying Intervention Protocol* is intended to support districts and schools in the development of an effective school-wide approach to bullying intervention using strategies which are supported by the philosophy of Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS).

### Definition of Bullying

Bullying is typically repeated behaviour that is intended to cause harm to another person(s). A person participates in bullying if he or she directly carries out, assists or encourages the behaviour in any way. Those that engage in bullying behaviour are perceived to be in a position of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal, social and/or electronic. In some circumstances bullying is an illegal activity.

### Bullying Definition Commentary

#### Forms of Bullying

- a. Physical bullying includes, but is not limited to, hitting, spitting, taking or damaging personal belongings and unwanted touching.
- b. Verbal bullying includes, but is not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, making threats and racist or homophobic comments.
- c. Social bullying includes, but is not limited to, spreading rumors, excluding from a group, and manipulation of relationships.
- d. Electronic bullying involves the use of cell phones, computers, and other devices to socially and/or verbally bully another.

#### Typically Repeated

Bullying is essentially a relational problem. It typically involves repetition or the threat of repetition. The behaviour may be repeated by an individual, many different individuals, or a social group. It may be targeted towards one or many individuals.

#### Intent to Cause Harm

Bullying is intended to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body,

feelings, self-esteem, reputation, or property.

### **Power Imbalance**

Bullying behaviour typically occurs where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. It involves differences in physical strength, social power or status. This power imbalance may be subtle. The student being bullied often has a difficult time reporting the behaviour or defending him or herself. It is typically attributed to factors such as differences in physical appearance, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic origin and other indicators of vulnerability and marginal status. The power imbalance may be intensified when an individual is bullied by many.

### **Bystanders**

Bystanders are those who witness or are aware of the bullying behaviour. They may intentionally or unintentionally communicate support by ignoring or avoiding the situation. Or they may avoid the situation because they are fearful of retaliation, or distressed by the behaviours. On the other hand, the bystander can help the person being bullied by redirecting the persons engaged in bullying behaviour, encouraging peers to stand up against bullying, or by reporting bullying to an adult. These responses promote a culture of non-acceptance of bullying behaviour. As outlined in this definition, those who instigate, encourage, motivate, or join in the bullying behaviour are considered participants.

### **Illegal Activity**

While bullying is not an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada, some bullying behaviours are illegal. Some activities that may be both bullying and criminal, as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada, include:

- Criminal harassment: making a person fear for their safety or the safety of another person
- Uttering threats: threatening to harm or kill another person
- Mischief: damage or destruction of property
- Assault: intentionally applying force without consent, or threatening to apply force
- Sexual assault: sexual harassment, unwanted sexual touching and dating violence

These are criminal activities. They may also be considered bullying activities if they meet the criteria outlined in the definition of bullying.

## **STAFF RESPONSE PROTOCOL**

This *Bullying Intervention Protocol* requires that staff respond to all bullying incidences which are witnessed by staff and/or staff is made aware of.

### **1. INTERVENE**

Once a staff member is aware of a bullying incident, the staff shall intervene immediately, or as quickly as reasonably possible, to address the bullying behaviour. (Adult non-intervention establishes a climate of fear, reinforces students' beliefs that bullying will be tolerated, and enables bullying behaviours to continue). Intervention must occur even if the person being bullied does not express overt disapproval of the incident.

The staff person intervening in a bullying situation will:

- a. Stop the behaviour from occurring if possible.

- b. Identify the behaviour(s) that meet the bullying criteria.
- c. Refer to classroom and/or school rules.
- d. Identify the behaviour as inappropriate and unacceptable.

All reports of bullying behaviour will be taken seriously by staff members. Students and parents/guardians will be offered a variety of ways to report bullying behaviours, which may include:

- a. An anonymous box located in a “safe” spot such as the guidance counsellor’s or administrator’s office.
- b. An anonymous “hotline” and/or online reporting.
- c. E-mail, text, telephone.
- d. In person to any staff member.

Cases of severe or repeated incidents should be referred to the administration, as outlined in the School’s Code of Conduct.

## 2. INVESTIGATE

When it is necessary to interview students (those exhibiting bullying behaviour, those being bullied and/or the bystanders) do so separately to avoid further victimization of the target and/or the bystander.

- a. Engage the student(s) being bullied.
  - i. Focus on his/her safety.
  - ii. Reassure him/her that the bullying behaviour will not be tolerated and that all possible steps will be taken to prevent reoccurrence.
  - iii. Ask questions and gather information.
    - What happened?
    - When?
    - What may have led to the bullying incident?
    - How he/she feels about it?
  - iv. If necessary, refer the student being bullied to the guidance counsellor.
  - v. Ask the student to make note of and report any future bullying situations.
  - vi. Thank them for their answers and ensure confidentiality of their responses.
  - vii. Follow up with the student on a routine basis.
- b. Engage the student(s) exhibiting the bullying behaviour. Have the student identify the issue using an ‘I statement’. If he/she is unable to name the behaviour, the teacher may prompt the student.
  - i. Ask questions and gather information.
    - What happened?
    - When?
    - What caused you to choose this behaviour?
    - How do you think your behaviour made the other person(s) feel?
    - What could you do differently next time?
  - ii. Remind the student of school rules and expectations.
  - iii. Utilize consequences or reactive strategies, as outlined in the School’s Code of Conduct.
  - iv. Take action to prevent further bullying or retaliation.
- c. Engage the bystander(s).
  - i. Have the student(s) identify the behaviour as observed or heard.
  - ii. Ask questions and gather information.

- What did you observe or hear?
  - What did you do?
  - What caused you to choose this behaviour?
  - What, if anything, may you do differently next time?
- iii. Thank them for their answers and ensure confidentiality of their responses.
  - iv. Take action to prevent retaliation against the bystander(s).

### 3. HOME CONTACT

A parent/guardian of each student involved in the incident will be informed of the incident as quickly as possible. This shall be followed by an appointment at the school if deemed necessary. Early intervention is most effective before patterns of behaviour are established.

The parent/guardian of each student should be seen separately. Invite the parent/guardian to collaborate on a solution.

### 4. CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are not always punitive in nature. Formative consequences are intended to:

- a. Correct the problem behaviour.
- b. Prevent a re-occurrence.
- c. Protect and provide support for the student being bullied.
- d. Take corrective action.

These measures allow the student exhibiting the bullying behaviour an opportunity to reflect on the behaviour, to learn pro-social skills, and to make amends to those affected.

Consequences should be applied based on the School's Code of Conduct and considering a number of factors, including:

- a. the age and developmental maturity of the students involved,
- b. the nature, frequency and severity of the behaviour,
- c. the context in which the incident occurred,
- d. other circumstances that may play a role, and
- e. district and school policies and procedures.

It is the responsibility of the school staff to use school rule violations as an opportunity to assist students in:

- a. Developing appropriate social and emotional skills, such as how to recognize and manage their emotions, how to make decisions and how to behave ethically and responsibly.
- b. Accepting personal responsibility for their behaviour and its affect on their learning environment.
- c. Understanding consequences for poor choices and behaviours.

### 5. DOCUMENT

School personnel must record all incidents of bullying and the action taken for each incident. All bullying incidents shall be recorded in a timely fashion, immediately when possible and documented using the *Inappropriate Student Behaviour Documentation Form*.