



SCHOOL BOARD OF POLK COUNTY

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009-016

Contact: Nancy Woolcock - 534-0931

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March 5, 2009

MEMORANDUM

To: Principals

From: Nancy Woolcock, Assistant Superintendent of Learning Support
Wes Bridges, General Counsel
Christine Laney, Paralegal

SUBJECT: Anti-Bullying Policy

On November 18, 2008 School Board Policy 1.016: Jeffrey Johnston Anti-Bullying Policy was approved. This policy provides specific direction and instruction in identifying, investigating, reporting, and preventing bullying.

The definition of bullying includes systematic, repetitive, behavior that is intended to demean another and exploits an imbalance of power. Some reminders:

- Incidents should not be viewed in isolation; once a pattern has been established and the other conditions are met, it is bullying.
- The victim and the bully must not be interviewed together.
- A plan of action may be developed for the bully, the law requires a plan be communicated to the parents of the victim.
- Parent/guardian communication and notification is required and is time sensitive.

Incident report, investigative reports and plan for action must be maintained for the student's entire school career. These records are to be maintained separate from the student's cumulative folder.

It is imperative that your staff receive training on how to identify and report bullying. School Psychologists, Social Workers, and Guidance Counselors have been provided with the necessary tools to conduct training at your school site.

Attached to the memo is a checklist and a guide to assist you in what is required for this and next school year. The checklist is to be reviewed, signed off by the Principal and returned to Wes Bridges. Signed receipt of this checklist signifies that you have complied with the 08-09 bullying requirements. The checklist must be returned by May 1, 2009.

**Technical Assistance for School Administrators:
Implementing the Jeffrey Johnston Stand up for All Students Act
Frequently Asked Questions**

REPORTING

Q: What are the requirements for reporting?

A: Every school is required to establish a reporting procedure that allows the reporting of observed incidences of bullying. The law specifies that each school must also have provisions for anonymous reporting.

Expected date of implementation: All schools will have reporting system(s) developed and operational at the current time.

Q: What kinds of methods for reporting should a school use; is a behavior referral form sufficient?

A: A referral form might constitute a method for teachers to report suspected bullying incidents, but it is not a method that can be used by parents, students or volunteers. Everyone at the school and in the community must have access to an appropriate method of reporting, and administrators must maintain records of all reports. Reporting methods may include but are not limited to:

- Use of the Harassment or Bullying Reporting Form (good for many parents or volunteers)
- Bully box at school (a student reporting method)
- On line reporting through the County website, (in development) or your own school website
- A method of documenting oral reports (ex. A child talking to a teacher or support staff)

INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

Q: What is required for an investigation?

A: Schools must follow district procedures to investigate suspected bullying cases in a timely manner:

- Principal or the Assistant Principal will conduct investigation
- Law requires prompt investigation (10 days from reporting)
- Parents must be informed immediately

Expected date of implementation: All school administrators are trained in the use of the forms that guide an investigation, and in investigation procedures. The procedures should be currently in use.

USING THE FORMS

Q: Do I have to use the Polk County forms?

A: Use of these forms is not required, but they are highly recommended. These forms are designed to ensure that the requirements of the law are met. If you follow the steps of the forms, you will have documentation that you have carefully implemented the requirements of the law.

Q: How do I use these forms; is it necessary for me to complete every one?

A: Not every form is always needed. Here is an explanation of their use (Also, see the attached flow chart.):

FORM	PURPOSE	INFORMATION
Bullying or Harassment Report Form	This form is used to report cases of suspected bullying to school administrators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be filled out by students, teachers, parents, or anyone with a bullying concern that needs to be addressed. • Other methods might be used to report bullying
Bullying/ Harassment Preliminary Review Form	This form is used by administrators to determine if there is sufficient evidence to conduct a bullying investigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This form is not always necessary • This form gathers much the same information as the bullying or Harassment reporting form and can be used as a reporting form • Remember to be bullying, the following must exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A hurtful action ○ An imbalance of power ○ A pattern or repetition <p>An easy method for remembering these elements is HIP (Hurtful action, Imbalance of power, and Pattern of Repetition)</p> • Although harassment and discrimination are similar to bullying, essential differences include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harassment and Discrimination may or may not be repeated ○ Are based on sex, race, national origin, language spoken, color, marital status, homelessness, or disability, or any other basis prohibited by law ○ Some acts could be both bullying and harassment
Bullying/ Harassment Determination and Investigation Form	<p>If the three HIP criteria are met, this form must be completed by the principal or assistant principal.</p> <p>Parents must be informed at the initiation and conclusion of the investigation.</p>	<p>Investigation Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying has occurred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Code of Conduct SESIR violation ○ Action Plan for Victim is district policy ○ Action Plan for Bully is recommended ○ Inform parents: the parents of the targeted student must be told of the actions the school will take to keep their child safe, AND, they must be informed at regular intervals about the success of that action • No bullying occurred, but repeated hassling behavior has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Discipline Code RHB ○ Action Plan for Victim best practice ○ Action Plan for Bully also best practice ○ Inform parents • No bullying occurred, but harassment or discrimination has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report to Senior Coordinator of Equity and Compliance ○ Code of Conduct SESIR violation ○ Inform parents • No bullying; no harassment has occurred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Code, (if necessary) ○ Inform parents
Action Plan	Provides documentation that the target's parents have been informed – at repeated intervals – of the actions the school is taking, and of the success of those actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizes the school personnel's response to the situation • Recommended for both bully and target • Can be completed by a team

Remember: Research indicates that simply sanctioning the bully is not sufficient to reduce the incidence of bullying in your school. It is best practice to deal with specific situations with a plan, possibly to provide counseling, and/or social skills training. School-wide improvement in bullying results from a comprehensive program that addresses the school climate with preventive activities and promptly and effectively intervenes once bullying has occurred.

Expected date of implementation: Immediate

Q: Where do I keep these forms after they are completed?

A: All the forms except the Action Plan have information about two or more students. Therefore, they cannot be kept in individual Cumulative Records, and cannot be shared with either parent. It is recommended that each school establish a school bullying file.

DATA COLLECTION

Expected date of implementation: Immediate

- SESIR for “persistent and serious”
- Local coding for less threatening, hassling behavior

TRAINING/INSTRUCTION

The law requires “A procedure for providing instruction on identifying, preventing, and responding to bullying or harassment” for “students, parents, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers”.

All School Based-Personnel:

Q: How can my school-based personnel receive the awareness training?

A: There are many ways already in place to provide instruction. All school psychologists, guidance counselors, and social workers have been provided with the necessary tools to implement faculty training. Other ways to provide training include:

- Blackboard – extensive training
- New Hires – compliance training
- Building based training – teams
- Large group faculty training

Expected date of implementation: before April 30, 2009.

Students:

Q: What kind of learning activities can I use for the students?

A: Student training is critical to reducing the incidence of bullying in a school. The teaching can be very specific (what is bullying, what to do if I'm bullied, what to do if I see bullying) or the activities can have a broader focus (acceptance of individual differences, No Bully Contracts, Rachael's Challenge, etc.) The approach must also be age and developmentally appropriate. Many of our schools have developed excellent and creative programs including:

- School based training conducted in classrooms
 - This can be done by integrating bullying information with the curriculum and be taught by the regular classroom teacher or other support staff
- School-wide training accomplished with a combination of formats:
 - Assemblies
 - Videos developed by schools
 - Videos developed by the District
 - Videos and other programs that are commercially developed
- Use of outside agencies or speakers
- Accessing web based information

Expected date of implementation: These activities should be ongoing to be effective. Minimum awareness training shall be completed during the 09/10 school year.

Parents

Q: How are schools providing information to their parents?

A: Schools may provide the information in the following ways:

- Newsletters
- Web based information
- County brochure
- Information reviewed during:
 - Open house
 - Parent teacher meetings
 - Other means

Q: Once bullying is investigated, how are schools informing the involved parents?

A: Information regarding a specific incident is provided as part of the investigation. The parents can be informed through phone calls or meetings. The Action Plan is one method of detailing how the school will keep the targeted child safe. The law requires frequent parent meetings to review the effectiveness of this plan.

OTHER ISSUES - THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

If you are getting many reports of bullying, consider:

- The school community may not fully understand the definition of bullying
- You may be relying too much on intervention and need stronger prevention activities
- You haven't given your program enough time to influence the school culture
- Comprehensive bullying programs reduce the incidence of bullying by as much as 50%, and overall discipline referrals by 20%. A good program should mean less time responding to discipline referrals.
- There is evidence that a comprehensive program works in Polk County. One large middle school found after the second year of implementing a comprehensive school –wide program, that only 16 cases of bullying were reported in the first half of the 08/09 school year.
- Form # 2 **Bullying/Harassment Preliminary Review** is designed to make a quick determination

Do not ignore a bullying situation. Ignoring leads to a poor learning environment, puts your students at risk, and is AGAINST the law.

**Requirements of the Polk County Anti-Bullying Policy
and the
Jeffrey Johnston Stand up for All Students Act for 2008/2009**

The recently enacted Jeffrey Johnston statute mandates implementation of a range of procedures, and training activities. Polk County schools Anti-Bullying Policy plans to implement all of the requirements over the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 school years. The following procedures must be implemented immediately:

Reporting:

Every school is required to establish a reporting procedure that allows students, parents, faculty and volunteers to report observed incidences of bullying. The law also specifies that each school must have provisions for anonymous reporting.

Investigation:

Administrators are required to follow the District's procedure to investigate suspected bullying cases and follow the time lines and procedures detailed in the Polk County Policy

Data collection:

Schools are required to enter discipline data, as either SESIR or local coding. (Please refer to the Code of Conduct)

Training / Professional Learning:

The law requires "A procedure for providing instruction on identifying, preventing, and responding to bullying or harassment" for a variety of groups. Our policy requires teacher training by April 30, 2009.

I certify that we are in compliance with the requirements described above.

Principal's original signature: _____

Date: _____

School: _____

Return to Legal Services by May 1, 2009

Steps to Investigation:

Actions taken by the Principal or Assistant Principal

How to Report:

Initial reporting may come from many sources:

1. *Harassment or Bullying Reporting Form*
2. *School Website*
3. *Bully Box*
4. *County Website*
5. *Student request to teacher*

All Polk County Employees are required to report observed bullying

1. Complete the Harassment or Bullying Reporting Form:
(if it was not used initially)

2. May complete the Bullying/Harassment Preliminary Review Form

If Evidence

3. Complete the Bullying/Harassment Determination and Investigation Form

Inform parents of investigation

Follow the procedures for investigating

No Evidence?
Stop

4. DETERMINATIONS:

- ✓ **Inform parents**
- ✓ **Report to principal**
- ✓ **Action plan – if necessary**
- ✓ **SESIR code – if necessary**
- ✓ **Monitor and follow up**