

Swampscott Public School District

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Swampscott Public School District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a requirement under M.G.L. c. 71, § 370. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and the district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation. Our principals are responsible for the overall implementation and oversight of the Plan.

Goals:

1. Engage students, staff, families and community members in building safe, inclusive and respectful school climates in each of our schools.
2. Develop school cultures that celebrate diversity and provide students with the critical thinking, collaborative learning and interpersonal skills required for citizens of the twenty-first century world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. LEADERSHIP

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

V. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

VIII. DEFINITIONS

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

APPENDIX A: COUNSELING RESOURCES

APPENDIX B: BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

APPENDIX C: COUNSELING PROCEDURES FOR INTERVENING IN BULLYING

I. LEADERSHIP

Leadership at all levels of our educational community plays a critical role in implementing and supporting the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Adult members of the educational community have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference.

- A. Public involvement in developing the Plan. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, the Plan has been developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, administrators, School Committee members, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians. Consultation included discussions at Anti-Bullying Task Force Meetings, Parent Presentations and a public comment period before adoption of the Plan is by the school committee.
- B. Assessing needs and resources. The Plan is the district'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, school leaders, with input from various constituencies and staff, have assessed the adequacy of current programs; reviewed current policies and procedures; reviewed available data on bullying and behavioral incidents; and assessed available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. Through this process we identified the need to revise and develop policies and procedures, identify curriculum resources and provide more training for staff.
- C. Planning and oversight. The following school leaders are responsible for the listed tasks under the Plan: 1) Principals or their designees will receive reports on bullying; 2) Principals or their designees will collect and analyze building data on bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes; 3) Principals will create a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors; 4) Leadership Team (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Principals and Management Information Services Director) will plan for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law; 5) Principals, Assistant Principals and Counseling Staff will plan for supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors; 6) Members of the Anti-Bullying Task Force, including principals, will choose and implement the curricula that the school or district will use; 7) Assistant Superintendent in conjunction with appropriate staff will review protocols under the Plan, including the Internet safety policy. 8) The Leadership Team, upon recommendation from the district's legal counsel, has revised the student handbooks. 9) The Anti-Bullying Task Force's subgroup on parent involvement is researching parent resources and will add to the district's web page of resources for parents and 10) Leadership Team will review and update the Plan each year, or more frequently as needed.
- D. Priority Statement. The Swampscott Public School District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. This expectation is in alignment with the Swampscott Public School's Action Plan goal for global competency and respect for human difference. We are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 requires the district to provide ongoing professional development for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals.

- A. 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 principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention strategies to be offered at all grades throughout the district. This training was begun this September at the first of faculty meetings in each of our schools. All custodians, cafeteria workers, nurses and half of our secretaries have also been trained AS WELL AS Swampscott Middle School teachers by Robert Cole, Esq. Additional trainings for the elementary and high school teachers as well as the remaining secretaries, coaches who are not faculty and paraprofessionals will be offered after the first of the year. Three of our staff members have been trained as trainers by Dr. Elizabeth Englander of MARC. Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be 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.
- B. 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 district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
 - (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
 - (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
 - (iv) 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;
 - (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying ; and
 - (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.
- Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.
- C. Written notice to staff. The district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, and will incorporate appropriate related topics into staff meetings.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A. Identifying Resources.

Bullying Prevention/Intervention Mapping

Bullying Prevention can be readily conceptualized as a tiered approach. Tier one constitutes those programs and experiential events which are part of the regular curriculum, provided district or school-wide, and to which all students have full access. Tier two focuses on those individual students who are most at risk or vulnerable to becoming either an aggressor and/or a target of bullying, harassment or teasing. One such vulnerable group includes students with disabilities, particularly those for whom social skill development is compromised. Tier three involves interventions focused on those students and employees of the district who have been identified as an aggressor and/or a target of bullying, harassment or teasing.

All five schools in Swampscott have a number of tier 1 practices in place to promote positive social interaction and effective problem-solving skills, which make it more difficult for bullying to exist. The elementary schools have hosted school-wide assemblies conducted by the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (M.A.R.C.), and school staff has facilitated an evening forum for parents to promote parent understanding. Also, the elementary schools host an annual Wellness Day that includes activities about anti-violence, self-control, respect and self-advocacy. Each school has some type of program in place that promotes and acknowledges students who exhibit pro-social behaviors, such as compassion/concern toward others. There are posters displayed that remind children about character values of concern, respect, accepting differences, etc. The three elementary schools share a Code of Conduct that is displayed in individual classrooms and is recited daily by the students. A recent school climate survey indicated a majority of students feel safe in school. An increased level of supervision at recess addresses a time period which may be more vulnerable to bullying. In the elementary schools, health teachers address bullying at every grade level. Physical education teacher's review and practice pro-social recess behaviors. The schools use programs considered to be best practice, including the Second Step Program and the Steps to Respect Program. District-wide the "I'm Peer Proof" program is utilized, which has a strong parent communication component and involves developmentally-appropriate activities, as well as pre- and post-program surveys. Additional class lessons are supplemented by a variety of tools including No Name Calling Week lessons, cited literature and M.A.R.C lessons. Swampscott Middle School hosts an annual Day of Respect which is school wide and has day-long activities to promote acceptance. Both the middle school and the high school have annually hosted programs that have student and parent/community components to focus on respectful behavior toward all. (For the 2010/11 school year, this has included Rachel's Challenge and Ryan's Story. The middle school has multiple types of visual displays to address issues of bullying, tolerance and self-acceptance, including educational posters outlining what bullying is and imposed consequences for bullying. At the middle school, bullying and cyberbullying are addressed both in computer classes and also more comprehensively in health classes. Safety plans have been established for students who have experienced bullying in the past.

Swampscott High School annually hosts a Wellness Day, for the entire student body. There

are peer-led activities throughout the day that address issues about handling challenging social situations and responsible decision making. SHS annually participates in "Mix It Up Day," which encourages expanding students' social boundaries and including others in their social circles. The Gay/Straight Alliance sponsors a school wide Day of Silence to raise awareness about an at-risk population. For a decade Swampscott High School has trained students to be Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), an evidence based program emphasizing students being active bystanders . The MVP students lead group discussions about anti-bullying, self-respect, and pro-social behavior at the middle and elementary levels.

High school health classes explore the dynamics of bullying, cyberbullying and the role of the bystander. Physical education embeds bully prevention lessons within the curriculum. For example, students can earn extra credit in physical education class by reaching out to another student who may be alone or without a partner during an activity. Teachers integrate themes of acceptance, appreciation of differences and bystander empowerment into a variety of subject areas. Theater and drama activities examine themes of scapegoating, harassment and prejudice; advanced-level language courses explore social and cultural competencies and dispel cultural stereotypes; and law classes explore the legal consequences of bullying. Student activities such as Mentors in Violence Prevention, Peer Leaders, Best Buddies and the Gay Straight Alliance also address anti-bullying strategies.

There are a number of tier 2 services for at-risk populations. The high school adjustment counselor meets annually with members of the Gay Straight Alliance to express support for their mission and to describe resources available to them should they encounter bullying or harassing situations. The school counselor conducts planned lessons in both elementary language-based classrooms that address a wide range of social skills development, including recognizing body language, empathy building, and assertiveness building. These lessons are conducted by using literature, role playing, and other interactive activities. Other special education programs with the most at-risk students utilize social skills components or provide a social skills class. Social skills development is a service provided to a number of students on IEPs across grade levels and in particular to students identified with an autistic spectrum disorder. These services are typically provided as "pragmatics" instruction by speech and language pathologists, or as "lunch bunches" and other group or individual formats provided by counselors, schools psychologists, or by the district's consulting psychologist. Some lunch bunches include students who may not be on IEPs but are considered likely to benefit from social skills support/instruction. Each building has an intervention team that responds to faculty concerns about student academic, social/emotional or behavioral functioning. These teams provide consultation or strategies to teachers which may result in referrals for assessment, direct services or behavioral intervention. At times, individuals or groups of students and employees of the district who exhibit aggressive behaviors or are at risk of being targeted are addressed by these teams.

Tier 3 services are determined based on student needs. Depending upon the severity of the situation and the student's presentation, school-based or outside counseling might be recommended, as outlined below.

B: Counseling and Other Services.

District Service Providers

At the elementary level tier 1 services involve all teaching staff. Integrating pro-social lessons into the regular classroom curriculum is an efficient way of delivering this critical instruction. Additional support from specialists such as physical education or health teachers, school nurses, or librarians/computer teachers address components specific to their disciplines. Current practices make extensive use of counseling staff for whole classroom instruction. At the secondary level, current tier 1 practices are primarily provided in the health curriculum and by individual teachers. A systematic implementation and embedding of anti-bullying lessons across departmental lines is a logical means of getting the message out to all students. In addition special events and speakers provide lessons of tolerance and acceptance. School counselors play a critical role in planning events such as Wellness Day and supporting groups such as Peer Mentors.

Current tier 2 practices are largely related to social skills development to help students and employees of the district become more assertive or less likely to engage in aggressive acts. Specific bullying prevention skill development can be incorporated into the broader social skills area. Current service providers include special education teachers, speech and language pathologists, and counselors.

The counseling staff are members of intervention teams and as a result meet with parents, develop behavior plans as well as provide counseling services in relation to tier 2 or 3 intervention levels. While there is only one full-time counselor/school psychologist available for each elementary school, there are more resources at the secondary level. At the middle school, there is a school psychologist and two guidance counselors. Lunch and team time are optimal opportunities to provide services, and counselor availability during these times ensures efficient service delivery.

At the high school level, there is a school psychologist, a full-time adjustment counselor, a part-time adjustment counselor associated with the STEP Program, and three FTE guidance counselors. The guidance counselors have course scheduling and college placement related duties, but they can schedule some time for direct intervention services. The counselor associated with STEP provides services in that program. The school psychologist is available to provide some intervention services; however, much of the service delivery is likely to fall on the full-time adjustment counselor. There is a consulting psychologist who provides limited social skills work across levels. In addition to the above named staff there are interns/trainees at various levels including social work, school psychology, and guidance interns who can be utilized to provide some services. An annual review of this plan will determine if resources are allocated equitably and efficiently.

Community Service Providers

Several community outpatient clinics that accept both private insurance and Mass Health were recently contacted. None of the clinics reported being in the process of developing any specialized services in response to the new Massachusetts General Laws regarding bullying. All of the providers, however, responded that they would be able to provide services for both aggressors and targets that would adequately service both populations. For example, the director of the Center for Family Development (CFO) of Health and Education Services indicated her clinic takes individuals on a case by case basis and develops an appropriate treatment plan based on the client's presenting issues. CFO would be happy to work with the school system in order to best meet the needs of the students and their families. Contact information for CFO and other Community Service Agencies

(CSAs) can be found in Appendix A. These agencies are able to offer a wide range of services from outpatient, individual, family and group therapy, to home-based treatment and supports to individuals and families who present with a higher level of acuity.

As well as the larger CSAs referred to in Appendix A, Swampscott also has a network of private therapists and providers that have a long and positive relationship with the school district. These providers have expressed an inclination to work with the school in relation to issues concerning bullying. However, as of yet, none of the CSAs or individual therapists have self-identified as offering services specifically designed for bullying intervention.

In addition, the school district contracts with, or has arrangements with, several providers for services within the schools. Among these are: a consulting psychologist who provides group and individual social skills/therapeutic support for students on the autistic spectrum, a social worker from North Shore Medical Center who sees individual students at the secondary level, Camp Fire USA that conducts peer relationship lessons at the elementary level and counselors from the North Shore Rape Crisis Center who lead groups at the high school.

C: Students with Disabilities.

Although students with disabilities are, as a whole, at risk or vulnerable to becoming either an aggressor and/or a target of bullying, harassment or teasing, there is a great deal of diversity among individual students and all are not at equal risk. Consequently, for many students with disabilities, the programs and events available to the general population of students will be sufficient (tier 1), whereas others may require additional support due to the nature of their disabilities or individual presentations (tier 2). Some may require intervention and skill building due to having exhibited involvement in bullying, harassment or teasing (tier 3). IEP Teams will help to differentiate the level of need in the following manner:

1. The responsibility of the Team to consider the student's degree of risk will be raised, and so documented, at all initial, re-evaluation, and annual review meetings. The concerns of Team members, including parents and teachers, will be solicited.
2. Although each student's individual presentation is considered, for those whose disabilities involve social skills deficits or which make them more vulnerable to involvement in bullying, harassment or teasing situations, additional support will be provided as per the Team's decision. This would include, but not be limited to, students who already are receiving social skills training, those with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or associated condition such as Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NLD), and might possibly include students who exhibit internalizing disorders such as anxiety disorders, particularly social phobia, or depressive disorders. It also might include students more at risk for being aggressors, such as those who exhibit externalizing disorders such as ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Conduct Disorder.
3. Students deemed to be at greater risk of being targets, and for whom the Team considers the programs provided in tier 1 to be insufficient, will be provided direct training in social skills that address bullying avoidance. This training may include assertiveness training, as well as instruction in the procedural and reporting steps to follow should bullying,

harassment or teasing incidents arise. Students deemed to be at greater risk of being aggressors, and for whom the Team considers the programs provided in tier 1 to be insufficient, will be provided direct training in social skills that tend to mitigate aggressive behaviors, such as empathy training, anger management or constructive decision making. Those determined to be at risk for both would be provided a combined training. These trainings might be provided as stand-alone, time-limited sessions, or be integrated into pre-existing services, such as social skills/pragmatic training or counseling, which already address vulnerable populations. Trainings might be provided in either group or individual formats. Recommendations for such services would be documented in the IEP.

4. Students who have been involved in bullying, harassing or teasing experiences as shown by past history, recent reporting, or if newly divulged in the Team process, may be referred for further investigation if required by the reporting aspects of this plan. They may also receive services as designated above, and/or may receive skill building or other bully proofing/bullying cessation interventions as described in the Response to Bullying section of this plan.

A flow chart will be devised to assist IEP Teams in making determinations about the need for additional supports in relation to bullying, harassment or teasing. A similar process will be followed by 504 Teams during initial determinations or reviews.

D: Referral to Outside Services.

The current protocol for referral to outside services primarily involves three criteria:

1. The scope of the student's difficulties.
2. The severity of the student's difficulties.
3. Issues related to safety.

Scope refers to the breadth of the problem, or how many domains it affects. Some issues such as learning difficulties and concomitant emotional or behavioral issues primarily affect the school environment. Other issues are more global and may substantially impact functioning in the home or community as well, or they may originate and be sustained by factors outside of the school. While this does not necessarily negate provision of school-based services, in such cases it can be beneficial for parents to seek support to more fully address needs such as family-based issues/dynamics, substance abuse, parenting information/support, or specialized treatment approaches. Examples of the types of services include individual psychotherapy, family therapy, specialized therapy or support groups, and parent education or training.

Severity refers to the intensity of the student's presentation/situation, and often involves more intensive or perhaps more medically-oriented services than would typically be provided in the school setting. For example, a student who is quite depressed might benefit from having a physician determine whether medication is needed, or a student with severe posttraumatic stress disorder may require specialized therapy such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Referrals of this nature might include a psychopharmacologist, neurologist, specialized therapists, partial hospitalization programs, specialized programs such as an anxiety or substance abuse clinic, or state agencies such as the Department of Mental Health.

Safety issues generally involve two types: concern about a caregiver harming or severely neglecting a child, or concern that student or students might harm either self or other

individuals. The first type usually results in referral to the Department of Children and Families, whereas the second type might involve bringing in a mental health screening team, sending a student either with a parent or by ambulance to a hospital for psychiatric screening, and/or involving a school resource officer or police.

Referrals due to scope or severity usually result from information gathered in a variety of ways, which might include written reports, interviews with the student, parent, teacher or administrator, and correspondence with outside agencies. Referrals themselves may be part of a team process, might be made by the counseling team, and might involve administrators. Often they are made directly to parents in a consultative manner and frequently are made at parental request. When they involve discussion with outside agencies, all legal and ethical guidelines related to privacy/confidentiality protections and permission to release information are followed. Care is taken to ensure that referrals are appropriate and that the providers are competent in the areas for which the student is referred.

Referrals due to safety often involve the disclosure of information from students and/or physical evidence of harm, and specified threats. Often this might involve a safety or mental status interview conducted by a counseling staff member, or possibly some involvement of the school nurse, and most often would involve a building administrator in decision making around going forward with a referral. Parents are contacted as soon as is practical to be included in the process. Again, all legal requirements around information-sharing are followed, as well as legally mandated reporting.

When bullying, teasing or harassment relates to the reasons for referral, it is (with appropriate release forms) important to convey that information to the outside provider. It is also important to consider those factors when selecting appropriate providers to refer to, and it is helpful to request feedback from those providers on ways in which the school can be of assistance in the treatment of the student(s). In the case of a safety issue, it is particularly important to address any bullying incidents which may relate to a student's level of distress, concern about retaliation, or risks of further or pending aggression. These types of issues are likely to involve the reporting, disciplinary and intervention portions of this plan, but may also involve the school resource officer or other police.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The law requires each school or district to provide age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's or district's curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

A Specific bullying prevention approaches. Our bullying prevention strategies will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;

- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference .

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The district will annually review the Plan with students in the fall of the school year.

B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual , transgender students, and homeless students;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork , and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

Swampscott's Anti-Bullying Task Force will be reviewing the curriculum we currently use and previewing other curriculum products that are research based to update the education of our students in the academic settings such as health where such curricula are used.

V. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

A. 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 using the reporting form (1) attached at the end of this document. A district 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 school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form,^I a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

¹ See Appendix B for Sample Incident Reporting Form.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district 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, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district 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 principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. 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 or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

The school or district 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 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. 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.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target 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 target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will

take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

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. (Include locally established student safety planning policies and procedures here.)

2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation 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 or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. 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 principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal 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.
- c. 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 aggressor, 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, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

- C. Investigation. The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. 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 or designee will consult with the Superintendent and with legal counsel about the investigation.

- D. Determinations. The principal or designee 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 target 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/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor'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 or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor 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.

- E. Responses to Bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 370(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's antibullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the

- anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

2. 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 code of conduct.

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

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.

3. 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 target'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 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.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

- A. Parent education and resources. The district will offer educational programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the antibullying strategies and any social competency strategies used by the district. In addition, the programs may be offered in collaboration with the PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and/or similar organizations. The elementary schools have already hosted a parent education forum and the middle and high school will present them after the first of the year. Links to the parent resources from the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) are posted on the district website.

The parenting sub-group of the Swampscott Anti-Bullying Task Force has developed the following recommendations for parents to help their children avoid and, if necessary, deal with bullying behaviors:

- Role play ignoring the bully or walking away.
- Arrange time on the weekends for your child to see friends.

- Plan fun activities with the family.
- Help build your child's confidence.
- Get your child involved with community groups to meet new friends.
- Get your child involved in multi-town sports to meet new friends.
- Model respect and non-aggression.
- Encourage talk about school and friends.

B. Notification requirements. Each year the district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying strategies that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents notice each year about the student related sections of the Plan and the district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The district will post the Plan and related information on our website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Swampscott School District prohibits bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. This statement along with the elaboration listed below is included in the student code of conduct and the student handbook

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- (i) 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, and
- (ii) 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.

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

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is a student or employee of the district who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination

thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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.G.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 condition 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, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H%, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

Appendix A: Outside Resources

- (1) Center for Family Development (CFO) of Health and Education Services
800 Cummings Center, Suite 266 T, Beverly, MA 01915
T: 978-921-1190

- (2) Children's' Friend and Family Services
110 Boston Street, Salem, MA, 01970
T: 978-744-7905

- (3) Family and Children's Services of Greater Lynn
111 North Common Street, Lynn, MA, 01902
T: 781-598-55 17

- (4) Family Continuity Program
72 Rear Cabot Street, Beverly, MA 01915
T: 978.922.4659, F: 978.927 .8342 Outpatient Mental Health Clinic

319 Lynnway, Room 307, Lynn, MA 01901
T: 781.477.7997, F: 781.477 .7910
Community-Based Wraparound Services for Individuals and Families

9 Centennial Drive, Ste. 202, Peabody, MA 01960
T: 978.927 .9410

- (5) North Shore Medical Center, Mass General for Children at North Shore Medical
Center, Highland Avenue Salem, MA 01970,
T: 978.354.2700

Most of the agencies referenced in Appendix A offer clinical and nonclinical outreach to individuals and families. Most services are strengths-based and designed to have the individual and/or family team make decisions for treatment planning. Some agencies provide home based services. These program tend to use a child- and family-centered approach to home-based support and treatment. Flexible services are provided in the client's home and individualized to each family's needs, helping to support and stabilize the family.

Other Services offered are:
Outpatient therapy

Groups geared to specific groups and/ or focus

Outpatient Family therapy

Family Stabilization and Treatment (FST) and Reunification: Assessment, crisis prevention/management, advocacy and community referrals.

Community Support Program (CSP). Helping clients reintegrate and/or maintain in the community.

Parent Support: Staff works with caregiver(s) during nontraditional service delivery hours.

Youth Support: Staff provides one-on-one support to children ages 8 - 22 (younger children accepted on a case-by-case basis).

Family Support and Training (Family Partners). One-on-one peer support.

APPENDIX B: Counseling Procedures for Responding to Bullying and Retaliation*

E. Responses to Bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill Building

School counseling staff will explore the event(s) prior to meeting with the aggressor and/or target by speaking with school administrators, teachers or other school professionals who witnessed and/or acted as the incident reporter.

Whether counseling is needed following a reported bullying incident is to be at the discretion of the building administrators in consultation with counseling staff. If during the initial investigation it is determined that the situation has not been resolved, underlying psychological issues are suspected, or there are significant social skill weaknesses, then a referral will be made to the school counselor for further intervention.

Counseling staff will always meet with the target student for intervention first. Sample techniques are described below. These procedures can be augmented with specific materials such as videos or age appropriate stories/readings.

- 1.) Affirm feelings: "You were right to report this. I'm glad you told us."
- 2.) Ask student to recount the bullying events (his/her perspective).
- 3.) Ask the student what he/she has already attempted to do to stop the situation.
- 4.) Remind the student that the aggression was not justified, and that it was brave to come forward.
- 5.) Brainstorm solutions after identifying what has and has not worked in the past. (Keep in mind that solutions which may seem obvious to an adult, such as avoiding the bully, may not be apparent to all children).
- 6.) Provide assertiveness training; discussing strategies on how to stand up for self (e.g., "Leave me alone"). This may include role playing between the target and counselor.
- 7.) Discuss positive skill-building (coping skills, stress management, problem-solving skills).
- 8.) Review with the target student the district-wide policy on bullying, harassment and teasing, and remind him/her of the procedural steps to take should other such incidents arise.
- 9.) Following the first session the counselor will determine whether more sessions are necessary. The target will also be informed that the counselor will serve as someone he/she can go to for support or check-ins as needed should other bullying incidents arise.
- 10.) Other evidence-based interventions offered to target students depending on level of severity and individual presentation/circumstances include: an outside counseling referral, lunch group/social skills training, or a referral to other available in-school support groups.

At the discretion of administrative and counseling staff, a counselor will meet with the **aggressor** for intervention:

1.) Discuss the incident with the aggressor following a reflective process. Reflective questions could include:

- What happened? (Ask them to recount event, their perspective)
- Who was harmed by this behavior? How do you know that you hurt them?
- Why did you do this? (What problem were you trying to solve? Did you want attention? Did you want to be left alone? Were you trying to have fun? Were you already mad about something?)
- Next time you are feeling this way, how will you act differently without hurting anyone?

2.) Discuss positive skill-building (coping skills, stress management, problem-solving skills).

3.) Provide anger control training for those aggressors who seem to get reinforcement from bullying by feeling powerful. Anger control training addresses how to recognize stress, how to cope with disappointments, and how to reduce anger (e.g., deep-breathing, taking a break, walking away, exercise).

4.) Provide empathy and perspective-taking training for students who have a social skill deficit in perspective taking, or who are seen as being insensitive or intolerant of others' feelings.

5.) Review with the aggressor the school-wide policy on anti-bullying, and remind him/her of the procedural steps that will be taken should other incidents of bullying, harassment, or teasing arise.

6.) The counselor will inform the aggressor that he/she will serve as the student's building mentor, someone the student can go to for support or check-ins should other conflicts arise.

7.) More intensive interventions to offer aggressors depending on level of severity and individual presentation/circumstances might include: an outside counseling referral, lunch group/social skills training, or other available in-school support groups.

* These counseling procedures are not used in place of necessary disciplinary action described in the main document and in the Swampscott Public Schools Student Handbooks.