

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RELATED TO REPORTING BULLYING OR HARASSMENT INVOLVING STUDENTS

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**QUESTION:** What should a student or parent or guardian do if they feel as though the school/District is not providing an adequate and appropriate response to a concern with bullying or harassment that has already been brought to the attention of at least one District employee?

**ANSWER:**

- 1. If the concerns have been primarily raised and addressed at the classroom or activity/program level, and the parent or guardian is unsure whether the building principal is sufficiently aware of the issue(s)/concern(s), elevate the matter directly to the building principal by submitting to his/her office a building-level "Report of Bullying or Harassment" form.** *Be sure to clearly indicate that you have already attempted to resolve the matter at the classroom level and try to identify why you feel the response provided to date has not been adequate.*
- 2. If the initial report was made at the building/school level and the principal has already been involved, report the concern(s)/incident(s) using the District-level complaint procedures.** *Be sure to clearly indicate that you have already attempted to resolve the matter at the building/school level and try to identify why you feel the response provided to date has not been adequate.*
- 3. If any report or complaint has already been submitted at the District level, then contact the District Administrator directly.** *Be sure to clearly identify the history of your efforts to address the situation and the reasons why you feel the response provided to date has not been adequate.*

Due in part to the broad spectrum and the varying degrees of severity of the behaviors that are prohibited under the District's anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy, there can be challenges associated with appropriately identifying, assessing, and/or responding to incidents of bullying and harassment. By escalating unresolved concerns as described above, multiple staff members will become involved, the relevant issues are likely to be clarified, and any misunderstandings between the District and the person who is reporting the incident(s)/concern(s) are more likely to be well-understood and resolved.

**QUESTION:** To what degree are the identities of people who report bullying/harassment kept confidential?

**ANSWER:**

The District appreciates the importance of protecting students and others who report bullying and harassment. For this reason, Board policy strictly prohibits acts of retaliation taken against any person who reports, is believed to have reported, or files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry related to a

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complaint of bullying or harassment. Further, student record laws and the District's student records policy/procedures provide some protection from the disclosure of records that identify individual students.

However, the District cannot absolutely guarantee that complaints and reports of bullying and harassment can be processed without disclosing the identity of persons involved in the events/issues to the extent reasonably necessary to investigate and process the report/complaint. In addition, serious incidents can lead to legal proceedings in which the District has less control over the information that is ultimately disclosed. For this reason, anyone with specific concerns about confidentiality in connection with the making of report on bullying/harassment should discuss those concerns at the time they make their report/complaint.

As an example, if a student who was a bystander/witness to an incident reports the incident, and if there were many others who also witnessed the same incident, it is much less likely that there would be a need during the course of the school's investigation to identify to anyone else (expressly or implicitly) which of the many witnesses made the initial report. In contrast, if an incident involved a victim and no other witnesses, the process of investigating the matter will almost always entail questioning the alleged bully/harasser about the incident in a manner that expressly or implicitly identifies the victim—who may also have been the person who reported the incident (or whom the alleged bully/harasser may assume reported the incident).

**QUESTION: Will the District consider anonymous reports of bullying or harassment?**

**ANSWER:**

The District does not categorically refuse to consider anonymous reports or complaints. However, when the District receives an anonymous report/complaint, the District must exercise judgment and discretion by, for example, attempting to assess the reliability and specificity of the information that has been provided. Further, if efforts are made to look into the report/complaint and those efforts fail to provide information that sufficiently corroborates the report/complaint or that otherwise enables further investigation, it would become very difficult to pursue the matter any further.

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