

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

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DOVER-SHERBORN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

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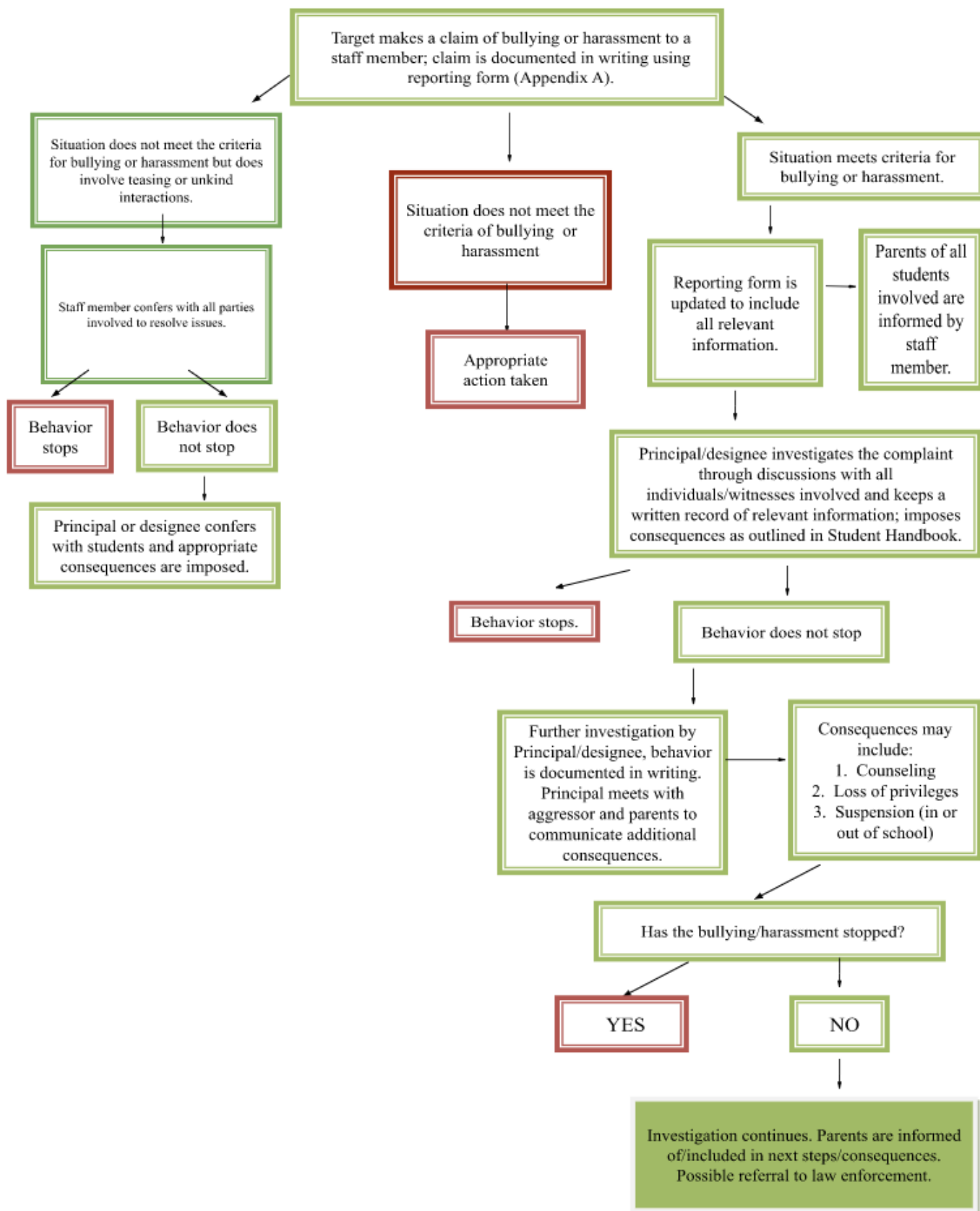
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The Dover School District, the Sherborn School District and the Dover-Sherborn Regional School District are hereinafter referred to as the “Dover-Sherborn Public Schools” or the “Schools”).

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex/gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, homelessness, or any other category protected by law.

INVESTIGATION FLOW CHART



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan meets the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, S370 and is modeled after the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model Plan for dealing with Bullying behaviors in our Schools. The Plan includes strategies for identifying, reporting and responding to Bullying behaviors. This Plan is a key part of our Schools' mission "to inspire, challenge and support all students as they discover and pursue their full potential" and it complements our Schools' student wellness and discipline policies. Please note the use of the words "target" instead of "victim" and "aggressor" instead of "perpetrator" are used throughout this document to be consistent with language used by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

I. DEFINITIONS

Definitions essential to the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan:

Aggressor is a student or member of the school Staff who engages in Bullying or Retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

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

Cyber-Bullying is Bullying, as defined above, 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. "Cyber-Bullying" includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-Bullying also includes:

- the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or
- the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of Bullying;
- the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of Bullying. M.G.L. c. 71, § 370.

Hostile Environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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 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 or Retaliation has been perpetrated.

II. LEADERSHIP

School leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Schools partner with various representatives of community leadership in promoting a positive school climate that is safe for all student learners.

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan:

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was developed in consultation with Staff, school volunteers, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. We invited all interested community members to provide public comment relative to the proposed Plan before the Plan was adopted by the Dover, Sherborn and Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committees at their respective December 2010 meetings. Additionally, the Schools solicited comment from various school organizations such as CSA, PTO, POSITIVE, Special Education Parent Advisory Councils and Guidance Advisory Council.

B. Assessing needs and resources:

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is our system's blueprint for enhancing capacity to prevent and respond to issues of Bullying or Retaliation within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families, students 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. This "mapping" process will assist our Schools and districts in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, our Schools will revise or develop policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

At least once every four years beginning with 2015/16 school year, Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of Bullying in our Schools. Additionally, we will annually report Bullying incident data to the Department. In addition, our Schools will utilize surveys to obtain input from staff, parents and guardians on school climate and school safety issues. Data from each school will be collected and analyzed on the

prevalence and characteristics of Bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations and “hot spots” in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses). This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform future decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services.

C. Planning and oversight:

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has identified that the building Principal or designee is the individual who is responsible for receiving all reports on Bullying and Retaliation (see VI. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION). The building Principal or designee is responsible for collecting and analyzing building data on Bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes. This same individual is also responsible for creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to targets and aggressors. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Professional Development Committee, under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent, as well as building Principals/Headmasters are responsible for planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law.

The building Principal or designee is responsible for planning supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors as well as for choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use to instruct students about issues of Bullying. Each building Principal or designee is responsible for implementing the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan; for amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct; leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials; and reviewing and updating these materials each year, or more frequently if necessary.

The Superintendent or designee is responsible for developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, including an Internet safety policy, and for designating key staff to be in charge of reviewing and updating them on an annual basis. The School Committees are responsible for the approval of any new policy.

D. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Priority Statement:

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing Bullying and Retaliation and each school in the district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of aggression. Measures of prevention including social competency curricula help to inform our practices. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of Bullying and Retaliation. The building Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan except when a reported Bullying or Retaliation incident involves the Principal or the Assistant Principal as the alleged aggressor. In such cases, the Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for investigating the report, and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged target. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the School Committee, or its designee, shall be responsible for investigating the report

and other steps necessary to implement the Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged victim.

Each school in the district expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

We recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of Bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. We will identify specific steps we will take to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to Bullying, harassment, or teasing.

III. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools ongoing professional development plans reflect the requirements under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and provide ongoing professional development for all Staff, including contracted service providers.

A. Annual staff training on the Plan:

Annual training for all school staff on the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will include staff responsibilities 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 curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school building. 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.

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, § 37O, the content of school-wide and professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent Bullying;
- developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop Bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the Bullying;
- 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;
- information on the incidence and nature of Bullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to 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.

Additional areas identified by the school or district for professional development include:

- 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;
- Engaging staff and those responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan to distinguish between acceptable managerial behaviors designed to correct misconduct, instill accountability in the school setting, etc. and Bullying behaviors.

C. Written notice to staff:

Each school will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff responsibilities, in the school employee handbook.

IV. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students are addressed. These students include targets, aggressors or bystanders of Bullying and Retaliation. Schools will also address the emotional needs of these students' families. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies for providing supports and services necessary to meet these needs. In order to enhance the Schools' capacity to prevent, intervene early, and respond effectively to Bullying and Retaliation, available services reflect an understanding of the dynamics of Bullying and provide approaches to address the needs of targets, aggressors and bystanders. The Schools' provide counseling or referral to appropriate services for students who are aggressors, targets, and family members of those students.

A. Identifying resources:

School counselors, together with building administrators, will work to identify the school's capacity to provide counseling, case management and other services for these students (targets, aggressors, bystanders) and their families. Schools will conduct an annual review of staffing and programs that support the creation of positive school environments, focusing on early interventions and intensive services, and develop recommendations and action steps to fill resource and service gaps. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools work in collaboration with local and state agencies to adopt evidenced-based curricula and to provide additional preventative services to students, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff.

B. Counseling and other services:

School counselors, nurses, school psychologists and special educators provide a variety of skill-based services to students within the educational setting that include on-going emotional support, risk assessment, crisis intervention, and help with community based counseling referrals when appropriate. School counselors meet with parents and teachers as needed to help address students' academic, emotional and behavioral concerns as collaboratively as possible. School counselors work with administrators to provide linguistically appropriate resources to identified families. School counselors maintain up-to-date information on community based mental health referrals as well as Community Service Agencies (CSAs) within the local vicinity, providing services to Medicaid eligible students. School counselors, school psychologists and intensive special needs educators work collaboratively to develop behavior plans and social thinking groups for students with social skill weaknesses. In addition, school counselors, school psychologists and special education professionals work together to educate and support parents, conduct parent workshops and apprise parents of outside resources to enhance parenting skills and provide for the needs of children.

Below is a list highlighting activities offered at various schools:

- One-on-one and small group counseling
- Case management services
- Crisis intervention
- Social Emotional Learning curriculum and skills support
- Classroom meetings to resolve problems
- School counseling curriculum on issues of respect, sexual harassment and student success skills
- Social thinking education groups
- MARC Student Ambassadors (Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center)
- Mindfulness groups and lessons
- Lunch/friendship groups
- Study skills/time management groups
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Parent workshops
- Transition planning
- Parent guidance
- Behavioral plan development
- Classroom observations
- Teacher consultation

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools consult with Dr. Elizabeth Englander, a professor of Psychology and the founder and Director of the *Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center* at Bridgewater State University, a Center which delivers anti-violence and anti-Bullying programs, resources, and research for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She is a nationally recognized expert in the area of Bullying, childhood causes of violence and aggression, child development, and characteristics of juvenile and adult violent offenders. Dr. Englander provides social skills programs to parents and to students of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools to help prevent Bullying. She offers education and training to faculty and staff on identification and intervention services for students exhibiting Bullying behaviors. In addition, trained professionals from Youthcare provide consultative services to the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools to address the needs of students on the autism spectrum.

C. Students with disabilities:

As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to Bullying, Retaliation, harassment, or teasing because of a disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to Bullying, Retaliation, harassment, or teasing.

D. Other students who may be at risk.

The district recognizes that students may be more vulnerable to Bullying and Retaliation based upon actual or perceived differences related to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socio-economic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by associations with other people who may have one or more of these characteristics. Staff shall provide additional support to vulnerable students, as necessary, to provide them with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to Bullying, Retaliation, or harassment.

E. Referral to outside services:

Dover-Sherborn Schools have building specific referral processes in place. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact their child's school counselor for assistance in identifying appropriate and timely services.

V. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will provide age-appropriate instruction on Bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the Schools' evidence-based curricula. Effective instruction includes classroom approaches, whole-school initiatives, and focused strategies for Bullying prevention and social skills development.

A. Specific Bullying prevention approaches:

Bullying prevention curricula are 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, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing Cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies per acceptable use policies.
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications;
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference; and

- providing parents and guardians with information regarding the Schools' Bullying prevention curricula

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan through school assemblies and/or small group meetings at the beginning of each 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;
- communicating with parents and guardians regarding the Schools' goals and expectations for students and students' safety
- 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.

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

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to Bullying and Retaliation, the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools have policies and procedures in place for receiving and responding to reports of Bullying and Retaliation. These policies and procedures ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, and staff – know what will happen when incidents of Bullying occur.

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 must be recorded in writing by the staff member. All employees are required to report such events as soon as reasonably possible to the Principal or designee any instance of Bullying or Retaliation when the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses the incident. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other non-employees may be made anonymously. If the Principal is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the Superintendent. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the School Committee. The Schools will make reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form, available on the

Use of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. Schools 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.

At the beginning of each school year, the Schools will provide the school community, including 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 Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

A Staff member will report such events as soon as reasonably possible to the Principal or designee when they witness or become aware of conduct that may be Bullying or Retaliation. If the Principal is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the Superintendent. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the School Committee. 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 each school's policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

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

Students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of Bullying or Retaliation involving a student shall report it to the Principal or designee. If the Principal is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the Superintendent. If the Superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the report should be made to the School Committee. 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 or Retaliation 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. There may be circumstances in which the Principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to an investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

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. The confidentiality of students and witnesses reporting alleged acts of Bullying or Retaliation will be maintained to the extent possible given the school’s obligation to investigate the matter.

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a. Notice to parents or guardians:

Upon determining that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, the Principal or designee will notify the parents or guardians of the target and the student who is the alleged aggressor or the staff member who is the alleged aggressor, of this determination as soon as reasonably possible, and of the procedures for responding to it.

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 notify by telephone as soon as reasonably possible 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.

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 or designee 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 involving an individual not enrolled in the 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 local law enforcement/school resource officer, and other individuals the Principal or designee deems appropriate.

C. Investigation Procedure:

1. Pre-Investigation:

Even before fully investigating allegations of Bullying or Retaliation, school personnel will consider whether there is a need to take immediate steps to support the alleged target and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. In taking any such action, however, the rights of both the alleged target and alleged aggressor must be considered.

2. Investigation:

The Principal or designee will investigate as soon as reasonably possible 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 and/or information related to the staff member involved.

Procedures for investigating reports of Bullying and Retaliation are consistent with district policies and procedures as detailed in each handbook. If necessary, the Principal or designee will consult with the Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent.

The confidentiality of the complainant and the other witnesses will be maintained to the extent practicable given the school's obligation to investigate and address this matter.

3. Written statement of the complaint:

The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gathering information from the complainant, including such matters as: what specifically happened, who committed the alleged acts, who was present or may have information about the events, when the events occurred (date, time of day), and where the events occurred.

It is helpful to have these facts in writing. If age appropriate, the complainant may be asked to put the complaint in writing and to sign and date it. If the complainant cannot or chooses not to write a complaint, the investigator will record the allegations, read them to the complainant to confirm accuracy, and ask the complainant to sign the document. If the complainant cannot or chooses not to sign, the investigator may sign and date the document her/himself.

4. Interviews:

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. The Principal or designee shall remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation and of their obligation to be truthful. The following are general guidelines for responding to a report of Bullying or Retaliation. The guidelines will be adapted as necessary to respond appropriately to the complaint.

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 or Retaliation behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

Interviews will be conducted by the Principal or designee, or 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 the 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.

Once the allegations of the complainant are established, the investigator will gather other evidence, which often involves interviews of the alleged aggressor and/or other witnesses. If appropriate, the investigator should remind the alleged aggressor and witnesses that Retaliation against persons whom they believe might have reported the incident or cooperated with the investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

D. Determinations:

School personnel must weigh all of the evidence objectively to determine whether the alleged events occurred and, if they did, whether the events constitute Bullying or Retaliation. The Principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances and the perspective of a reasonable person. When applied to children, the "reasonable person" standard is generally "that of a reasonable person of like age, intelligence, and experience under like circumstances." See *Ellison v. Brady*, 924 F.2d 872 (9th Cir. 1991).

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 student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the Bullying behavior or Retaliation and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

If a School Principal or designee determines that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, they shall take appropriate disciplinary action, and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Principal shall notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency and notify the superintendent.

A Principal or designee, upon determining that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, shall promptly contact the parents or guardians of the alleged target(s) and when the alleged aggressor(s) is a student or a staff member, parents or guardians of the alleged aggressor(s). Actions being taken to prevent further acts of Bullying and Retaliation shall be discussed.

If Bullying or Retaliation is substantiated, the school will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. As with the investigation, the response will be individually tailored to all of the circumstances, including the nature of the conduct and the age of the students involved. In addition to taking disciplinary action, the following are examples of steps that may be taken to prevent the recurrence of Bullying or Retaliation:

- Holding parent conferences;
- Transferring student's classroom or school;
- Limiting or denying student access to a part, or area, of a school;

- Enhancing adult supervision on school premises;
- Excluding from participation in school-sponsored or school-related functions, after-school programs, and/or extracurricular activities;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students. Guidance counselors and others in the school setting who have been trained in working with students on interpersonal issues may be helpful in providing such programs.
- Personalized Action Plan and directives for future conduct, including providing the target with a process for reporting any concerns about future conduct immediately. It is critical to involve the student in creating an action plan that involves a reporting process that works for that particular student.
- Arranging for communication between the parties, if appropriate, to assist them in resolving issues which have arisen between them. (Such an approach will be used cautiously since communication can sometimes exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the target's concerns and since the conduct often involves an imbalance of power.)
- Providing counseling (or other appropriate services) or referral to such services for the target and/or the aggressor and/or for appropriate family members of said students.
- Disciplinary actions for employees who are found to have committed an act of Bullying or Retaliation shall be in accordance with state law, any applicable Collective Bargaining Agreements, and the district's policies and procedures.

E. Closing the Complaint and Possible Follow-Up

School staff will provide notice as soon as reasonably possible to the parent/guardian of the target(s) and the aggressor(s) about whether or not the complaint was substantiated and, if substantiated, what action is being taken to prevent any further acts of Bullying or Retaliation. Specific information about disciplinary action taken will not be released to the target's parents or guardians—unless it involves a directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

If appropriate, within a reasonable time period following closure of the complaint, the Principal or designee will contact the Target to determine whether there has been any recurrence of the prohibited conduct. The district will retain a report of the complaint, containing the name of the complainant, the date of the complaint, investigator, school, a brief statement of the nature of the complaint, the outcome of the investigation, and the action taken.

The Principal or designee will notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor as soon as reasonably possible 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 and due process is followed in all cases as documented in school handbooks. 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 directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The Principal or designee will inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the Bullying determination.

F. Responses to Bullying and Retaliation:

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools have incorporated a range of individualized strategies and interventions that may be used in response to remediate a student's skills or to prevent further incidences of Bullying and/or Retaliation.

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, § 37O(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 anti-Bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school 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 Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and with each school's policies and procedures.

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.

Disciplinary actions for employees who are found to have committed an act of Bullying or Retaliation shall be in accordance with state law and the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools' policies and procedures.

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 consistent with the school's code of conduct/student handbook.

Disciplinary actions for employees who are found to have committed an act of Bullying or Retaliation will be in accordance with state law and the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools' policies and procedures.

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Principal or designee(s) 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.

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 as soon as reasonably possible.

VII. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan includes strategies to engage and collaborate with students' families in order to increase the capacity of each of our Schools as well as the district to prevent and respond to Bullying. Resources for families and communication with them are essential aspects of effective collaboration. Provisions for informing parents or guardians about the Bullying Prevention and Intervention curricula used by the Schools include: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home and support the school or district plan; (ii) the dynamics of Bullying; and (iii) online safety and Cyber-Bullying. Parents and guardians will also be notified in writing each year about the student-related sections of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

Schools will collaborate with School Councils and overarching parent organizations (School Councils, PTO, CSA, POSITIVE, Guidance Advisory Council, and SEPAC) to create parent resource and information networks. Schools will join with these parent groups to offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-Bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the school(s).

Schools will annually inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-Bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of Bullying, including Cyber-Bullying and online safety. The Schools will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the Dover-Sherborn Network and Internet Acceptable Use 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. Each school will post the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and related information on its website.

VIII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of Bullying or Retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses and at school bus stops or in school-related activities. Schools will investigate as soon as reasonably possible all reports and complaints of Bullying and Retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

Acts of 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 through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district, and

- at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district, 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, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

IX. PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700. Hard copies of this information is also available at the Superintendent's office.

X. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or 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, ancestry, sexual orientation, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention 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 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this Plan covers the behavior.

APPENDIX A

[INCIDENT REPORTING FORM](#)