

Bullying is a term used to define repeated patterns of behavior, which hurt, injure, embarrass, upset, or discomfort others, directly or indirectly. Any instances of bullying should be immediately reported to the school disciplinarians who will determine the appropriate consequences to be issued. Please refer to the HCCS Bullying Plan available in the school's main office or the summary below.

Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010 - An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools:

“Bullying”, 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 victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

“Charter school”, commonwealth charter schools and Horace Mann charter schools established pursuant to section 89 of chapter 71.

“Cyber-bullying”, bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be 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 shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include 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 clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

“Hostile environment”, 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 the student’s education

Holyoke Community Charter School Anti-Bullying Policy Summary

Below is a summary of the Holyoke Community Charter School’s Anti-Bullying Policy, for the full version, please refer to the HCCS Anti-Bullying Plan available in the school’s main office.

The members of the Holyoke Community Charter School will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target’s sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

At Holyoke Community Charter School, our goal is to have students feel secure and valued as members of a caring community, to develop academically and socially with confidence and without fear. The aim of the policy is to help us deal with incidents of bullying quickly, effectively, consistently and with sensitivity to the needs of the individual. When dealing with incidents of bullying the following cannot be emphasized too strongly:

- The necessity to involve parents as soon as possible
- The need to develop strong relationships between student, school and home
- That subsequent action should be driven by the need of the individual

We should also distinguish between behavior intended to hurt and the hurt caused by thoughtlessness and insensitivity. This distinction must be made when deciding on a course of action. Situations involving thoughtlessness and insensitivity may benefit more from education rather than disciplinary action, especially when dealing with younger students. It is comparatively easy to punish after the event. Our goal is to be proactive and develop sensitivity from the moment the young person comes into our care. We want students to be sensitive to the feelings of others and to ensure that their words or actions do not hurt. We should also like them to talk to a parent, teacher or student management if they are being made unhappy. We hope that parents will inform us at an early stage if their child is being bullied or they suspect that it is happening. We should like to be informed if the strategies we subsequently employ are not working so that others can be tried. We should also like parents to work with us, if necessary, to educate their child into being sensitive to the feeling of others. Each incident of bullying should be dealt with on an individual basis taking into account the age and stage of development of the students involved and to seek parental support at the earliest possible opportunity. If students have reached an age and stage in their development when they clearly understand what is meant by the term bullying, it may be necessary to apply immediate disciplinary action. In conclusion, by continually developing the roles of students, staff and parents in the HCCS community, we shall become increasingly effective in preventing the development of bullying and the misery and suffering that go with it.

We need to catch bullying in the early stages: to prevent situations by looking out for signs of behavior that, unchecked, are likely to develop into bullying. Signs such as:

- Aggression
- Teasing
- Thoughtless words or actions
- A reluctance to involve someone in the group

Bullying is any individual or group behavior which is intentionally unkind and which may cause physical hurt and /or emotional distress. It may involve:

- Physical actions - pushing, hitting, punching, kicking or any other unwanted physical contact
- Verbal abuse - name calling, racially and sexually offensive remarks
- Emotional abuse - ignoring/shunning, ridiculing, tormenting, moving/hiding possessions, graffiti, intimidation, racial and sexist gestures and harassment

Children who are being bullied at school will not always feel able to tell those in authority. However, when a disclosure is made or bullying is suspected, it should always be treated seriously. While others may not feel that certain actions or words are of a bullying nature, if the recipient feels they are being bullied that is sufficient evidence to investigate immediately. For those students who feel unable to

inform staff about their problem, observations regarding specific behavior patterns can be routinely established within the school.

Signs of bullying might include:

- Unwillingness to come to school or to specific classes
- Withdrawn, isolated behavior
- Complaining about missing possessions
- Refusal to talk about the problem
- Being easily distressed
- Damaged or incomplete work
- Changes in student behavior

DEALING WITH BULLYING

Reporting bullying or retaliation

All incidents of bullying or retaliation should be reported to the School Director or Student

Management Coordinator. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by students, staff, 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. A school 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. Reports made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report.

The school 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 the student management office.
- 3) Post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in Spanish.

Students

Students should be sensitive to the feelings of others to make sure that their words or actions do not hurt. They should talk to someone if they are unhappy and they should tell a member of staff if they witness any form of bullying. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Bullying should be reported as soon as possible to a parent or staff member. **Students are encouraged to report to their teacher, student management staff, school social worker, adjustment counselor, student life coordinator, administrator or other available staff member if they witness, or may be a victim of bullying.**

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians need to inform us at an early stage if their child is being bullied or that they suspect that this is happening. They also need to inform us if the strategies employed do not seem to be working so that others can be tried and to work with us to educate their child to be sensitive to the feelings of

others. Parents are encouraged to report any concerns as soon as possible to student management staff, the principal, school counselors or other available staff.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or student management staff will take steps to needed 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, change seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, student life, 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 student management staff will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of, and after the investigation, as necessary.

Staff

Staff must be consistent in their expectation of students’ behavior. Each incident must be dealt with on an individual basis taking into account the feelings of the child being bullied and the age and stage of development of the students involved. Parents must be informed at an early stage and students must be informed where they may seek help, especially at break time and lunchtime so that they know where they can be safe.

The principal or student management staff 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.

Sanctions

When students have reached an age and a stage in their development when they clearly understand what is meant by the term bullying, it may be necessary to apply sanctions immediately. Sanctions may include the following:

- Reprimand and warning
- Parent meetings
- Detention
- Anti-bullying workshop
- Short term suspension
- Longer term suspension
- Law enforcement notification
- Permanent exclusion