

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

South Coast Educational Collaborative expects that all members of its school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences. SCEC is committed to providing all students and employees with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying, cyber-bullying, teasing, harassment and retaliation. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying, harassment, teasing and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We recognize that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender and homeless students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment or teasing. SCEC takes specific steps to create a supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community and provides all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

SCEC does not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, in our classrooms, school buildings, on school grounds, during school-related activities, at school bus stops, on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by SCEC, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by SCEC. SCEC does not tolerate any form of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation perpetrated by any student or by any member of the staff including, but not limited to, an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional, or related service provider. We investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation and take prompt action to end this behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parent/guardian/caretaker involvement.

“Bullying” is defined as the repeated use by one or more students or by any member of the staff including, but not limited to, an educator, an administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity, paraprofessional, or related service provider, 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 himself/herself or of damage to his/her 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 defined as 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, e-mail, instant messages, text messages, Internet postings, and the use of an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons.

Prevention and Intervention Plan

Prevention: South Coast Educational Collaborative educators focus on the prevention of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation through the following initiatives:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and differences;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- consistently using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;

- implementing social skills education groups focusing on issues of building community; respect; sexual harassment; bullying; social thinking; activities of daily living; anger and stress management; assertiveness training; conflict resolution; coping; problem solving; study and time management skills;
- using social stories, scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to understand when they are the target of bullying;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaging in acts of bullying, cyber-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 the safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- creating and maintaining a learning environment where the care, welfare and security of each student is assured.

Reporting: Students or employees who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying. Each SCEC school site has a means for anonymous reporting by students or staff of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Parents/guardians/caretakers, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying as soon as possible. Any SCEC employee shall immediately report any instance of bullying he/she has witnessed or become aware of to their Educational Administrator or designee. Confidentiality shall be utilized to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

Investigation:

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, the Educational Administrator 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. The Educational Administrator or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation a student or employee who has reported bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, a student or employee who has witnessed bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, a student or employee who provides information during an investigation, or a student or employee who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation. Upon determining that bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Educational Administrator or designee will promptly notify the parent/guardian/caretaker of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it.

In addition, SCEC will notify the parent/guardian/caretaker of the target of bullying of the availability of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Problem Resolution System and assist the parent/guardian/caretaker in understanding and accessing this process. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Problem Resolution System provides for the investigation of complaints and the enforcement of compliance with 603 CMR 28.00, as well as with other statutes and regulations pertaining to education. Any party wishing to file a complaint may do so through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Program Quality Assurance Services:

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906
 TTY: N.E.T. Relay: 1-800-439-2370
 Email: compliance@doe.mass.edu

Telephone: 781-338-3700
 FAX: 781-338-3710
 Web: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa>

The student's Educational Administrator or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Special Education Administrators or designees of the aggressor's and the target's local education agencies (school districts).

At any point after receiving a report of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Educational Administrator or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Educational Administrator or designee will notify the local law enforcement agency. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations.

The Educational Administrator or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the developmental levels and ages of the students involved. The Educational Administrator or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation by using the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form*.

The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. The parent/guardian/caretaker and the local education agencies shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results. The Educational Administrator or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Educational Administrator 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 Educational Administrator or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary. Upon the Educational Administrator or designee determining that bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school will use a range of strategies to initiate an appropriate response which balances the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior according to the ages and developmental levels of the students.

If the Educational Administrator or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the form of that action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Educational Administrator or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, the developmental level of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the school's Code of Conduct, which conforms to all federal and state regulations governing discipline procedures for students with disabilities.

Target Assistance: SCEC will provide counseling or referral to appropriate services and protection to students and employees, both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying, as needed.

Training and Assessment: Annual training is provided for SCEC employees who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to and reporting incidents of bullying. Age-appropriate, developmentally-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention will be incorporated into the curriculum for all students.

Publication and Notice: Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* is provided to students and their parent/guardian/caretaker. Annual written notice of the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* is provided to all SCEC staff. All SCEC employees are trained annually on the *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan*. The SCEC *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* is posted on its website.

SOUTH COAST EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: _____ Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

Check whether you are the: Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

Check whether you are a: Student Staff member (specify role) _____

Parent Administrator Other _____

Your contact information/telephone number: _____

If student, which program? _____ Grade: _____

If staff member, which program? _____

Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior): _____

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): _____

Date(s) of Incident(s): _____

Time When Incident(s) Occurred: _____

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): _____

Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used. Please use additional space on back if necessary.

Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

Form Given to: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date Received: _____

INVESTIGATION

