



Virtual Preparatory Academy of Oklahoma Bullying Policy

It is the policy of the school that any form of Bullying behavior, whether in the classroom, on school property, including, without limitation, school buses, to and from school, at School-Sponsored Events, or via electronic act (defined as an act committed using a cellular telephone, computer, pager, personal communication device, or other electronic communication devices) is expressly forbidden. Periodically, the school shall review the policy and consult with parents, school employees, school volunteers, students, and community members regarding necessary revisions.

Students determined to have engaged in prohibited behaviors are subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion from school. The school's commitment to addressing such prohibited behaviors, however, involves a multifaceted approach, which includes education and the promotion of a school atmosphere in which students, faculty, or school personnel will not tolerate bullying.

It is imperative that bullying be identified only when the specific elements of the definition are met because the designation of such prohibited incidents carries special statutory obligations. However, misconduct by one student against another student, whether appropriately defined or not, will result in appropriate disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator.

Definitions

"Harassment" means any intentional behavior or course of conduct (whether written, verbal, graphic, or physical) directed at a specific person or group of persons that causes substantial physical and/or emotional distress or harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, and/or abusive educational environment for the other person(s) and serves no legitimate purpose.

"Bullying" means any unwanted, aggressive behavior committed in person or by electronic communication directed toward a student or group of students: that results in or are reasonably perceived as being done with the intent to cause negative educational or physical results for the targeted individual or group and is communicated in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student, and that is repeated or is highly likely to be repeated.

"At school" means on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored activities, or school-sanctioned events. A School-Sponsored Event shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized, or organized by the school or on behalf of the school.

"Cyberbullying" is the use of information and communication technologies, such as but not limited to cell phone, email, instant messaging, social media websites, Twitter, etc., to support deliberate and hostile behavior by an individual or group that (i) is intended to harm others or (ii) that an objectively reasonable person would expect to cause harm to others. Cyber-bullying includes the posting or other transmission of text, video, or images that are embarrassing, demeaning, or threatening in nature, regardless of whether the subject of such text, video, or images directed, consented to, or otherwise acquiesced in the at-issue posting or other transmissions.



"Electronic communication" means the communication of any written, verbal, pictorial information, or video content by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, a mobile or cellular telephone or other wireless telecommunication devices, or a computer; and

"Threatening behavior" means any pattern of behavior or isolated action, whether or not it is directed at another person, that a reasonable person would believe indicates potential for future harm to students, school personnel, or school property.

"Hazing" is the use of ritual and other activities involving harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, intimidation, abuse, or humiliation for the purpose of initiating a person or persons into a group, regardless of whether the such person(s) consented to or otherwise acquiesced in the at-issue behavior(s) and action(s).

"Endanger the physical health" shall include but not be limited to any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, alcoholic beverage as defined in Section 506 of Title 37 of the Oklahoma Statutes, low-point beer as defined in Section 163.2 of Title 37 of the Oklahoma Statutes, drug, controlled dangerous substance, or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health or safety of the individual; and 3.

"Endanger the mental health" shall include any activity, except those activities authorized by law, which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as prolonged sleep deprivation, forced prolonged exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual.

In evaluating whether conduct constitutes Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying, special attention should be paid to the words chosen or the actions taken, whether such conduct occurred in front of others or was communicated to others, how the perpetrator interacted with the victim and whether the victim's reaction was reasonable or foreseeable under the circumstances, and the perpetrator's motivation, either admitted or appropriately inferred.

Types of Conduct

Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying can include many different behaviors, including overt intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate another student or school personnel. Examples of conduct that could constitute prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Physical violence and/or attacks.
- Threats, taunts, and intimidation through words and/or gestures.
- Extortion, damage, or stealing of money and/or possessions.
- Exclusion from the peer group or spreading rumors; and
- Repetitive and hostile behavior with the intent to harm others using information and communication technologies and other Web-based/online sites (also known as "cyberbullying"), such as the following:
 - Posting slurs on Web sites where students congregate or on Web logs (personal online journals or diaries).



- Sending abusive or threatening instant messages or emails.
- Using camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students and posting them online or sending them to third parties; and,
- Using Web sites to circulate gossip and rumors to other students; and
- Excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to Internet service providers.

Prevention and Intervention

All school administrators and employees at each school site shall be required to complete annual professional development training in school bullying prevention, identification, response, and reporting that meets the requirements of 70 O.S. § 24-100.4(A) and 210:10-1-20. Selection of the required training at each school site shall be based upon the recommendation of the Safe School Committee established at the site.

The Virtual Preparatory Academy of Oklahoma is committed to providing annual training to students regarding identifying, preventing, addressing, and reporting bullying incidents. Such educational programs may include but are not limited to, classroom discussion, assemblies, multimedia, and presentations. The purpose of the educational programs is to assist students in identifying bullying behaviors, reporting procedures, and the consequences for violation of school policy.

The Virtual Preparatory Academy of Oklahoma will implement a research-based educational program as designed and developed by the State Department of Education for students and parents in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying or that best addresses the needs of the school community.

The Virtual Preparatory Academy of Oklahoma will establish a Safe School Committee that meets the requirements of 70 O.S. § 24-100.5(A). The duties of the Committee shall be the duties set forth in 70 O.S. § 24-100.4(B). Operational functions of the Safe School Committee include but are not limited to;

- Promoting positive social behaviors
- Raising awareness in schools about the dangers of bullying
- Planning and implementing prevention efforts
- Notify the school of unsafe conditions, possible strategies for avoiding harm, student victimization, and other issues that compromise the maintenance of a safe school.

In administering discipline, consideration will be given to alternatives to traditional punishment to ensure that the most effective discipline and support are administered in each case. In all disciplinary actions, teachers, staff, and administrators will be mindful that they are dealing with individual personalities.

Alternatives to punitive measures include but are not limited to those below.

- Referral to counselor
- Conference with student
- Conference with parents
- Behavior contract
- Community service
- Referring a student to an appropriate social agency or a delinquency prevention and diversion program administered by the office of Juvenile Affairs



- Other appropriate disciplinary action as required and as indicated by the circumstances, which may include, but is not limited to, restrictions of privileges such as removal from eligibility to participate or attend certain school activities and/or classes.

To prevent further incidents of bullying and intimidation, targets of bullying should not be impacted directly or indirectly by the consequences assigned to the perpetrator. I.e., moving the target/victim out of a particular class or activity.

****This list does not reflect a sequence of events to follow in disciplinary actions.**

The school's bullying coordinator and individuals designated as school site investigators will receive additional training regarding appropriate consequences and remedial action for perpetrators, helping targets of bullying, and the school's strategy for counseling and referral for all those affected by bullying.

Students will receive annual education regarding behavioral expectations, understanding bullying and its adverse effects, disciplinary consequences for infractions, reporting methods, and consequences for those who knowingly make false reports. Any person who knowingly makes false accusations against another person will be appropriately disciplined according to school policy. Any accusations confirmed to be false will be removed from the falsely accused student's file. Parents and guardians may participate in a parent-education component.

This policy shall be made available to every member of the school community.

Reporting and Documenting

Bullying Preventing Officers- The Head of School shall designate at least one Bullying Prevention Officer ("BPO") who shall be the primary point of contact to receive reports of bullying incidents.

The duties of the BPO shall be as follows:

- To receive, promptly review, and track reports of incidents of bullying;
- To establish and maintain the confidentiality of reports of incidents of bullying as appropriate;
- To establish a method for receiving anonymous reports of incidents of bullying;
- To publicize the procedures for reporting outlined in this policy to all students, parents/legal guardians of students, and school employees;
- To educate the school and community about bullying prevention measures; and
- To review, monitor, and suggest strategies for improvement of the school climate in order to facilitate prevention and intervention of bullying incidents in the school site and promote a school culture of intolerance of bullying behaviors;
- To report the number of documented and verified incidents of bullying to the school and/or the State Department of Education per the requirements of 70 O.S. §24-100.4(F) and accompanying regulations at 210:10-1-20;
- To serve on the Safe School Committee and make recommendations for bullying prevention education, professional development, and/or policies and procedures about bullying prevention; and
- Any other duties deemed necessary by school administrators and/or the Safe School Committee to facilitate bullying prevention at the school site.



Students, parents, and staff shall be informed of the process for reporting incidents of bullying and encouraged to report all incidents of bullying. Incidents of bullying shall be reported on the "Bullying Incident Report Form" which shall be always made available to students during regular school hours, including in the main/front office of the school site, the office of the school counselor, the website of the school site, and any other locations recommended by the Safe School Committee at each school site.

If any person is aware of or sees a victim of bullying as defined in this policy, such person must immediately report to the principal of the building. Reports may be made anonymously; however, no formal disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Reports shall be made immediately to a building administrator by any school employee with reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target or perpetrator of bullying. Any written documentation of the alleged incident(s) shall be provided to the principal. If the bullying involves electronic communication as defined in the policy, a printed copy of the communication as well as any identifying information, such as an email or web address, shall be provided to the principal.

Complaints

Written Complaints

Students and/or their parents or guardians may file reports regarding suspected Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying. Such written reports shall be reasonably specific, including the person(s) involved, the number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school staff member or administrator, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the building principal for review and action in accordance with this policy.

Verbal Complaints

Students and/or their parents or guardians may make verbal complaints of conduct that they consider to be Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel. Such verbal complaints shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying, including the person(s) involved, the number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of the prohibited behavior(s), and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school staff member or administrator who receives a verbal complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing, including the above information. This written report by the school staff member and/or administrator shall be promptly forwarded to the building principal for review and action following this policy.

Protection of Person Filing Complaint

Individuals who make complaints as set forth above may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the school staff member(s) and administrator(s) who receive the complaint. The complaints shall be reviewed, and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student (s) alleged to have committed acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying. Reports of bullying shall be kept confidential to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Family Education and Privacy Rights Act (FERPA) and to protect students who report incidents of bullying from retaliation.



False Complaint

It is a violation of this policy and procedure to knowingly report false allegations of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying. Persons found to knowingly report or corroborate false allegations will be subject to appropriate discipline.

School Personnel Responsibilities

Teachers and Other School Staff

Teachers and other school staff, who witness acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying, as defined above, shall promptly notify the building principal and/or his/her designee of the event observed and shall promptly file a written incident report concerning the events witnessed. Teachers and other school staff who receive student or parent reports of suspected Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying shall promptly notify the building principal and/or his/her designee of such report(s). If the report is a written complaint, such complaint shall be forwarded promptly (no later than the next school day) to the building principal or his/her designee. If the report is a verbal complaint by a student that a teacher or other professional employee receives, he or she shall prepare a written report of the verbal complaint, which shall be promptly forwarded (no later than the next school day) to the building principal or his/her designee.

In addition to addressing written and verbal complaints, school personnel is encouraged to address the issue of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying in other interactions with students. School personnel may find opportunities to educate students about Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying and help eliminate such prohibited behaviors through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior. School personnel should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, humiliating, or intimidating another student/school personnel, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying."

Administrator Responsibilities

Investigation

The principal and or his/her designee shall be promptly notified of any written or verbal complaint of suspected Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying. Under the direction of the building principal or his/her designee, all such complaints shall be investigated promptly. A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying were verified, and, when prohibited acts are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action, shall be included in the report. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when a student making a verbal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complaint. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged perpetrator), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.



Remedial Actions

Verified acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying shall result in an intervention by the building principal or his/her designee that is intended to ensure the prohibition against Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying behavior is enforced, with the goal that any such prohibited behavior will cease.

Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in seriousness and impact on the targeted individual and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying. While conduct that rises to the level of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying, as defined above, will generally warrant disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such prohibited behaviors, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (detention, in and out-of-school suspension; or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the building principal.

Reporting Obligations

Report to the Parent or Guardian of the Perpetrator

If, after investigation, acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying by a specific student are verified, the building principal or his/her designee shall notify in writing the parent or guardian of the perpetrator of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such a Student, a description of such discipline shall be included in such notification.

Reports to the victim and his/her parent or guardian

If, after investigation, acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying against a specific student are verified, the building principal or his/her designee shall notify the parent or guardian of the victim of such finding. In providing such notification, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the perpetrator of such Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying.

Reporting of verified acts of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, or Cyberbullying

The school principal/administrator shall annually provide the president of the school board a written summary of all reported incidents and report to the Oklahoma State Department of Education as required.



Bullying Incident Report Form

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____ Repeat infraction? YES NO

Location of Incident: _____

Name of victim(s): _____ Name of student(s) bullying: _____ Name(s) of witnesses/bystanders: _____

Type of Bullying:

- Verbal
- Physical: Result in injury? YES NO Reported to Police? YES NO
- Relational

Bullying Behaviors: _____

Cyber-bullying using: Text messages Website Email Other: _____

Racial, Sexual, Religious or Disability Circle one and describe: _____

Reported to school by (circle all that apply):

Teacher Student Bystander Victim/Target Parent Anonymous Other: _____

Describe the incident:

Physical Evidence? Notes Email Graffiti Video/audio Website Other: _____

Actions Taken:

Consequences: _____

Remediation: _____

Referral for additional support services: _____

Parent Contact: Date _____ Time _____ Person making contact: _____

Result: _____

Today's Date: _____ Reported by: _____ Signature: _____