

BULLYING – WHAT IS IT AND FAQs ABOUT IT

Bullying is when one or more students repeatedly uses written, verbal or electronic means; or physical gestures or force, or any combination at a person (target) in such a way that causes them:

- physical or emotional harm
- damages their property
- places the target in reasonable fear for his/her safety, or the protection of his/her property
- creates a hostile environment for them at school, or
- disrupts the educational process of a school in both a physical and meaningful way.

What is considered bullying?

Example 1 - Boy A passes Boy B in the hallway and publicly embarrasses Boy B by tripping him, publicly drawing attention to Boy B's situation, causing others to laugh at Boy B.

Is this considered bullying? No, as it was done only once. This is still a serious incident that the school should deal with.

Example 2 – The same as above, however, Boy A does this, and then follows up the next week by calling Boy B a name, and then the next day pulls on the Boy B's back pack as he's going upstairs, hindering his progress and creating a hostile and dangerous climate.

Is this considered bullying? Yes, as it is repeated and covers 4 of the 5 consequences to the target.

Example 3

Girl A and Girl B both attend the same school. Girl A begins a Facebook and texting attack on Girl B, creating emotional distress during off-school hours. This also creates anxiety and fear for Girl B when she does go to school.

Is this considered bullying? Yes, as it is repeated, creates a hostile school environment and places the target in a reasonable fear for her safety.

Example 4

Girl A and Girl B attend different schools but play on a non-school soccer team together. Girl A begins a repeated Facebook and texting attack on Girl B, creating emotional distress during off-school hours. Girl B is OK when she goes to school since Girl A and the other aggressor girls attend another school.

Is this considered bullying? No, even though it is repeated, uses electronic means, and causes emotional harm, it does not create a hostile environment to Girl B at her school.

Example 5

Boy A is harassed by Boy B one time. Boy C is harassed by Boy B one time. Girl A is harassed by Boy B one time.

Is this considered bullying? Yes. Boy B is repeatedly creating a hostile environment for a number of students. Even though each student was only bothered one time, Boy B is bullying. All incidents that create a hostile environment, puts a target in physical or emotional distress, causes them to worry about their safety needs to be reported. The principal or designee, upon receiving several reports about Boy B will be able to see the pattern and take the legal and appropriate steps required.

FAQS about Bullying for the Hudson Public School District

1. Who can report bullying?

Anyone can. Parents, students, staff, guardians or others may do so.

2. How is this done?

Verbally or written. If a person tells a school staff member, the staff member will make a written report of it and get it to the principal or designee (someone the school designates to handle bullying). All schools will also make available the district's incident reporting form in the office, counseling office, and on the school webpage. Also, bullying can be reported by sending an email to the school's building principal or using the anonymous reporting tool located on the HPS website under the Parent/Students Anti-Bullying page. Any of these can be utilized to voice your concerns.

3. Does the reporting have to be done by the target (the person being bullied) or representative of the target?

No. Anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of a bullying incident can report it. Staff members who become aware of a bullying incident will immediately report any to the principal or designee. This staff member also has the authority to take any appropriate steps they deem necessary within school and district disciplinary guidelines.

4. Can reporting be done anonymously?

Yes. However, the schools will not take disciplinary action based on an anonymous report. An investigation must take place.

5. What if my child is too scared to make the report?

The administration understands how scary this must be to a child. The schools will do their best to provide a safe, practical, private, and age-appropriate way for students to report and discuss a bullying event. As part of any investigation, the principal or designee will strategize and take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target. In order for the schools to be able to help your child, it is important to voice your concerns and bring information you have to the school's attention.

6. What if my child wasn't bullied, but witnessed it. Are they protected?

The same strategy for safety and protection applies to the target, the witness, or someone who provided information during the investigation.

7. What takes place during the investigation?

The principal or designee may interview students, staff, parents, or anyone they think necessary to arrive at the truth. The alleged aggressor will be informed that any retaliation or badgering of the target or witnesses is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Confidentiality will be kept to the extent practical.

8. Will I be notified of the results of the investigation?

You will be notified inasmuch as the law, right to privacy, and safety of those in the school allows. Laws of confidentiality may not allow full disclosure to all parties. Upon determining if the accusation is true, the administration will promptly alert the parents or guardians of both the target and the aggressor of this, and what actions are going to be taken.

9. What if my child was bullied by someone from another school?

As soon as the principal of the target becomes aware of it, he/she will contact the principal of the other school so that they can take appropriate action.

10. Does Law Enforcement ever get involved?

Yes. At any point during the investigation, the principal or designee will notify the local law enforcement agency if they believe that criminal charges are possibly warranted.