



# **BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION MANUAL**

**2019-2020**

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## **FOREWARD**

Katy ISD is committed to providing every student with a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from bullying and harassment. Reports of harassment, bullying, and cyberbullying are taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated. Harassment, bullying (including cyberbullying), and retaliation are not tolerated and shall result in disciplinary action as defined in the Katy ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct.

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## **POLICY**

Katy ISD School Board has adopted policies and procedures concerning bullying that:

1. Prohibits the bullying of a student;
2. Prohibits retaliation against any person, including a victim, a witness, or another person, who in good faith provides information concerning an incident of bullying;
3. Establishes a procedure for providing notice of an incident of bullying to:
  - a. A parent or guardian of the alleged victim on or before the third business day after the date the incident is reported; and
  - b. A parent or guardian of the alleged bully within a reasonable amount of time after the incident;
4. Establishes the actions a student should take to obtain assistance and intervention in response to bullying;
5. Sets out the available counseling options for a student who is a victim of or a witness to bullying or who engages in bullying;
6. Establishes procedures for reporting an incident of bullying, including procedures for a student to anonymously report an incident of bullying, investigating a reported incident of bullying, and determining whether the reported incident of bullying occurred;
7. Prohibits the imposition of a disciplinary measure on a student who, after an investigation, is found to be a victim of bullying, on the basis of that student's use of reasonable self-defense in response to the bullying; and
8. Requires that discipline for bullying of a student with disabilities comply with applicable requirements under federal law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Bullying**

Bullying is defined in Section 37.0832 of the Education Code as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that satisfies the applicability requirements below and that:

- a. Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property;
  - b. Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student;
  - c. Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or
  - d. Infringes on the rights of the victim at school; and
2. Includes cyberbullying.

### **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is defined in Section 37.0832 of the Education Code as bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool.

The District has jurisdiction to take disciplinary action regarding:

1. Bullying that occurs on or is delivered to school property or to the site of a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property;

2. Bullying that occurs on a publicly or privately owned school bus or vehicle being used for transportation of students to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity; and
3. Cyberbullying that occurs off school property or outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity if the cyberbullying:
  - a. Interferes with a student's educational opportunities; or
  - b. Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a classroom, school, or school-sponsored or school-related activity.

### **Retaliation**

A person commits an offense if the person intentionally or knowingly harms or threatens to harm another by an unlawful act in retaliation for or on account of the service or status of another as a:

- a. public servant, witness, prospective witness, or informant; or
- b. person who has reported or who the actor knows intends to report the occurrence of a crime

## **TYPES OF BULLYING**

Bullying involves various forms of behavior such as hitting, name-calling, spreading rumors, or making disparaging posts online. Some are overt and easy to spot; while other actions are covert and make it challenging to identify and intervene. Therefore, it is imperative to notify school personnel. These behaviors alone are not necessarily bullying but must also meet the criteria defined by the State.

Bullying is categorized into four sub-types:

### **Physical**

- Hitting or slapping
- Kicking or tripping
- Destroying property
- Throwing objects at someone
- Spitting

### **Verbal**

- Name-calling
- Taunting
- Threats
- Demeaning remarks about someone's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation

### **Social**

- Spreading rumors
- Isolating someone from a peer group
- Damaging someone's reputation
- Sharing personal information
- Public humiliation

### **Cyberbullying**

- Abusive or hurtful messages, posts, emails, images, or video
- Fake profiles
- Spreading rumors
- Threats

## WARNING SIGNS

Research indicates that a culture of silence is associated with bullying, and many children will not tell anyone. A child may not talk about being a target of bullying out of fear or embarrassment, believe it will make the situation worse, do not think anything can be done to stop it, or may not want to be viewed as a tattletale or snitch. There are warning signs that may indicate that a child is experiencing bullying or dealing with another concern that is causing emotional distress.

### Signs may include:

- Not wanting to attend school and give excuses to avoid going
- Make remarks about disliking school or a student
- May appear anxious, agitated, sad, or fearful before and/or after school
- Ask to change how he/she gets to school (want to be dropped off instead of taking the bus or may not want to walk)
- Skip a particular class
- Ask to attend a different school, be homeschooled, or take online courses
- Refuse to discuss school
- Unexplained bruises, cuts, or injuries
- Belongings are damaged, stolen, or “lost” frequently
- Difficulty sleeping (insomnia, sleeping too long, or nightmares)
- Change in eating habits
- Somatic symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches
- Change in disposition
- Withdrawn from family and friends
- Stop participating in activities that were once enjoyable
- Get upset when texting, on social media, or online
- Does not have friends

### If you suspect your child is being bullied:

1. Talk to your child in a calm and supportive manner.
2. Reassure your child that it is not his/her fault.
3. Gather as much detail as possible.
4. Discuss strategies to handle any further incidents.
5. Identify trusted adults on campus.
6. Monitor technology.
7. Block the aggressor(s) on all technology.
8. Encourage open communication.
9. Contact the school.
10. Seek counseling, if necessary.

It is imperative that you take your child seriously. A child who is dismissed when trying to discuss a sensitive topic is likely to refrain from speaking up in the future. Bullying should not be accepted as a normal part of growing up.

**If you find out your child is the aggressor and is bullying others:**

1. Talk to your child in a calm and supportive manner.
2. Find out why your child is engaging in this type of behavior.
3. Determine the support necessary to change behavior and deal with the reason your child is bullying.
4. Teach empathy, compassion, and acceptance.
5. Be clear about your expectations.
6. Give consequences for the behavior.
7. Monitor technology if this is the tool used to bully others.
8. Collaborate with the school.
9. Give positive reinforcement for improved behavior.
10. Seek counseling, if necessary.

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## **REPORTING INCIDENTS OF BULLYING**

Students, parents, and staff members can report incidents of suspected bullying in various ways. Timely reporting of an incident will allow campus administrators to intervene and take effective action. Katy ISD takes all reports of bullying seriously and investigates all allegations promptly to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all students.

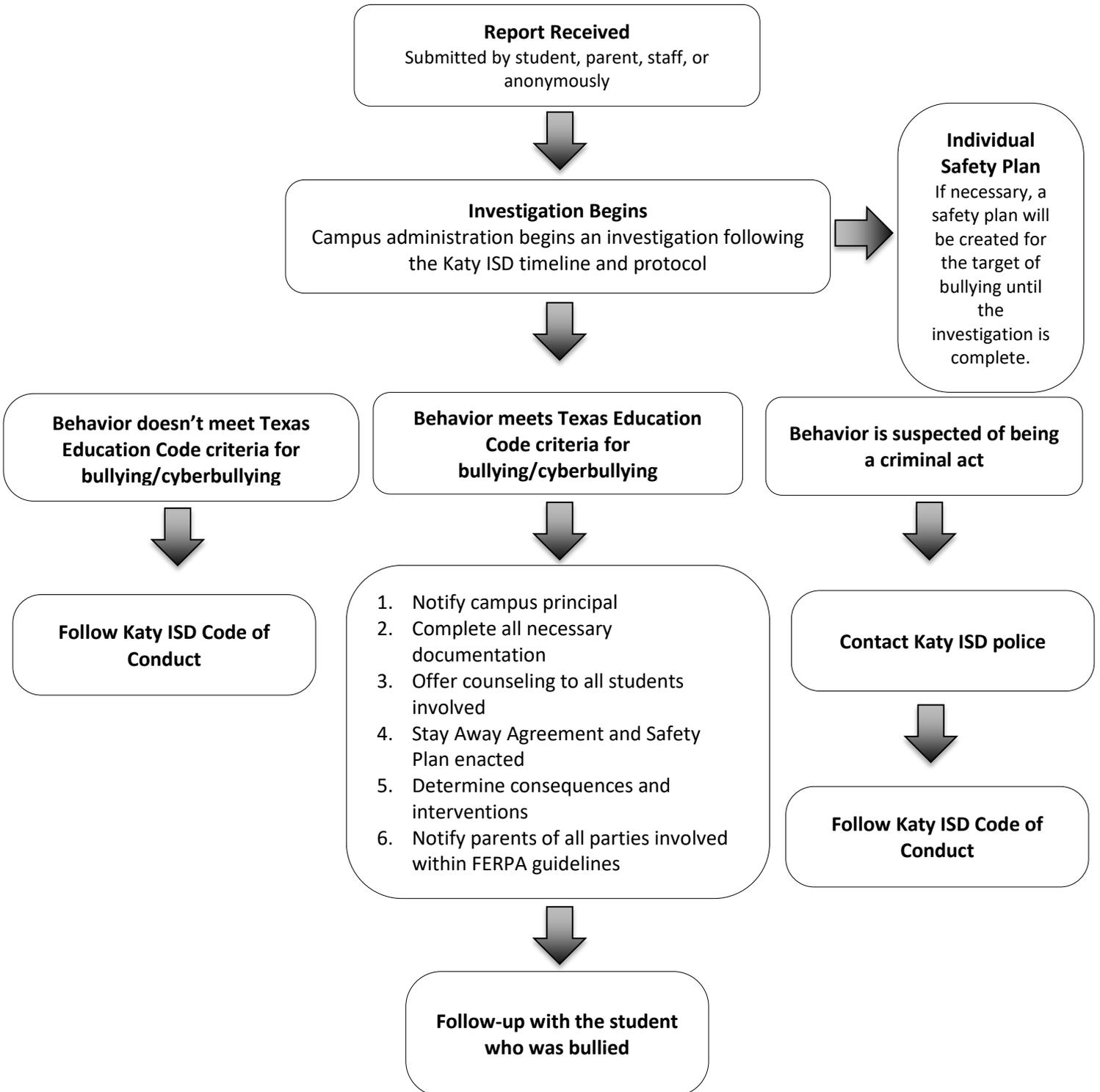
### **SpeakUP**

SpeakUP, an anonymous reporting system, empowers Katy ISD students, parents, and community members to anonymously submit tips about safety and well-being concerns to help prevent school-related incidents that could cause harm to others. Tips may include bullying, weapons, suicide or self-harm, illicit drug use, inappropriate relationships, violence, and other concerns for safety and well-being. In addition to submitting anonymous and secure tips, users can upload video and photo evidence. All tips are thoroughly investigated by campus personnel, police, and or/or a crisis management team.

### **School Personnel**

Students are the number one priority to all staff members in Katy ISD. It is always best to report safety issues or incidents of bullying directly to a teacher, counselor, or campus administrator. A student or parent can report an incident of bullying either orally or in writing. If for some reason, a student or parent does not feel comfortable making a report in person, a report can be made using the SpeakUP app.

# BULLYING INVESTIGATION FLOWCHART



## RESOURCES

### **Immediate Crisis Hotlines**

#### **Crisis Intervention of Houston**

Helps people in crisis through intervention and referral for issues around mental health and suicidal thoughts.

Phone TeenTalk: 832-416-1199 | Text 281-201-4430 | <https://www.crisishotline.org/>

#### **Teen Line**

Helps adolescents address their problems through a confidential peer hotline and community outreach program. Open from 6 pm to 10 pm Pacific Time, every night.

Phone: 310-855-HOPE (4673) or 800-852-8336 | <https://teenlineonline.org/>

#### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

24 hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis (confidential)

Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) | <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

### **National Bullying Resources**

#### **Champions Against Bullying**

Focuses on the issues associated with bullying among children & work to make a safer, bully-free environment for kids.

#### **PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center - Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights**

Significantly expand the opportunities and enhance the lives of children and young adults with disabilities through the concept of parents helping parents.

#### **Stomp Out Bullying**

Focuses on reducing & preventing bullying through education.

#### **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Bullying Prevention: StopBullying.gov**

Provides information from reputable government agencies on many bullying topics.

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## **Books**

### [PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center Book Club](#)

Provides a list of books with accompanying discussion guides for pre-k through high school.

### [American Federation of Teachers](#)

Provides a list of bullying prevention books for educators and parents.

## **Other**

### [Technology Use Contract](#)

### [Understanding the Roles of Parents and Caregivers in Community-Wide Bullying Prevention Efforts](#)

### [Parenting, Media, and Everything In Between](#)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Can a single incident be considered bullying?**

Senate Bill 179, otherwise known as David's Law, broadened the definition of bullying in Texas Education Code. A single significant act can now be constituted as bullying if another criterion is met.

### **Is teasing the same as bullying?**

Teasing usually occurs between friends in a joking manner, not meant to cause harm. If one person becomes offended and asks the other person to stop, the teasing would cease. In incidents of bullying, teasing is one-sided, and the aggressor intends to cause harm to the target with the use of verbal bullying.

Teasing becomes bullying when:

- a power imbalance exists between the students;
- the teasing is repeated;
- the intent is to humiliate, intimidate, or cause fear;
- the teasing continues despite obvious distress or requests to stop.

### **Why are some situations considered bullying and others are not, even if the behaviors are the same?**

Katy ISD must follow discipline guidelines outlined in the Texas Education Code. In order for an incident to be coded bullying in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), Texas Education Agency's data collection system, the behavior must meet all of the State's criteria for bullying (see [Definitions](#)). Campus administration will address the behavior following the Katy ISD Discipline Management Plan.

### **What is the difference between conflict and bullying?**

Conflict is a normal part of life and relationships. Conflict occurs when two or more people have a different point of view about something, resulting in mutual disagreement. Emotions may be involved because of the relationship between those experiencing conflict, which could lead to mean words or actions. The main difference between conflict and bullying is that in conflict, a power imbalance does not exist; everyone involved is considered equal in the relationship. Conflict can be resolved in most situations.

### **What happens after a report has been made?**

Once a report of bullying has been made:

1. Campus administration will begin an investigation by interviewing the target, aggressor(s), and any witnesses, obtain written statements and gather any evidence (pictures, online messages, visible marks, video footage, etc.). A safety plan will be put in place for the alleged target, if necessary at this point.
2. Campus administration will notify parents of the target, aggressor(s), and witnesses of the investigation.
3. Campus administration will review all of the information and determine if the behavior meets the definition of bullying, according to the Texas Education Code.
  - a. The concern could be bullying, conflict, mean behavior but not bullying, or a misunderstanding.

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4. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the target, aggressor(s), and their parents will be notified of the decision and any follow-up actions such as disciplinary consequences, safety plan, stay away agreement, or individualized interventions.
5. If confirmed bullying, campus administration will enact an Individual Safety Plan and Stay Away Agreement.
6. If something else occurs, notify campus administration immediately.

**Why cannot the school share information about the consequences assigned to the student(s) who bullied my child?**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that requires confidentiality of student information. Student discipline records are considered protected information. Therefore, the school cannot legally share information about another student. Campus administration will follow the Katy ISD Discipline Management Plan when issuing consequences for the aggressor(s).

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## REFERENCES

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