



BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE CHARTER SCHOOL PRIORITY STATEMENT

Neighborhood House Charter School will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, harassment, cyberbullying, discrimination, retaliation, or hate crimes in all forms and types towards others in school or at school-related activities. Neighborhood House Charter School will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying and take prompt, effective action to end that behavior, prevent its recurrence and restore the target's sense of safety. Action will include, where appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. 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.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the school is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of bullying. In consultation with our stakeholders we have established this Plan for reporting, preventing, intervening and responding to bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation. The Principals of the Lower School, Middle School and High School are responsible for the implementation and oversight of this Plan. The Principal may assign a Designee to investigate the report, and other steps necessary to implement this Plan, including addressing the safety of the alleged target.

This plan applies to students and members of the school staff, including, but not limited to educators, administrators, nurses, dining hall staff, facilities staff, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and behavioral aides.

II. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Bullying of a student including cyberbullying and retaliation is prohibited as provided in M.G.L.c. §370.

Neighborhood House Charter School prohibits acts of bullying:

- 1) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds,
- 2) at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school
- 3) through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school
- 4) at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school, shall be prohibited if the bullying:
 - a) creates a hostile environment at school for the target
 - b) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
 - c) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school

III. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is a student or member of school staff who engages in bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation.

Bullying as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the *repeated* use by one or more students or a member of a school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- 1) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;

- 2) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or damage to his or her property;
- 3) creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- 4) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- 5) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

For the purposes of this plan, bullying will include cyber-bullying.

Cyberbullying, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, §37O, means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but 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. Cyberbullying shall also include:

- 1) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or
- 2) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions in 603 CMR 49.03: Bullying(1) through (4).
- 3) Cyberbullying 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 in 603 CMR 49.03: Bullying(1) through (4).

Hostile environment as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37O, is 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 a student's education.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation about bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and or all support staff.

Target means a student target of bullying or retaliation as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, §37O.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyberbullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

To support efforts to respond promptly and effectively to bullying and retaliation, at the beginning of each school year Neighborhood House Charter School provides the school community including administrators, staff, students, parents/guardians/caregivers, with policy information for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. The school's Bullying and Intervention Policy, bullying reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the Principal or Designee, is listed in the Family Handbook, the Staff Handbook and is available on the school/s website. These policies and procedures ensure that members of the school community know what will happen when incidents of bullying occur.

Neighborhood House Charter School, in accordance with MA LA M.G.L. c.71, §37O, has designated the Principal or Designee as the person responsible for receiving reports, recording incidents, and investigating all incidents. The principal or Designee is responsible for responding to and resolving all cases.

Reports of Bullying or Retaliation

All bullying allegations, no matter how they were reported, (e.g., through the electronic reporting form available on the [NHCS website](#) electronically through the bullyingline@thenhcs.org, directly to the school leader, directly to staff at the school, shall be promptly investigated.

Reports of bullying or retaliation can be made by staff, students, families/caregivers or others, and can be submitted through the dedicated email address bullyinginfo@thenhcs.org or directly online through the NHCS Bullying Prevention Incident Reporting Form. To report in your native language, please email bullyinginfo@thenhcs.org and ask for translation services. All employees are required to report immediately to the Principal/School Leader or Designee, any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses.

Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students are provided practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying.

Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

Once an allegation of bullying or retaliation has been reported the Principal or Designee will assess the need 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,

- 1) creating a personal safety plan
- 2) pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch or on the bus
- 3) identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target
- 4) altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target

The Principal or Designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The Principal or Designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation any 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. The confidentiality of students and witnesses reporting alleged acts of bullying will be maintained to the extent possible given the school’s obligation to investigate the matter

The Principal or Designee will promptly conduct an investigation. During the investigation, the Principal or Designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Principal or Designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

In conducting an investigation, the Principal or Designee will consider how the bullying behavior might impact the general learning environment of the school or the impact it may have on bystanders or other students in the school. The Principal or Designee determination should not rely solely on the target's account or perception of the incident.

Consequences may be necessary even if the target indicates the aggressor(s) behavior is permissible.

A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Investigation

The Principal or Designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved. Neighborhood House Charter School shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and aggressors, affected by bullying or retaliation, as necessary. The school's social worker will provide referrals for counseling for parents and family members when asked or when the school deems it beneficial.

During the investigation, the Principal or Designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Principal or Designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Principal or Designee or other staff members as determined by the Principal or Designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address

the matter, the Principal or Designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal or Designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal or Designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

Determinations

The Principal or Designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal 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 Principal or Designee will:

- 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and
- 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action are necessary.
- 3) Notify the families/caregivers of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.
- 4) Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal or Designee may choose to consult with the student's teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.
- 5) The Principal or Designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Principal or Designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directives that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

Notice to Parents or Guardians

Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal or Designee shall promptly notify the parents of the target and the aggressor of the determination and the school's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. The Principal or Designees shall inform the target's parent of actions that school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Nothing in 603 CMR 49.05(1) prohibits the Principal or Designees from contacting a parent of a target or aggressor about a report of bullying or retaliation prior to a determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred.

Notice required by 603 CMR 49.05 shall be provided in the primary language of the home.

A Principal or Designee's notification to a parent about an incident or a report of bullying or retaliation must comply with confidentiality requirements of the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00, and the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations, 34 CFR Part 99, as set forth in 603 CMR 49.07.

The Principal or Designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

Notice to Another School

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, nonpublic school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Principal or Designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Principal or Designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action.

Notice to Law Enforcement

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal or Designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Principal or Designee after consultation will notify the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Principal or Designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Confidentiality of Records

A Principal or Designee may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent unless the information is about the parent's own child. A Principal or Designee may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency under 603 CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or his or her parent. The Principal or Designee shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances. (3) A Principal or Designee may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties in addition to law enforcement in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals as provided in 603 CMR 23.07(4)(e) and 34 CFR 99.31(a)(10) and 99.36. 603 CMR 49.07(3) is limited to instances in which the Principal or Designee has determined there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or other individuals. It is limited to the period of emergency and does not allow for blanket disclosure of student record information. The Principal must document the disclosures and the reasons that the Principal determined that a health or safety emergency exists.

RESPONSES TO BULLYING

Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Principal or Designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school uses a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. Skill-building approaches that the Principal or Designee may consider include:

- 1) offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula
- 2) providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- 3) implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals;
- 4) meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;

- 5) adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and making a referral for a special education evaluation.

Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Principal or Designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Principal or Designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's code of conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which will be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the Principal or D determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Director of Student Support, Deans, and Principal will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the Principal or Designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal or Designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Principal or Designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

Possible Civil Right Violations

All allegations regarding bullying based on race, color, age, disability, sex/gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, retaliation, sexual orientation, genetics, military status, criminal record, socioeconomic status or homelessness status will be submitted to NHCS HR department for review of potential civil rights violations.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As required under M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O, Neighborhood House Charter School requires annual bullying prevention and intervention training (available in person or asynchronously) for all school staff, including lunch monitors, safety officers, receptionists, teachers, administrators, and all other staff.

Annual Staff Training on the Plan

Annual training for all school staff on the plan will include an overview of the steps that the Principal or Designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and training in the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school. This training will be conducted during the mandatory Annual Staff training. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable comparable program within the last two years.

Neighborhood House Charter School will offer professional development to all administrators, teachers, assistant teachers, behavioral aides, fellows, and all ancillary staff members. This includes Identifying Bullying Behavior, Types of Bullying, Roles of Aggressors/Targets/Bystanders, Rights and Responsibilities under the Law M. G. L. c. 71, § 37O, Information regarding the most-risk populations (including LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners), Internet Safety, Reporting Responsibility, Adult Bias, and Addressing Student Bias-Based Speech and Behavior.

Ongoing Professional Development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. The content of schoolwide and districtwide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- 1) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- 2) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective

- interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- 3) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between an aggressor, target, and witnesses to bullying;
 - 4) research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
 - 5) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
 - 6) internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The school supports the creation of positive school environments by focusing on early interventions and intensive services. Action steps and services include, but are not limited to,

- 1) Everyday Speech - Social, Emotional Learning Platform, grades K1 - 4
- 2) Responsive Classroom curriculum, grades K1 - 4
- 3) Advisory, grades 5-12
- 4) Student Support team pre-referral process, grades K1 -12
- 5) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices, grades K1-12

Counseling and Other Services

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of all students are addressed. These students include targets, aggressors, or bystanders of bullying, retaliation, or cyberbullying.

We provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources within the school. In addition, staff and service providers will develop safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, provide social skills programs to prevent bullying, and offer education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors. These staff members include Deans of Student Culture, classroom teachers, Student Support team, Principals, school psychologist, administrators, and the school nurse.

Neighborhood House Charter School will also address the emotional needs of these students' families. The student support team, together with building administrators, will work to identify

the school's capacity to provide counseling, case management, and other services for these students (targets, aggressors, bystanders) and their families.

The Neighborhood House Charter School uses behavioral intervention plans, social skills groups, and individually focused curricula to address issues related to bullying.

Neighborhood House Charter School shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and aggressors, affected by bullying or retaliation, as necessary. The Neighborhood House Charter School in collaboration with the Family Council, Principal or Designee, and Director of Family Engagement will offer education programs for parents and guardians which will be focused on recognizing and understanding the dynamics of bullying and appropriate parental and school response.

Students with Disabilities

For students identified with a disability, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (G.L. c. 71B, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010). As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Referral to Outside Services

There is an established referral process for referring students and families to appropriate and timely services. It is the responsibility of SST to make these referrals. All referrals comply with relevant laws and policies. The current local referral protocol is periodically evaluated and revised as needed.

School Climate and Safety Survey

At least once every four years, the district will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, the school or district will annually report bullying

incident data to the Department. Similar tools to the student survey will be used with faculty, staff, and parents/guardians to assist in determining school climate needs.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §§41 and 42, M.G.L.c. 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Parent Education and Resources

Neighborhood House Charter School will offer educational programs and resources to parents and guardians that are focused on ways that families can support bullying and cyber-bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Programs and resources will be offered in collaboration with the Parent Council and Special Education Parent Advisory Council. NHCS will provide resources for parents on the school website, including specific information about online safety, the potential threat of cyber-bullying and bullying dynamics.

Notification Requirements

The school will inform parents and guardians about the curricula being used that address anti-bullying. NHCS will also make available information for parents that are provided in the various curricula already in use. A written notice will be sent home each year about the

student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention Plan, along with the school's Acceptable Use Policy for the Internet. These will be provided in languages other than English, as needed. The complete Plan will be posted on the school's website. The NHCS Family Handbook will include relevant sections of this Plan.

Problem Resolution System

Chapter 86 of the Acts of 2014 amended Section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws to include (g) (v): The Plan shall inform parents or guardians of the target about the Department's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system. This information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats:

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700.