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2026-27
Sturgis Charter Public School
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Sturgis Charter Public School is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Sturgis Charter Public School expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

Sturgis Charter Public School is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. We understand that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students with cultural and linguistic differences, immigrants, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and unhoused students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. Sturgis Charter Public School will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for all populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school building, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. 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 ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and Sturgis Charter Public School is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

Definition of Bullying

"Bullying", the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Definition of Cyberbullying

"Cyber-bullying", is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall 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. Cyber-bullying

shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying 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 enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

If behavior occurs outside of school, one of the last three criteria must be impacted for the school to investigate.

Bullying is prohibited:

1. on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district; and
2. at a location, activity, function, program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school, if the bullying 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 of the school.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. Retaliation is prohibited. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously; provided, however, that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Specific Steps to Support Vulnerable Students

Sturgis recognizes that some students are more vulnerable to bullying and stereotyping/biased language based on actual or perceived characteristics; race, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socio-economic status, physical appearance, gender identity or expression, pregnant or parenting status, mental, physical, or developmental disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics The school has active-bystander training in place for all students that addresses how to recognize and respond to bullying. In Advisory, students have an opportunity to understand the Student Handbook and other norms of Sturgis culture.

In order to support especially vulnerable students, Sturgis uses a Student Support Team to note students who may be experiencing interference with their learning and provide interventions.

These may include:

- Meetings with school counselors or school adjustment counselors
- Addressing vulnerability to bullying in IEP Team meetings, 504 meetings and within the multilingual learner department
- Connecting students with concerns to the Student Services department, school-based Equity Teams, or relevant Sturgis affinity groups to share concerns and get support

Sturgis follows guidance from DESE on enrolling students who obtain admission through our lottery process. According to the Department of Education's letter on May 8, 2022 from Commissioner Riley, "Newcomer and refugee school-aged students are legally entitled to equal access to a free public education without regard to their or their parents' or guardians' national origin or immigration status as established by the U.S. Supreme Court in Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982). Newcomer and refugee school-aged students have the right to attend the public schools in the town in which they reside and must be permitted to enroll in public schools without undue delay." Since our enrollment periods are not ongoing, we allow any student, regardless of legal status, to participate in the lottery and begin studies at Sturgis upon admission through the lottery.

Additionally, Sturgis assures the protection of all students, regardless of legal status.

II. Training and Professional Development

1. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan, which includes procedures for reporting and responding to bullying and retaliation.
    a. Specific components addressed (among others):
        i. Strategies for interventions to stop bullying
        ii. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place among an aggressor, a target, and witnesses to bullying
        iii. Information on students who are at risk for bullying
2. Annually: New staff training on bullying prevention and intervention (using the MARC training material or other appropriate program).
3. Every two years: Staff training on bullying prevention and intervention (using the MARC training material or other appropriate program).
4. Biannually (December and May): School-Based Bullying Prevention Teams meet to review data on reports of bullying.
5. Annual training of special education teachers addressing ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' IEPs.

III. Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by

or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A Sturgis Charter Public School staff member is required to report immediately to the Principal any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not Sturgis Charter Public School staff members, may be made anonymously. Sturgis Charter Public School will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, an Incident Reporting Form, emailing the East Assistant Principal at klombardozzi@sturgischarterschool.org or the West Assistant Principal at jnewcombe@sturgischarterschool.org and drop box in the school where students can report bullying, either anonymously or with their name.

Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. However, Sturgis Charter Public School will make it available in Sturgis Charter Public School's main office, the counseling offices, and the school nurse's office and post it on Sturgis Charter Public School's website.

1. Reporting by Staff

A staff member will report immediately to the Principal when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Principal does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with Sturgis Charter Public School 's policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline. A faculty or staff member will immediately report witnessed bullying of a student or students by a faculty member to the Principal.

2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

Sturgis Charter Public School expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Principal. 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, specifically the attached Incident Reporting Form (see end of document). Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the Principal.

3. Responding to a Report of Bullying or Retaliation

A. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal /Assistant Principal 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. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the target; and altering the

aggressor's schedule and access to the target. The Principal will take additional steps to promote the safety of all parties during the course of an investigation, and afterwards, as necessary.

When necessary, the Principal/Assistant Principal will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a 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. If a faculty member is alleged to have bullied a student, the school will extend appropriate protections and safeguards to the student.

B. Obligation to Notify Others

a. Notice to Parents or Guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the Principal will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Principal contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b. Notice to Another School. If the reported incident involves students from a school other than Sturgis Charter Public School, the Principal 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. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with 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 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.

C. Investigation

The Principal/Assistant Principal will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the Principal /Assistant Principal will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The Principal/Assistant Principal 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, other staff members as determined by the Principal, and in consultation with the school counselors, as appropriate. Given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Principal / Assistant Principal will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Principal/Assistant Principal will maintain a written record of the investigation.
Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school procedures for investigations. If necessary, the Principal/ Assistant Principal will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

D. Determinations

The Principal/ Assistant Principal will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal/ Assistant Principal will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted from participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The Principal/ Assistant Principal will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Principal/ Assistant Principal may choose to consult with the target's or aggressor'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 or resulted from the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional support, including social skills development.

The Principal/ Assistant Principal 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. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Principal 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 directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

E. <u>Responses to Bullying</u>

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Principal/ Assistant Principal determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that Sturgis Charter Public School use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior (M.G.L. c. 71, §37O (d)(v)). Skill building approaches that the Principal may consider include:

- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students,

in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate school personnel
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals
- Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the Bullying Prevention curricula and social skills building activities at home
- Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Principal/ Assistant Principal decides that disciplinary actions are appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Principal/ Assistant Principal, 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 or district's code of conduct.

Based on the investigation, Sturgis will implement appropriate responses. These will be based on the frequency and severity of the incidents. Responses may include educational interventions, relationship building, direct instruction, conferencing, restorative practices, loss of school privileges, suspension, or any other appropriate intervention as determined by school administration.

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

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

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Principal/ Assistant 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/ Assistant Principal 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 implementation of intervention strategies and/or disciplinary action, the Principal/ Assistant Principal 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 will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

IV. Access to Resources and Services

A. <u>Counseling Services</u>

School counseling services are available for both the target and the aggressor. When deemed appropriate, students and their families may be referred to community based agencies, such as Independence House, CIGSYA, DCF, and/or other youth service providers. Sturgis Charter Public School maintains a list of outside agencies and services available for students and families. Parents/Guardians should contact a school counselor at Sturgis Charter Public School to obtain assistance and/or referral to an outside agency.

B. Students with disabilities

When the IEP Team determines a student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team must consider what should be included in the IEP to develop skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

V. Bullying Prevention Approaches

A. Specific Bullying Prevention Approaches Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance, speaking up, and not joining in the laughter, teasing, gossip or rumors
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance
- emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Principal will determine how and when Sturgis Charter Public School will review the Plan with students.

B. General Teaching Approaches that Support Bullying Prevention Efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, students with cultural and linguistic differences, and homeless students
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students

require discipline
- using positive behavioral supports
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors ● using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength
- telling the aggressor, "I don't like what I saw you do" or "I don't like what I heard you say". Do not dismiss what you saw or heard.

The Principal will determine how and when staff will review these teaching approaches.

VI. Collaboration with Families

Each year, the Principal will inform parents or guardians about:

- the bullying prevention curricula used at Sturgis Charter Public School ● how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school plan;
- the dynamics of bullying
- online safety and cyberbullying

In addition, the student-related sections of Sturgis Charter Public School's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan which is provided to parents and guardians at the beginning of each school year, and will be provided to new students who enroll during the course of the school year upon matriculation.

Sturgis administers a student survey at least once every four years to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in schools.

VII. 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, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race; religion; ancestry; national origin; sex; socioeconomic status; academic status; physical appearance; pregnant or parenting status; mental, physical, or developmental disability; or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. 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 Sturgis Charter Public School policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of Sturgis Charter Public School to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or Sturgis Charter Public School policies in response to violent, harmful,

or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

Further Information

For more information regarding problem resolution, to file a claim or for any additional assistance, please consult DESE's Problem Resolution System at https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/

Sturgis Charter Public School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form

I. Reporting

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: _____ (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.)

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

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

☐ Parent ☐ Administrator ☐ Other (specify) _____

4. If student, state your grade: _____

5. 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): _____

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

Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other:_____

Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other:_____

Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other: _____

7. 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 the back if

necessary.