

Bullying - Intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, or written conduct, or an intentional electronic communication that creates a hostile educational environment by substantially interfering with a student's or staff member's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, or with their physical or psychological well-being and is:

- motivated by an actual or perceived personal characteristic including race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, familial status, or physical or mental ability or disability; or
- threatening or seriously intimidating; and,
- occurs on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus; or, substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school or workplace. (HCPSS Policy 1060)

What is the school system's policy on bullying and how do I know if my child is experiencing peer conflict or bullying?

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and nurturing school environment that values diversity and commonality. The Board prohibits acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, because they compromise the learning environment and well-being of students, staff and community.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation (BHI) Reporting Forms are available and accessible in the main office, school counseling office, media center, health room, and can be downloaded from the HCPSS website. Forms should be submitted to an administrator in person, by mail, or electronically. The administrator will investigate within two school days of receiving the form and implement corrective actions as outlined on the BHI Incident School Investigation Form and consistent with HCPSS Student Code of Conduct. Policy 1060 may be found at www.hcpss.org.

Knowing the difference between normal peer conflict and bullying can be challenging.

| Normal Peer Conflict | Bullying |
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| Peers have equal power or are friends with each other | Imbalance of power between peers; not friends |
| Conflict happens occasionally or rarely | Repeated negative actions that happens often |
| May be accidental | Purposefully done |
| Not serious; no threat of harm | Serious with threat of physical or emotional harm |
| Equal emotional reaction from both peers | Strong emotional reaction from victim and little or no emotional reaction from bully |
| Not seeking power or attention and not trying to gain something | Seeking power, control, or material things |
| General remorse - will want to take responsibility | No remorse - bully blames victim; no guilt from bully |
| Effort on both sides to solve the problem | No effort to solve the problem |

*Adapted from *Bully-Proofing Your School*, 2004

Frequently Asked Questions

Will there be any counseling supports within the school for the students?

Support services will be made available to the victim, witness, and bystander and to the student exhibiting bullying behaviors. Supports will be implemented as appropriate based on context, situation, age, and severity.

Can the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation (BHI) Reporting Form be used if the bullying occurs off school grounds?

When bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation interfere with a safe and respectful school climate and workplace, the reporting form should be completed.

Are reports kept in the student's permanent educational record?

In accordance with Maryland law, the BHI Reporting Form is confidential and may not be made a part of the student's permanent educational record.

