

BI-COUNTY COLLABORATIVE
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BULLYING
PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION
PLAN

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BULLYING AND INTERVENTION PLAN
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BI-COUNTY COLLABORATIVE

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

The following Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. The Bi-County Collaborative is committed to working with students, staff, families, and the community to prevent issues of violence. This plan shall apply to students and members of a school staff, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria works, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, and 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 target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

I. LEADERSHIP

A. Plan Development

Through input from the following constituent members, the Bi-County Collaborative is committed to create structures within its programs that promote supportive school environments to reduce barriers to learning. Input from the following members of the Collaborative community was sought in the development of this plan:

- Leadership Team (consisting of):
 - Executive Director
 - Program Directors
 - Director of Clinical Services
 - School Nurse Manager
- Staff (Professional and non professional)
- Parents
- Operating Committee (member Special Education Administrators)
- Out-of-District Placement Coordinators (member school districts)

Input from these constituents was sought at committee meetings, information and planning sessions, a parent focus group meeting, and through a public comment period where the "draft" Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan was posted on Bi-County Collaborative's website for

public viewing and comment. Letters were sent to all parents and staff by mail informing them of the posting of the plan on the website and the call for public comment. Special Education Administrators were notified through email.

Program Directors in conjunction with the Executive Director are responsible for the implementation and oversight of this plan.

B. Assessing Needs and Resources

It is the intention of the Bi-County Collaborative to enhance its capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of this process Bi-County will conduct the following:

◆ The Leadership Team together with the Positive School Climate (Bullying Prevention/Intervention) Committee have identified current programs in place throughout the organization that address the social and behavioral well being of our students. Current programs identified include: *CPI, Health Curriculum (proposed), Project Teammate, Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS), Circles, EduGames*. Various techniques are utilized, including the development of pragmatic skills, social skills, modeling, social stories, and other team building activities that are embedded within programs and services.

◆ The Leadership Team will assess the effectiveness of these programs through the monitoring of bullying incident reporting data at regularly scheduled weekly Leadership Team meetings. The Leadership Team will assess the outcomes of those incidents, and develop/modify/critique the action plan as a result of those incidents that work to prevent reoccurrence.

◆ In addition to the monitoring of bullying incident reporting data, all behavioral incidents reports are reviewed by Program Directors and the Executive Director to identify those behaviors that may be characteristic of bullying. Such incident reports are directed to the Director of Clinical Services, Board Certified Behavior Specialists (BCBAs), and psychological consultants for follow up and to design intervention plans to address those behaviors.

◆ Individuals within the organization have participated in “train the trainers” program conducted by Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Commission (MARC). These individuals include special education teachers, school adjustment counselors, behavior specialist, and Program Directors, and make up the Positive School Climate Committee. These trainers will conduct training sessions for all staff, parents and administrators in bullying prevention and intervention. As embedded members of the organization, these individuals will be key to the organization’s monitoring and observation of issues related to bullying so that interventions and treatment plans may be executed proactively.

◆ Bi-County Collaborative Board of Directors approved “Bullying Prevention and Intervention” policy on September 16, 2010.

The intended outcome of the assessment aspect of this plan is to develop, revise, and/or implement policies and procedures to promote a positive school climate. The timeline for completion of assessment is Sept.-December, 2010. The person(s) responsible is the Bi-County Collaborative Leadership Team.

C. Planning and Oversight

If a reported incident of bullying occurs the following actions will be taken.

- a. Staff will report in writing any bullying incident to their Program Director or designee using the Bi-County Collaborative *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form*.
- b. The report will be reviewed and signed off by the Program Director and Executive Director.
- c. Tracking of reported incidents will be conducted by the Program Directors with noted attention given to targets and aggressors.
- d. Analysis of bullying incidents and their resulting outcomes will be conducted by the Bi-County Collaborative Leadership Team as incidents occur, as well as in weekly Leadership Team meetings. During the review process consideration will be given to the need for action and prevention plans and/or supports for the needs of targets and aggressors.
- e. Professional development will be provided by Bi-County Collaborative's Positive School Climate Committee and will include positive school climate and bullying identification and prevention techniques. Information will be shared with all staff when they convene in September of each school year. Subsequent trainings will take place either in further staff meetings or classroom meetings.
- f. With input from trained staff, the Leadership Team will identify age and ability appropriate curriculum by January 2011 with implementation to begin/continue immediately thereafter.
- g. Should the development or implementation of any portion of this plan affect the Board approved Bullying Prevention and Intervention policy the Executive Director will bring it to the attention of the Board of Directors for consideration.
- h. As a result of the bullying plan and policy, the student handbook will be modified by June 2011 and posted on Bi-County Collaborative's website.
- i. The Positive School Climate Committee will identify parent training opportunities when it convenes in December 2010.

D. Priority Statements

The Bi-County Collaborative expects that all members of the Bi-County community treat each other in a civil manner with respect for individual differences. Bi-County is committed to providing all students and staff 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.

At Bi-County Collaborative, we understand that members of certain student groups such as gay/lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, homeless and our students with disabilities may be more

vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing in our own programs or in our host school environments. Bi-County Collaborative will take steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations and provide its students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Bi-County Collaborative will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, on school transportation, 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.

II. TRAINING and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual Staff Training

Bi-County Collaborative will provide annual training on bullying prevention and intervention to all staff at the mandatory Orientation meeting held in September of each year. This training will include, but not be limited to:

- Review of the Bi-County Collaborative's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Plan
 - Specifically including: procedures for reporting and analyzing bullying incidents, steps Program Directors will take upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and the location of the policy on the Collaborative's website
- Overview of bullying prevention curricula

Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be trained by the Program Director or by a trained member of the Collaborative.

B. Ongoing professional development.

Professional development will be offered to staff to build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. This training will be site based and delivered through staff meetings and/or classroom meetings by trained staff members who received extensive training through MARC (Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Commission). The content of the trainings will include the following:

- ◆ Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying.
- ◆ Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents.
- ◆ Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take

- place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying.
- ◆ 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.
 - ◆ Information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying; and
 - ◆ Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individual Education Program (IEP)s, with particular focus on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder or whose disability affects social skills development. Program Directors, in conjunction with the Out-of-District Placement Coordinators, will ensure and be responsible to ensure this topic is addressed by the Team and changes are made to the Individual Education Program (IEP) as appropriate and in accordance with input from the IEP Team.

C. Written notice to staff

The Board policy on Bullying Prevention and Intervention along with this plan will be available to Bi-County Collaborative staff on the Collaborative's website. Collaborative staff will be notified as such during the annual training to be held at the beginning of each school year.

III. ACCESS to RESOURCES and SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families and others are addressed. If a student has been identified as a target or as an aggressor the following supports will be made available.

A. Identifying Resources

Bi-County Collaborative educational programs offer support to students in a protected environment with small class sizes (4-10 students) with a low student to teacher ratio. All staff members are highly trained to work with students with disabilities. In addition to teaching and therapy staff, students also have access to counseling through the Collaborative's school adjustment counselors. Many students who attend Bi-County programs also receive services through private agencies outside of the Collaborative. Collaborative staff members routinely work with families to solicit releases to directly communicate with outside providers and with this authorization communication is established between the school program and outside providers. Should a student require additional counseling or agency resources Bi-County staff members work closely with families to identify need, and to provide access to community resources.

- Bi-County Collaborative has identified resources for families of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder or any disability which are available to staff through their Program Directors.

- Built into Bi-County Collaborative programs are home visits, which may be conducted if parents need additional supports/information.
- Also available to parents, through District request are extensive home services offered through our Applied Behavior Analysis Home Services program.
- Program Directors and/or School Adjustment Counselors work with families to identify needs and to make connections to outside agencies, either directly or through the sending school district.

B. Counseling and other intervention services.

As indicated above, counseling and positive behavior support services are available for all students at the Bi-County Collaborative. Should behavioral incident reports or bullying incident reports indicate a need for further counseling supports, the Program Director will make an immediate referral to one of the Bi-County school adjustment counselors and/or behavior specialists. Additionally, positive behavioral support plans may be developed or modified based upon incident reporting through the intervention support of the Program Director. It is at the discretion of the Program Director, teaching staff, and school adjustment counselors as well as behavior specialists to develop a plan for involving and providing information to parents about bullying behaviors and steps they may take outside the school day.

- Should acts of bullying occur, staff will identify common times students are together and work to separate students whenever possible.
- The identified aggressor will receive increased adult supervision.
- Program Directors will refer students to counseling as appropriate.
- School Adjustment Counselors, along with Program Directors will work with families to identify an action plan with a built in re-evaluation period.
- The need for a behavior management plan will be assessed and implemented as needed.
- If the bullying behavior becomes a pattern, it will be addressed in the student's Individual Education Program (IEP).

C. Students with disabilities

As a special education service provider, the Bi-County Collaborative staff is sensitive to the needs of its students and families. Program Directors have made available to staff the DESE *Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2011-1: Bullying Prevention and Intervention*. Together with the Out-of-District Coordinators, Program Directors will direct the IEP Team to consider the student's social skills and identify behaviors that affect the student's learning, the learning of others, and the student's ability to interact with others in positive ways.

During the evaluation process, the IEP Team will gather data and information relative to a student's social skills. That data will be used as a source for discussion of potential student supports.

D. Referral to outside services

- Staff will refer students to an outside agency as warranted. The determination will be made on an individual basis.

IV. ACADEMIC and NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

- ◆ By January 2011, the Leadership Team in conjunction with the Positive School Climate Committee will assess current instruction on bullying prevention in each grade and begin implementation promptly.
- ◆ Self-advocacy will be taught to all students at all levels to know their disability and how to have a voice.

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;
- 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; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Each year, classroom staff will instruct students in age appropriate and developmentally appropriate language to recognize bullying and to take the necessary steps to respond to and report to such acts.

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;
- 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.

V. **POLICIES and PROCEDURES for REPORTING and RESPONDING to BULLYING and RETALIATION**

A. **Reporting bullying or retaliation.**

1. Reporting by staff. It is the Bi-County Collaborative's expectation that the host school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, contracted staff, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional, shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation s/he has witnessed or become aware of to the School Principal and/or Program Director or designee. The Program Director or designee shall immediately inform the Executive Director of Bi-County Collaborative, School Principal or designee of the host school, and Special Education Administrator or designee from the sending school district.

2. Reporting by students, parents or guardians, and others. Bi-County Collaborative expects students, parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Program Director or designee. An individual may make an anonymous report of bullying or retaliation using the procedure at the host school or that of the public day school. However, no disciplinary action may 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.

B. **Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation.**

1. Safety. Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Program Director or designee 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 Program Director or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. Additionally, the Program Director or designee 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.

2. Obligations to notify others.

a. Notice to parents or guardians.

The Program Director or designee will notify the parent/guardian of the alleged target and the alleged aggressor of a report of bullying or retaliation once a pre-investigation of events has been conducted. If either the alleged target or alleged aggressor attends the host school, the Program Director or designee will notify the School Principal of the host school, and Special Education Administrator or designee of the sending school district. If the alleged target and alleged aggressor attend different schools, the Program Director or designee receiving the report shall inform the Program Director of the other program or Principal of the other student's school, who shall notify the student's parents of the report and procedures.

b. Notice to another school district.

If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one school district and Bi-County Collaborative is the first to be informed of the bullying or retaliation, then the Program Director or designee must, consistent with state and federal law, promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school district or school so that both may take appropriate action.

c. Notice to law enforcement.

At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, or during or after an investigation, if the Program Director or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that the incident may involve criminal conduct, Program Director or designee will notify the local law enforcement agency. In addition, if an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in a local school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school or collaborative school, Program Director or designee will notify local law enforcement if s/he believes that criminal charges may be pursued.

C. Investigation.

The Program Director or designee in collaboration with host school administration, as warranted, shall investigate promptly a report of bullying or retaliation, giving consideration to all the circumstances at hand, including the nature of allegations and ages of students involved. The following are general guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. The guidelines will be adapted as necessary to respond appropriately to the complaint.

Pre-Investigation: Even before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, Collaborative personnel in collaboration with host school administration will consider whether

there is a need to take immediate steps to support the alleged target and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. In taking any such action, however, the rights of both the alleged target and alleged aggressor must be considered.

Written statement of the complaint: The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gathering information from the complainant, including such matters as: what specifically happened, who committed the alleged acts, who was present or may have information about the events, when the events occurred (date, time of day), and where the events occurred.

It is helpful to have these facts in writing. If age appropriate, the complainant may be asked to put the complaint in writing and to sign and date it. If the complainant cannot or chooses not to write a complaint, the investigator will record the allegations, read them to the complainant to confirm accuracy, and ask the complainant to sign the document. If the complainant cannot or chooses not to sign, the investigator may sign and date the document her/himself.

Interviews: Once the allegations of the complainant are established, the investigator will gather other evidence, which often involves interviews of the alleged aggressor and/or other witnesses. If appropriate, the investigator should remind the alleged aggressor and witnesses that retaliation against persons whom they believe might have reported the incidents or cooperated with the investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Confidentiality: The confidentiality of the complainant and the other witnesses will be maintained to the extent practicable given the Collaborative's obligation to investigate and address the matter. The names of individuals involved will not be released to other parties.

D. Determinations.

The Program Director or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Program Director 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 Program Director or designee 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 Program Director or designee may choose to consult with the students' 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.

The Program Director 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. 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 Program Director 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 directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

E. Response to bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the Program Director or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district 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 Program Director or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school’s/district’s anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school adjustment counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

3. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Program Director 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 student’s individual behavior plan and/or Individual Education Program (IEP).

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 Program Director or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Program Director or designee 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 Program Director 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 Program Director 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 Program Director or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

VI. COLLABORATION with FAMILIES

- A. Parent education and resources. Bi-County Collaborative parents will be eligible to attend local trainings through their sending districts as sponsored by the local PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations. In addition, Bi-County Collaborative parents will be notified by classroom teachers when students are receiving curriculum instructions around this topic. Parent trainings will also be offered by the Bi-County Collaborative and individual parent trainings will be provided by Bi-County Collaborative on a case specific basis.
- B. Notification requirements. Each year at the beginning of the school year either through the registration packet or the student handbook, Bi-County Collaborative will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety, as well as the student-related sections of the Plan and the Bi-County Collaborative's Internet and Network Acceptable Use Policy. Bi-County Collaborative will post the Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING and RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored, on school transportation, 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 a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Perpetrator, a student or 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 who engages in bullying or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, and 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 target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 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 student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of 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, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. 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, color, sex, religion, national origin, or 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, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.