



## **POLICY AGAINST BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of Florida A&M University Developmental Research School (**FAMU DRS**) that all of its students and school employees have an educational setting that is safe, secure, and free from harassment and bullying of any kind. The district will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any type. Conduct that constitutes bullying and harassment, as defined herein, is prohibited.

### **a. Definitions**

**Bullying, including cyberbullying**, means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It is further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student or adult, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

1. Teasing
2. Social Exclusion
3. Threat
4. Intimidation
5. Stalking
6. Physical violence
7. Theft
8. Sexual, religious, or racial harassment
9. Public or private humiliation
10. Destruction of property

**Cyberbullying** means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes, but is not 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 system, photoelectronic system, or photooptical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or 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 the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying also includes 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 the definition of bullying.



**Harassment** means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

1. Places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property;
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits; or
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

**Bullying and harassment** also encompasses:

1. Retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.
2. Perpetuation of conduct listed in the definition of bullying or harassment by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause emotional or physical harm to a student or school employee by:
  - a. Incitement or coercion
  - b. Accessing or knowingly and willingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system
  - c. Acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying or harassment

**Cyberstalking** as defined in s. 784.048(1)(d), F.S., means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

## **b. Expectations**

FAMU DRS expects students to conduct themselves as appropriate for their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment.

The school district believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents/legal guardians, staff, and community members producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of students, staff, and community members. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers will demonstrate appropriate behavior, treat others with civility and respect, and refuse to tolerate bullying or



harassment. Students will obey constituted authority within the school environment including but not limited to: teachers, administrators, staff, SRO and others deemed in authority and respond appropriately to those holding such authority.

Bullying or harassment of student or school employee is prohibited:

- During any school district program or activity;
- During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity;
- On school-sponsored transportation;
- Through the use of data or electronic communication that is accessed through a district owned or operated computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic device. The physical location or time access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense to a disciplinary action initiated under this policy. The application of this policy shall be consistent with the standards that exist under the Constitution of the United States of America; or
- Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, **if the bullying substantially interferes with or limits the victim's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school or substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.** This paragraph does not require a school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program. Pursuant to section 1006.147, Florida Statutes, nothing in this policy shall be interpreted or relied upon, or establish an expectation that, the school district will staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

Student rights shall be explained as outlined in the Student Code of Student. All students shall be familiar with and understand the following:

### 1. **Respect for Persons and Property**

- Students have the right to use school property in a manner approved by the school center.
- Students have the responsibility to respect the rights of others and not to interfere with their learning.
- Students have the right to use their personal property in a manner approved by the school.
- Students have the responsibility to respect and adhere to the rules and regulations of the school system.
- Students have the right to privacy consistent with applicable laws.
- Students have the responsibility to report evidence of an illegal act or violation of the code.
- Students have the right to be respected and accepted as individuals. Students have the responsibility to exhibit respect for themselves and others by dressing appropriately and in accordance with the adopted dress code, recognizing the role that appropriate dress and respect for self and others has on orderly learning environment.



## **2. Knowledge and Observation of Rules and Conduct**

Students have the right and are expected to know the rules and regulations regarding their conduct. They also have the opportunity for input in the development of these rules and regulations. Students have the responsibility to follow the rules and regulations of the school. Students also have the right to be assured of a school environment, which does not jeopardize their safety, health or welfare. Students have the responsibility to follow the rules and regulations of the school center so as not to jeopardize the safety, health and welfare of others.

## **3. Respect for Authority**

Students shall abide by the standards of conduct established in Student Code of Conduct this policy, and by rules established by the school administrators and classroom teachers, which rules shall be consistent with the Student Code of Conduct and applicable law. Students who do not conduct themselves in accordance with such policies and rules are subject to discipline in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **4. Student Recognition**

All administrators, faculty, and staff, in collaboration with parents, students, and community members, will incorporate systemic methods for student and staff recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success, as seen in the school's recognition plan or school rules.

## **5. Sanctions and Due Process**

Proper prevention and intervention steps shall be taken based on the level of severity of the infraction as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

### **c. Consequences for a student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution who commits an act of bullying or harassment**

Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all of the facts and surrounding circumstances. The physical location or time of access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have committed an act of bullying or harassment may be disciplined in accordance with district policies, procedures, and agreements. Additionally, egregious acts of harassment by certified educators may result in a sanction against an educator's state issued certificate. (See State Board of Education Rule 6B-1.006, FAC., *The Principles of Professional Conduct of the*



*Education Profession in Florida.*) Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer, found to have committed an act of bullying or harassment shall be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.

**d. Consequences for a student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution who is found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another of an act of bullying or harassment**

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another as a means of bullying or harassment range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may be disciplined in accordance with district policies, procedures, and agreements. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer, found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.

**e. Receiving reports of an alleged act of bullying or harassment, including provisions that permit a person to anonymously report such an act**

At FAMU DRS, the principal or the principal's designee is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. All other members of the school community, including students, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy anonymously or in-person to the principal or principal's designee.

The principal of each school building in the district shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents/legal guardians, how a report of bullying or harassment may be filed either in-person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon. The victim of bullying or harassment, anyone who witnessed the bullying or harassment, and anyone who has credible information that an act of bullying or harassment has taken place may file a report of bullying or harassment. A school employee, school volunteer, student, parent/legal guardian or other persons who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying or harassment to the appropriate school official and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in the district policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying or harassment will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments.



Any written or oral reporting of an act of bullying or harassment shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s). Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

**f. Procedure for the prompt investigation**

In the FAMU DRS district, the **Procedures for Investigating Bullying and/or Harassment** include:

- The principal or designee selects a designee(s), employed by the school, trained in investigative procedures to initiate the investigation. The designee(s) may not be the accused perpetrator (harasser or bully) or victim.
- Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses are conducted privately, separately, and are confidential. Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses) will be interviewed separately and at no time will the alleged perpetrator and victim be interviewed together.
- The investigator shall collect and evaluate the facts including, but not limited to:
  - o Description of incident(s) including nature of the behavior; context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred, etc.;
  - o How often the conduct occurred;
  - o Whether there were past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior;
  - o The relationship between the parties involved;
  - o The characteristics of parties involved (i.e., grade, age, etc.);
  - o The identity and number of individuals who participated in bullying or harassing behavior;
  - o Where the alleged incident(s) occurred;
  - o Whether the conduct adversely affected the student's education or educational environment;
  - o Whether the alleged victim felt or perceived an imbalance of power as a result of the reported incident; and
  - o The date, time, and method in which the parents/legal guardians of all parties involved were contacted.
- Whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances and includes:
  - o Recommended remedial steps necessary to stop the bullying and/or harassing behavior; and
  - o A written final report to the principal.
- The maximum of 10 school days shall be the limit for the initial filing of incidents and completion of the investigative procedural steps. The highest level of confidentiality possible will be upheld regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of bullying and/or harassment, and the investigative procedures that follow.



**g. Investigation Process**

A principal or designee will assign a designee(s) that is trained in investigative procedures to initiate an investigation of whether an act of bullying or harassment is within the scope of the school district.

The trained designee(s) will provide a report on results of investigation with recommendations for the principal to make a determination if an act of bullying or harassment falls within the scope of the district.

- If it is within scope of district, move to Procedures for Investigating Bullying and/or Harassment.
- If it is outside scope of district, and determined a criminal act, refer to appropriate law enforcement.
- If it is outside scope of district, and determined not a criminal act, inform parents/legal guardians of all students involved.

**h. Immediate notification to the parents/legal guardians**

The principal, or designee, shall promptly **report via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of bullying or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved** on the same day an investigation of the incident(s) has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

If the bullying or harassment incident results in the perpetrator being charged with a crime, the principal, or designee, shall by telephone or in writing by first class mail, inform parents/legal guardian of the victim(s) involved in the bullying or harassment incident about the Unsafe School Choice Option (No Child Left Behind, Title IX, Part E, Subpart 2, Section 9532) that states “...a student who becomes a victim of a violent criminal offense, as determined by State law, while in or on the grounds of a public elementary school or secondary school that the student attends, be allowed to attend a safe public elementary school or secondary school within the local educational agency, including a public charter school.”

Once the investigation has been completed and it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, all appropriate local law enforcement agencies will be notified by telephone and/or in writing.



**i. Refer for Counseling:**

A district referral procedure will establish a protocol for intervening when bullying or harassment is suspected or when a bullying or harassment incident is reported. The procedure shall include:

- A process by which the teacher or parent/legal guardian may request informal consultation with school staff (specialty staff, e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, etc.) to determine the severity of concern and appropriate steps to address the concern (the involved students' parents or legal guardian may be included).
- A referral process to provide professional assistance or services that includes:
  - A process by which school personnel or parent/legal guardian may refer a student to the school intervention team (or equivalent school-based team with a problem-solving focus) for consideration of appropriate services. (Parent or legal guardian involvement is required at this point.)
  - If a formal discipline report or formal complaint is made, the principal or designee must refer the student(s) to the school intervention team for determination of counseling support and interventions. (Parent or legal guardian involvement is required at this point.)
- A school-based component to address intervention and assistance as determined appropriate by the intervention team that includes:
  - Counseling and support to address the needs of the victims of bullying or harassment;
  - Research-based counseling/interventions to address the behavior of the students who bully and harass others (e.g., empathy training, anger management); and/or
  - Research-based counseling/interventions which includes assistance and support provided to parents/legal guardians, if deemed necessary or appropriate.

**j. Discipline Data**

The school district will utilize Florida's School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data, which includes **bullying** and **harassment** as incident codes as well as **bullying-related** as a related element code. The SESIR definition of bullying is systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation. The SESIR definition of harassment is any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct that 1) places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, 2) has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or



benefits, or 3) has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school including any course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such a person and serves no legitimate purpose.

If a **bullying** or **harassment** incident occurs then it will be reported in SESIR with either the bullying or harassment code. If the bullying or harassment results in any of the following SESIR incidents the incident will be coded appropriately using the relevant incident code AND the related element code entitled **bullying-related**. Those incidents are:

- Alcohol
- Arson
- Battery
- Breaking and Entering
- Disruption on Campus
- Drug Sale/Distribution Excluding Alcohol
- Drug Use/Possession Excluding Alcohol
- Fighting
- Homicide
- Kidnapping
- Larceny/Theft
- Robbery
- Sexual Battery
- Sexual Harassment
- Sexual Offenses
- Threat/Intimidation
- Trespassing
- Tobacco
- Vandalism
- Weapons Possession
- Other Major (Other major incidents that do not fit within the other definitions)

Discipline and referral data will be recorded in Student Discipline/Referral Action Report and Automated Student Information System.

The district will provide bullying or harassment incident, discipline, and referral data to the Florida Department of Education in the format requested, through Surveys 2, 3 and 5 from Education Information and Accountability Services, and at designated dates provided by the Department. Data reporting on bullying, harassment, unsubstantiated bullying, unsubstantiated harassment, sexual harassment and threat/intimidation incidents as well as any bullying-related incidents that have as a basis sex, race or disability should include the incident basis. Victims of these offenses should also have the incident basis (sex, race or disability) noted in their student record.



**k. Procedure to provide instruction**

The district ensures that schools sustain healthy, positive, and safe learning environments for all students. It is important to change the social climate of the school and the social norms with regards to bullying or harassment. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment – teachers, administrators, counselors, school nurses, other non-teaching staff (such as bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and/or school librarians), parents/legal guardians, and students.

Students, parents/legal guardians, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers shall be given instruction at a minimum on an annual basis on the district's Policy and Regulations against bullying and harassment. The instruction shall include evidence-based methods of preventing bullying and harassment, as well as how to effectively identify and respond to bullying or harassment in schools.

The FAMU DRS School District provides the following list of authorized programs including, but not limited to: *(Programs listed below are provided as examples only. Inclusion of programs within this list does not imply endorsement or promotion by the Florida Department of Education. Specific programs authorized for use in your schools will need to be determined by the Superintendent and/or appropriate school district staff.)*

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- American Psychological Association
- Randy Sprick's Safe and Civil Schools
- Back Off Bully
- SERAPH
- University of South Florida Student Support Services

Decisions to include additional instructional programs or activities, not previously listed within this policy, will be made on a case-by-case basis and authorized by individual school principals.

**l. Procedure for regularly reporting**

The principal or designee shall by telephone and/or in writing report the occurrence of any incident of bullying or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved on the same day an investigation of the incident has been initiated. According to the level of infraction, parents/legal guardians will be notified by telephone and/or writing of actions being taken to protect the child; the frequency of notification will depend on the seriousness of the bullying or harassment incident. Notification must be



consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

**m. Procedure for Publicizing**

At the beginning of each school year, the Superintendent or designee shall, in writing, inform school staff, parents/legal guardians, or other persons responsible for the welfare of a student of the district's student safety and violence prevention policy.

FAMU DRS shall provide notice to students and staff of this policy through appropriate references in the code of student conduct and employee handbooks, and/or through other reasonable means. The Superintendent shall also make all contractors contracting with the district aware of this policy.

Each school principal shall develop an annual process for discussing the school district policy on bullying and harassment with students in a student assembly or other reasonable format. Reminders of the policy and bullying or harassment prevention messages such as posters and signs will be displayed around each school and on the district school buses.