



HARMONY DC PCS - SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

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Bullying Prevention Policy – Freedom from Bullying & Cyber-bullying

Harmony DC defines bullying as any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

1. May be based on a youth's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, place or residence or business, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a youth's association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and
2. Can reasonably be predicted to:
 - a. Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to their person or property;
 - b. Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth's physical or mental health;
 - c. Substantially interfere with the youth's academic performance or attendance; or
 - d. Substantially interfere with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by an agency, educational institution, or grantee.

Additionally, Harmony DC is committed to making every school a safe and welcome space for your child. Families are critical players in these efforts.

One of the most proactive measures families can take to shield their children from bullying is to talk to them early and openly about what it means to bully or to be bullied. Doing so not only ensures that you and your child maintain open lines of communication, but also reinforces the importance of speaking up about problems at school.

If you suspect your child may be bullied at school, don't be afraid to ask them about it. Make sure to tell your child that you are there to help and you believe what he or she has to say.

If you think your child is bullied or is bullying others, it is important to discuss the behavior and make it clear that bullying is taken very seriously. At the same time, you may want to work with your child to understand some of the reasons behind the bullying.

If you witness cyberbullying (use of the Internet and related technologies to bully) that includes threats of violence, child pornography or sexually explicit materials, stalking, or hate crimes you should consider reporting the incident to law enforcement. Cyberbullying also can create classroom disruptions and lead to in-person bullying. School should be a safe, welcoming environment for your child. If you feel that your child is unsafe or is being bullied at school, contact your child's teacher and the principal. Harmony DC's Bullying Prevention Policy is enforced:

- On school property
- This includes electronic communication on school property and electronic communication with school property
- At school sponsored functions, events, or activities
- On school transportation and on transportation sponsored by the school
- Through electronic communications to the extent that it interferes with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school

Reporting Procedures

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced bullying or cyber-bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to the Principal, a teacher, counselor, or other school

employee. A report may be made anonymously, orally or in writing, but note no formal response will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Investigation of Report

The Assistant Principal or the Principal investigate the concern and determine whether the allegations in the report, if substantiated, would constitute prohibited harassment, and if so proceed under that policy instead. See Amended “Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation” portion of this Handbook. The administrator shall conduct a timely investigation based on reports of policy violations and complaints of bullying or retaliation. Additional investigation may be conducted based on the allegations in the report, and shall take prompt interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, when appropriate.

The investigator shall prepare a written report of the investigation, including a determination of whether bullying occurred, and send a copy to the Principal and Board of Trustees. If the results of an investigation indicated that bullying occurred, the school shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The School may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the School concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying as defined above.

Confidentiality

To the greatest extent possible, the School shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation. Resolutions will be shared on a “need to know” basis. Due to privacy laws, complainants may not receive detailed information on the intervention that took place.

Appeal

A student, parent/guardian, child advocate, or anyone who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the school’s grievance process.

Level One:

- Appeal must be made in writing within 10 working days of an initial investigation to the Principal unless the higher-level authority sets forth those circumstances in writing, and the additional time is not to exceed 15 days
- Reason for appeal must be clearly stated and additional evidence or documentation is required at this time

The Principal will conclude a second investigation if necessary within 20 working days of receiving the written appeal. If additional time is needed to complete a thorough investigation, the Principal will notify the student, parent/guardian, or child advocate and provide a realistic resolution timeline. Level Two:

- If the student, parent/guardian, or child advocate is not satisfied with the outcome of their Level One grievance, they may file a final written appeal within 10 working days to Harmony’s Board of Trustees at board@harmonydc.org. The Board member will collect relevant information from all parties and review the record of previous actions.
- If in the judgement of the Board member, the appeal and record of previous actions have resolved the grievance or do not warrant further action, they will notify the student, parent/guardian, child advocate and the respondent within 10 working days of receiving the written appeal. If the Board member’s determination is that the grievance does not

warrant further action, the decision is final.

- If the Board member believes the grievance warrants further action, he or she will make a final decision or convene a grievance panel to conduct a hearing.
- Hearings will be conducted in a timely fashion, not to exceed 30 working days after the written appeal was submitted.

**The party not satisfied with the outcome shall be informed of his/her right to seek further redress under the Human Rights Act.

See “Parent and Student Complaints and Concerns” section of Handbook for additional appeal processes.

Retaliation

Harmony DC Public Charter School prohibits retaliation against a student alleged to have experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, or another student who, in good faith, makes a report, serves as a witness, or otherwise participates in an investigation. Also, retaliation is prohibited against the (1) victim of bullying, (2) a witness of the bullying, (3) a person who reports bullying, or (4) anyone else with reliable information that a person has been subject to bullying.

Bullying Consequences

Harmony DC recognizes that for sanctions to be an effective component of a bullying prevention plan, they must be applied consistently, fairly, and equitably. To this end, Harmony DC shall ensure that staff follow these guidelines as closely as possible, while allowing for flexibility to adapt sanctions to individual contexts. Furthermore, to ensure equitability in applying sanctions, measures will be applied on a graduated basis determined by the nature of the offense, the disciplinary history of the youth involved, and the age and developmental status of the youth involved. Responses to incidents of bullying may include, but are not limited to:

- Reprimand, peer mediation, counseling by administrator, or conference with parent and principal
- Withdrawal of Harmony DC privileges. E.g. Extracurricular activities, clubs, sports, field trips, etc.
- Ban or suspension from using Harmony DC facilities
- In school suspension for up to five days
- Out of school suspension up to five days
- Expulsion upon Discipline Committee Review hearing

Sanctions will be applied within one day of the determination that an incident of bullying has occurred, unless an appeal of the incident by the accused bully has been received in that time as described in the Appeals section of this policy. To ensure that single incidents of bullying do not become recurring problems, Harmony DC will always refer victims and bullies involved in an incident to the appropriate services in addition to imposing sanctions on bullies.

Harmony DC does not endorse the use of punitive strategies associated with “zero-tolerance” policies when applying sanctions to an incident of bullying.