

PDE, Office for Safe Schools  
Bullying Prevention Updates  
Mary Dolan  
c-mdolan@pa.gov

**Bullying Prevention and the Office for Safe Schools**

The Office for Safe Schools is committed to assisting schools with their efforts to create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments. Through professional development opportunities, webinars, grant funding, regional school climate support and technical assistance, the Office is supporting efforts to prevent and address bullying behavior in the schools.

**PDE, Bullying Prevention Website**

The PDE's website contains downloadable resources to support bullying prevention in schools and communities. Please visit <http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Pages/Bullying-Prevention.aspx> to access helpful resources such as the *PA Bullying Prevention Toolkit*.

**Bullying Prevention Consultation Line**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office for Safe Schools has implemented the PA Bullying Prevention Consultation Line. The Bullying Prevention Consultation Line is a toll-free number to allow individuals experiencing chronic and unresolved bullying to discuss effective strategies and available resources to deal with school-based bullying. This supportive resource has been developed in collaboration with the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP), and is available at no cost to students, parents/guardians, and school districts across the state. Users can leave a message 24 hour a day, seven days a week, and will be returned Monday-Friday during normal business hours. The Consultation Line number is 1-866-716-0424.

**The PA Bullying Prevention Partnership**

Under the leadership of the Office for Safe Schools, representatives from agencies, organizations, communities and schools across the Commonwealth have joined together to form the PA Bullying Prevention Partnership. Through productive collaboration, the mission of the Pennsylvania Bullying Prevention Partnership is to communicate information and resources to schools, families and communities, which will advance efforts to create, transform and sustain safe and supportive learning environments. The PA BP Partnership is currently examining youth engagement and school climate policy as they relate to bullying prevention efforts in the schools.

**The PA Bullying Prevention Support Plan**

The development of the PA Bullying Prevention Support Plan for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office for Safe Schools was completed in October 2013. The purpose of the plan is to identify needs and provide recommendations which will best support efforts to reduce bullying behavior in schools and to support the implementation, sustainability and fidelity of research-based or evidence-based bullying prevention efforts in Pennsylvania's schools.

Through researching the needs of the schools and examining contributions of key partners in bullying prevention over the past decade, six core themes emerged and serve as the framework for the six ***PA Bullying Prevention Support Plan Recommendations***.

1. Demonstrate collaborative efforts to expand and sustain bullying prevention education and efforts to support safe and secure learning environments.
2. Build upon the foundation of over one decade of research-based bullying prevention efforts.
3. Increase capacity of the PA Bullying Prevention Network (Network) to serve Pennsylvania's schools.
4. Continue and Expand Bullying Prevention Education for Schools, Communities and Future Educators.
5. Utilize Data to Identify and Address Bullying Prevention Needs.
6. Integrate Bullying Prevention Efforts with School Climate Initiatives.

### **PA School Climate Surveys**

The Office for Safe Schools of the Pennsylvania Department of Education announces the release of school climate surveys to all school entities in the Commonwealth. The surveys are intended to provide schools with formative and summative climate data for use with needs assessments, program development and short and long term planning. The domains measured by the surveys include: Social Emotional Learning, Student Support, High Expectations and Academic Rigor/Challenge, and Safe and Respectful School Climate.

The surveys and their results are located on a secure website and are completely confidential. Survey data will be the sole property of the school district. No results will be reviewed by the PA Department of Education for any reason. The surveys are completely free to all participating school entities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. School entities can choose to administer any and all of the available surveys. Use of the surveys is at the discretion of each school entity. Surveys are available for administration year round to assist school entities with ease of use and planning of administration. Surveys are available for grades 3-5, 6-8, 9-12, staff and faculty, parents and community members.

For more information, please visit the PDE, Office for Safe Schools website <http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Pages/default.aspx#.Va6I0FTD9wE> or contact Pamela Emery at [c-pemery@pa.gov](mailto:c-pemery@pa.gov).

### **School Climate Leadership Initiative**

The PDE Office of Safe School's *School Climate Leadership Initiative* (SCLI) is a new effort focused on building capacity for school climate leadership in Commonwealth through the establishment of networked learning communities focused on building safer, more supportive schools. This year, SCLI will provide an opportunity for individuals to be trained in the *National School Climate Center's (NSCC) School Climate Improvement Process*. Trainer candidates, from each of Pennsylvania's Intermediate Units, are currently participating in NSCC's online learning modules, in-person trainings and ongoing coaching. These trainer candidates, known as School Climate Regional Coordinators (SCRCs), will be working with at least 2 building level school climate improvement teams (newly formed or existing teams/committees).

Schools have many initiatives, curricula, programs and strategies in place which address school climate improvement. However, they often report a need to identify and utilize an organized process (best practice) to do this important work. When a strategic process is not utilized the result can be another "program de jour" based on the reaction to data or an isolated incident.

The NSCC *School Climate Improvement Process* is not a program and most importantly involves the five following stages:

- **Stage one** or "Preparation" assists schools in forming a team or examining an existing committee whose focus is school climate improvement and obtaining buy-in from staff to complete the process from start to finish.
- **Stage two** or "Evaluation" helps schools examine existing data or collect new data which will help to identify needs as they relate to school climate. This can include data such as SAP data, PA Youth Survey Data, PA School Climate Survey data and incidents reported on the Safe Schools Annual report.
- **Stage three** or "Action Planning" assists schools with aligning strategies to address identified needs.
- **Stage four** or "Implementation" involves the actual implementation of strategies listed on the action plan.
- **Stage five** or "Re-evaluation" consists of collecting and examining current data to determine progress made or adjustments needed to existing strategies.

The *NSCC School Climate Leadership Certification* will provide SCRCs with a high level of understanding of these 5 stages and position them to provide schools with the support, expertise and guidance needed to create and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment. For more information, please contact Stacie Molnar-Main at [c-smolnarm@pa.gov](mailto:c-smolnarm@pa.gov).

### **Bullying Prevention Legislation**

In 2008, the Public School Code of 1949 was amended (24 PS 13-1303.1-A) and requires schools to develop a policy relating to bullying. The following outlines the requirements of Pennsylvania's legislation.

- Incorporate the policy into the code of student conduct.
- The policy shall delineate disciplinary consequences for bullying.
- Identify the appropriate school staff person to receive reports of incidents of alleged bullying.

"Bullying" shall mean an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, or a series of acts that:

- Occurs in a school setting\*

\* *"School setting" shall mean in the school, on school setting grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop or at any activity sponsored, supervise or sanctioned by the school.*

- Is severe, persistent or pervasive;
- Is directed at another student or students; and
- Has the effect of doing any of the following:
  1. Substantially interferes with a student's education
  2. Creates a threatening environment; or
  3. Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school

A school entity is not prohibited from defining bullying in such a way as to encompass acts that occur outside a school setting, if those acts

- are severe, persistent or pervasive;
- are directed at another student or students; and
- Have the effect of doing any of the following:
  1. Substantially interferes with a student's education;
  2. Creates a threatening environment; or
  3. Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school

When a school entity reports acts of bullying in its School Safety report it shall report the incidents that qualify as bullying under the its adopted definition.

The policy must be available:

- On its publicly accessible internet website (if available).
- In every classroom.

- The policy must be posted at a prominent location within each school building.
- The policy and procedures for reporting bullying incidents must be reviewed with students within ninety (90) days after their adoption and thereafter at least once each school year.
- A copy of the bullying policy must be submitted annually to the department.
- It should include information related to the development and implementation of any bullying prevention, intervention and education programs.
- The policy will be submitted as part of the Annual School Safety Report.
- The policy must be reviewed every three (3) years.
- The policy may provide for research-based prevention, intervention and education programs.

### **Cyber Harassment of Children**

On July 10, 2015 Governor Wolf signed PA House Bill 229 into law.

HB 229 is now Act 26 of 2015. Act 26 amends Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in assault, further providing for the offense of harassment.

Act 26:

1. Defines cyber harassment of a child and makes it a crime.
2. Explains what occurs if a juvenile is charged with this offense.
3. Defines the following: *emotional distress*, *repeatedly communicates* and *seriously disparaging statement*.
4. Becomes effective September 8, 2015.

For more information or to read the law, please visit

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2015&sInd=0&body=H&type=B&bn=229>