



## ***Saint Vincent's Anti-Bully Policy***

Everyone at St. Vincent's School is committed to making our school a safe, therapeutic place for all students. All staff and students will treat each other with respect, and will refuse to tolerate bullying of any kind. In addition, cyber-bullying, even if it occurs off of school grounds, will not be tolerated.

St. Vincent's school defines "target" as the student who is bullied. The "aggressor" is the student who is doing the bullying.

St. Vincent's school defines "bullying" as follows: The repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her or her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

St. Vincent's school defines "cyber-bullying" as follows: 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, social networking, and Internet postings.

St. Vincent's school defines "retaliation" as follows: 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.

Examples of bullying and cyber-bullying include:

- Hurting someone physically by hitting, kicking, tripping, pushing, and so on
- Stealing or damaging another person's things
- Impersonating another person in order to use the Internet to intimidate someone
- Ganging up on someone in person or on the Internet
- Teasing someone in a hurtful way
- Using put-downs or verbal assault, such as making fun of someone's race, looks, or being a boy or girl
- Touching or showing private body parts
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Creating a Web page to hurt, embarrass, or scare someone
- Excluding someone on purpose or trying to get other students not to play with someone
- Sending hurtful text messages

### **Reporting Bullying**

*Adult receiving a report from a student.* The St. Vincent's staff receiving the report of bullying will begin by affirming the student's feelings. They will look into the incident by asking questions of the reporter. The staff will then assess the student's safety by asking questions about what the student needs in order

to feel safe now. Finally, the staff will tell the student that a report will be made and identify who the student can look to for support (as identified in his/her support plan).

*Adult reporting to administration.* School staff that witness bullying or who receive a report of bullying from a student *must* inform the Special Education Administrator or designee immediately. Staff will be prepared to report the date and time of the incident, who was involved (target and aggressor), where the incident occurred, the behaviors or verbal interactions witnessed, immediate safety concerns (if any), specific concerns regarding the target or the aggressor, and immediate action that was taken.

*Protecting students who report.* Retaliation against students for reporting bullying is prohibited. Students who retaliate against others will immediately receive consequences as identified in this policy. Students may report bullying anonymously. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report unless substantiated by further investigation. False accusations of bullying against others are not allowed and will result in consequences outlined in this policy. When interviewing the student accused of bullying or other students about the bullying, staff will make every effort not to name the student who reported the behavior. In some cases, however, the bullying may be too severe or jeopardize safety and warrant breach of confidentiality. In these cases, assure the student that adults will do everything possible to protect them from retaliation.

### **Investigating Reports of Bullying**

When the Special Education Administrator or designee receives a report of bullying, an investigation into the incident will be initiated promptly. Our school will use the following steps as part of our investigation process:

1. The Special Education Administrator or designee will notify the Assistant Executive Director of any allegations or complaints warranting an investigation.
2. An immediate assessment of the safety of the target will be conducted and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure continued safety.
3. The Internal Investigation is completed in accordance with the Internal Investigation format detailed below, which includes comprehensive interviews and/or collecting statements from all staff and students involved.
4. The assigned investigator(s) conducts the investigation and completes the written report within two days of the incident. The completed investigation is submitted to the Special Education Administrator or designee and the Quality Management office.
5. The Special Education Administrator or designee provides coordination for the follow-up and corrective action based on the recommendations of the investigation report.
6. The Case Manager, Clinical Program Director, Special Education Administrator or designee working with the student will contact the designated Department of Children and Families (DCF) Social Worker and all other collaterals associated with the student's case (as determined appropriate).
7. If the disposition of the investigation warrants outside notifications to the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC), the Clinical Program Director or Assistant Executive Director will establish contact and forward the report. The Special Education Administrator will establish contact with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and forward all appropriate documentation.
8. All internal investigation reports will be maintained in the Quality Management office.

If bullying is found to have occurred, the student who perpetrated the bullying (the aggressor) will receive coaching about appropriate behavior and be subject to consequences as outlined in this policy. The target of the bullying will receive additional support and referrals as stated in this policy.

## **Consequences of Bullying**

### **Step 1: First Occurrence**

Appropriate behavior, school expectations, and rules are reviewed and emphasized. Conflict resolution and problem-solving conference is held with aggressor. Student calls parent with Case Manager. Student is informed of Steps 2 – 4.

### **Step 2: Second Occurrence**

A conference with the student, parent, teacher, and principal is required. Parent signature is required. Student is informed of Steps 3 – 4.

### **Step 3: Third Occurrence**

In-school suspension. Student calls parent with case manager and/or principal. Student is informed of Step 4. *If a student retaliates against a student who made a bullying report, he or she immediately goes to this step.*

### **Step 4: Fourth Occurrence**

Parent is required to pick up day school student and remove from school. Day school students will be removed from the classroom to an alternative classroom space until parent arrives. Residential students will be separated from the classroom. The incident will be reviewed by the clinical team to determine appropriate course of action. Progressive discipline will occur up to and including termination of placement if appropriate.

**Note:** Whenever bullying is determined to have taken place, the parents of all students involved, (target(s) and aggressor(s), will be notified of the incident and of the actions being taken by the school. If a law is believed to have been broken, law enforcement will be notified by the school as well.

## **Assisting Targets of Bullying**

*Establishing a sense of safety.* School staff and administration will affirm the student for making the difficult decision to report bullying and keep the student and his or her family informed of the process being used by the school in response to the incident. Staff will be watchful for signs of retaliation and use immediate, clear, and consistent consequences, if retaliation occurs. A partnership with the student will be formed to help the student report any additional bullying and to provide support.

*Strategies for preventing bullying in the future.* School staff will work with the student to create a plan to help prevent bullying in the future. Discuss ways to avoid the person who bullied during the school day, coach the student in assertiveness skills, and identify parents, teachers, staff, and friends who can support the student. The case manager will add the plan identified to the student's support plan. Staff will follow up with the student to see how the plan is working and help brainstorm more solutions, if necessary.

*Providing referrals.* Should the student and/or family want or need counseling services to deal with the effects of bullying, St. Vincent's may provide the services through the mental health clinic at St. Vincent's, or a referral may be made to the CSA in their community. In cases in which the student and/or family is already receiving such services, the Case Manager will notify the service provider of the incident, if appropriate, and with appropriate consent of the parent/guardian.

## **Parent Notification**

The parents and/or guardians of both the target and the aggressor will be notified of all incidents of bullying which involve their child. The parents and/or guardian of the target will also be notified of the action taken by the school to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation toward their child.

## **Staff Education and Responsibilities**

Each year, St. Vincent's will provide written notice to all school staff of the bullying prevention and intervention plan. This policy will also be included in the employee handbook. Staff will be trained annually on the plan, policy, and curriculum chosen by the school. The training will cover ways to prevent and intervene in bullying, information about the complex nature of bullying, research on bullying and children who may be more vulnerable to bullying by others, and information on cyber-bullying and Internet safety.

Staff at St. Vincent's will do the following things to prevent bullying and help students to feel safe at school:

- Closely supervise students in all areas of the school and playground
- Watch for signs of bullying and stop it when it occurs
- Teach students with disabilities and/or individualized education plans the skills necessary to avoid and respond to bullying
- Teach lessons that support social and emotional skills
- Teach students about bullying
- Respond quickly and sensitively to all reports of bullying
- Take families' concerns about bullying seriously
- Utilize consequences for bullying based on the school bullying policy
- Provide immediate consequences for retaliation against students who report bullying, consistent with the school bullying policy

## **Parent Education**

St. Vincent's will use the following evidence-based bullying prevention curriculum to help address bullying at our school: **Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center's (MARC) Bullying Prevention Curriculum**. Each year, St. Vincent's will provide parents and/or guardians with information about this program and how they can reinforce the curriculum at home and within the community. Parents will also be provided with information describing the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying and information about Internet safety.

Each year, St. Vincent's will also provide students and parents and/or guardians with written notice of our bullying policy and post it on our school Website. A student-appropriate version will be published in the student handbook.