

**ADAMS—CHESHIRE REGIONAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

BULLYING PREVENTION PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY	
Anti-Bullying Policy	2
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICY	
Disciplinary Policy Regarding Civil Rights Issues.....	5
PROCEDURES	
Electronic Reporting Systems.....	9
Procedures Related to Acts of Bullying.....	10
Bullying Flowchart	13
Bullying Incident Reporting Form.....	15
Bullying Investigation and Determination Form	16
Safety/Conduct Plan.....	20
PARENT EDUCATION 2010 – 2011.....	22
EVALUATION.....	22
SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM.....	23

BULLYING PREVENTION PLAN

December 2010

INTRODUCTION

This Plan is divided into 6 sections:

POLICIES – These include the School Committee’s newly adopted Anti-Bullying Policy and a series of disciplinary policies related to bullying that have become part of each school’s Student Handbook.

PROCEDURES – The district has adopted common procedures and forms for reporting, investigating and resolving bullying incidents.

BULLYING PREVENTION CURRICULUM – As a result of the Anti-Bullying Task Force work, the district has strengthened the social skills development curriculum of Grades K-5 (*Responsive Classroom*). Grades 6-12 are researching programs that would be appropriate.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT – For the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years, a plan is in place to provide training to all teachers in preventative curriculum at all grade levels.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION – We will have several forums for parents/guardians, students and community members.

EVALUATION – All of the programs that will be used in the schools are evidence-based. However, we have developed appropriate instruments to gauge the climate of our schools at all levels, particularly the amount of bullying that occurs within the schools and how it is handled by students and staff. These instruments will be used annually to assess whether the new programs and new ways of handling bullying incidents are having an impact that reduces bullying in the schools.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

COMMITMENT

The Adams-Cheshire Regional School District is committed to creating and sustaining a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all students. We will treat all members of our community with civility and respect in an inclusive environment. Key words that represent our actions and our words are kindness, dignity, responsibility, courage and honesty. Our schools strictly enforce a prohibition against bullying of any student or staff. The School Committee expects that in collaboration with teachers, families and community members, each school will develop and implement a plan for education and discipline, including curriculum, to prevent bullying and to help adults and students to respond effectively to reports and observations of bullying. We believe that education and prevention are key elements within our bullying prevention plan.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more persons of written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that has the effect of:

- (a) causing physical or emotional harm, or of damage to his/her property,
- (b) placing a target in reasonable fear of harm or of damage to his/her property,
- (c) creating an unwelcoming or hostile environment at school for another person,
- (d) infringing on the rights of another person at school, or
- (e) materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

BULLYING PROHIBITED

Bullying and retaliation regarding bullying issues are prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs whether on or off school grounds, at school bus stops, on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the district, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school district.

Bullying and retaliation are also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the district, if the act or acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the target, infringe on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

The School Committee expects administrators to make clear to students and staff that bullying and retaliation will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination for employees.

· Deliberate acts of exclusion which have the same effect are also considered forms of bullying under this policy.

All staff members are required to report any bullying, retaliation or harassment they see or learn about. The district will promptly and reasonably investigate all allegations of harassment, including bullying. The principal/designee of each building will be responsible for handling all complaints alleging bullying, harassment or retaliation. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying, is prohibited and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination for employees.

PROCEDURES

The superintendent will develop administrative guidelines and procedures for implementation of this policy, including

- a student complaint process,
- a reporting process for staff,
- an investigation process,
- a process for communication with parents/guardians,
- record keeping and reporting, and
- annual report of bullying incidents to the School Committee.

The superintendent will publish disciplinary policies in Student Handbooks, which shall prohibit bullying and shall include the bullying prevention and intervention plan required by Chapter 71 Section 37 of the Laws of the Commonwealth. Student handbooks shall include age-appropriate summaries of the student-related sections of the district's bullying prevention and intervention plan.

PREVENTION/INTERVENTION PLAN

The school district shall develop and update at least every two years a bullying prevention and intervention plan in consultation with school staff, students, parents and community members. The School Committee will provide an opportunity for public comment prior to approving this plan. The bullying prevention plan shall:

1. include descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation,
2. establish clear procedures for students and staff to report bullying or retaliation,
3. include a provision that reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously, provided that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report,
4. establish clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation,
5. identify the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation,
6. establish clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a victim and assessing that person's needs for protection,
7. establish strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying,
8. establish procedures for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a victim and a perpetrator, for notifying the parents or guardians of a victim of the action taken to

prevent any further acts of bullying, and for notifying local law enforcement officials where criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator,

9. include a provision that a person who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action, and
10. include a strategy for providing counseling in-house or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims and for appropriate family members of the students.

PROGRAMS

The school district will implement an anti-bullying program as a required part of the curriculum at each grade level. It will be based in age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention using evidence-based curricula. Furthermore, the district will provide instruction on civil and ethical behavior at each grade level and hold students and adults responsible for behaving with respect toward one another at all times. Instruction will include appreciation of human differences and avoidance of behaviors that discriminate against others based on their gender, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, race, national origin, religion or disability.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include ongoing professional development of all members of the school staff to build the skills to prevent, identify and respond to bullying and to implement the bullying prevention and intervention plan. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to (1) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; (2) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; (3) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among the perpetrator, the victim and any witnesses to the bullying; (4) research findings on bullying; (5) information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; (6) internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying; and (7) legal issues and responsibilities related to bullying. The school staff shall receive annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention policy.

PARENT/ GUARDIAN EDUCATION

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include provisions for educating parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum at each school, how they can reinforce the curriculum at home, how they can support the district's prevention and intervention plan, the dynamics of bullying and online safety and cyber-bullying.

The district shall provide to students and their parents or guardians in age-appropriate terms and in the most prevalent languages of families, annual written notice of relevant sections of the bullying prevention plan in the student handbook.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICY

Prepared for Student Handbooks 2010 – 2011

DISCIPLINARY POLICY REGARDING CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES

The Adams – Cheshire Regional School District prohibits all forms of harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes based on the following protected categories: race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability. The Adams – Cheshire Regional School District also prohibits bullying, as defined below. The schools will also not tolerate retaliation against persons who take action consistent with this disciplinary policy or the District’s civil rights policies.

The prohibitions against harassment, discrimination, hate crimes, bullying, and retaliation applies to all individuals:

- (a) on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions, or programs whether on or off school grounds, at school bus stops, on school buses, or other vehicles owned, leased, or used by our district or school, or through the use of technology or electronic devices owned, leased, or used by our school district or school and
- (b) at locations, activities, functions, or programs that are not school-related, or through the use of technology or electronic devices that are not owned, leased, or used by our school district, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of our school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Permissible Disciplinary Sanctions and Corrective Actions in Response to Bullying, Retaliation, Harassment, Discrimination, or Hate Crimes

Disciplinary sanctions and corrective actions will include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following, taking into consideration the frequency and severity of the incident(s):

Disciplinary Sanctions

- A written warning
- Parent conference
- Exclusion from participation in school-sponsored functions and school-sponsored after-school program/extracurricular activities
- Short-term or long-term suspension
- Expulsion from school
- Referral to School Resource Officer and/or police department for criminal action
- Any other action authorized by and consistent with the disciplinary code

Possible Corrective Actions

- Restorative justice
- Awareness training (to help students understand the impact of their behavior)

- Participation in empathy development, cultural diversity, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, or intergroup relation programs
- Mandatory counseling
- Classroom or school transfer
- Limiting or denying student access to a part or area of a school
- Adult supervision of student on school premises

False Charges

Any student who knowingly makes false charges or brings a malicious complaint regarding bullying, harassment, discrimination or hate crimes may be subjected to any of the disciplinary and/or corrective action(s) detailed above.

Student Responsibilities

Each student is responsible for:

- 1.) Complying with the District's civil rights policies;
- 2.) Ensuring that (s)he does not bully, retaliate, harass, discriminate or commit a hate crime because of that person's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability against another person on school grounds or in a school-related function, event, or activity;
- 3.) Ensuring that (s)he does not retaliate against any other person for reporting or filing a bullying or civil rights complaint, for aiding or encouraging the filing of a bullying report or civil rights complaint, or for cooperating in an investigation of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or a hate crime; and
- 4.) Cooperating in the investigation of reports or complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, or retaliation.

Key Definitions

Bullying - 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: (a) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; (b) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property; (c) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (d) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (e) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Deliberate acts of exclusion which have the same effect are also considered forms of bullying. For the purpose of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying - bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be 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, photo electronic, or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (a) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (b) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions

enumerated in clauses (a) to (e), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of 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 clauses (a) to (e), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Hostile environment - a situation in which 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 the student's education.

School grounds - property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased, or used by a school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school, or collaborative school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction, or training.

Target - a person against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Perpetrator - a person who engages in bullying or retaliation.

Discrimination - treating people differently, or interfering with or preventing a person from enjoying the advantages, privileges, or courses of study in a public school because of an individual's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability (i.e. protected status). A person may not be subjected to discipline or more severe punishment, nor denied the same rights as the other students, because of his/her membership in a protected class.

Harassment - the oral, written, graphic, electronic, or physical conduct on school property or at a school-related event, function, or activity related to an individual's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability (i.e. protected status), that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the district's programs or activities, by creating a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive environment. For purposes of this policy, harassment shall also mean conduct, if it persists, that will likely create such a hostile, humiliating, intimidating, or offensive environment. A single incident, depending on its severity, may create a hostile environment.

Retaliation - any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment by a student directed against any student, staff, or other individual for reporting or filing a complaint, for aiding or encouraging the filing of a report or complaint, for cooperating in an investigation under the District's civil rights policies, or for taking action consistent with policy.

Hate Speech – any speech not protected by the First Amendment because it is intended to foster hatred against individuals or groups based on race, religion, gender, sexual preference, place of national origin, or other improper classification.

Hate Crime - a crime motivated by hatred, bias, or prejudice, or where the victim is targeted or selected for the crime at least in part because of his/her actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or sex.

Citations

M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37 O

Attorney General's Safe School Initiative (2005). M.G.L. Chapter 76, Section 5

PROCEDURES

ELECTRONIC REPORTING SYSTEMS

It is widely understood that the failure to report remains a significant hurdle in attempting to respond effectively to incidents of bullying or retaliation. To address this concern, the new Massachusetts anti-bullying law requires that schools make provisions for anonymous reporting, and the procedures we have adopted adequately address that concern. There remains, however, the question of providing the community with the ability to anonymously report incidents of bullying electronically.

- What we have learned from the past is that many students knew of bullying incidents but lacked the confidence to alert the administration. An electronic anonymous system will open the door to reporting and take away the fear associated with reporting an incident.
- The presence of an electronic anonymous reporting system will serve as an immediate deterrent for bullying or retaliation behavior. It will empower bystanders and victims while shifting the balance of power away from those that engage in bullying or retaliation behavior.
- Drafting strong penalties for the misuse of the system will help curb inappropriate use.
- Offering an electronic anonymous system sends a strong message to the students and the community that the district is ready and able to tackle this problem by any means necessary.
- Students, staff, parents, guardians or others are able to report incidents of bullying or retaliation through the anonymous electronic system or through report forms located at each individual school as well as the Superintendent's office.

One significant concern that has been raised is the question of false reporting and/or abuse of an anonymous reporting system. Our research has shown that schools that have adopted anonymous electronic systems report minimal issues with false reporting. We also recognize that the provision of anonymous reporting, regardless of the format, will always carry an associated risk of false reports.

Adams – Cheshire Regional School District Procedures Related to Acts of Bullying

A. Procedures for Reporting Acts of Bullying or Retaliation

1. If any employee of the Adams – Cheshire Regional School District observes, has been reported to, or otherwise becomes aware of a possible act of bullying or retaliation that person must report the event to a school administrator (Principal/Designee) within one (1) full school day, using the Bullying Reporting Form, or other appropriate means of communication.
2. If a student expresses a desire to report or discuss a possible incident of bullying or retaliation with a staff member, the staff member will, in a timely manner, provide the student with a practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate way of doing so.
3. Reporting forms may be obtained in the school's main office, counselor's office, on the respective school and district web sites, and other locations determined by the school. All members of the community (students, staff, family members, or members of the community at large) may report an act of bullying or retaliation to a school administrator via the bullying reporting form or other appropriate means of communication. If a student requires help completing the form, a staff member will provide the necessary assistance.
4. Each school will devise ways in which the reporting forms may be submitted to school administration, including means to report anonymously.
5. Information obtained from the Bullying Report Forms shall be recorded in the district specific filing system as a "complaint" for the reporting student.

B. Procedures for the Prompt Investigation of Acts of Bullying or Retaliation

1. The Principal or designee must initiate an investigation of a report of bullying or retaliation within a swift and timely manner after being notified of a possible bullying or retaliation incident, consistent with due process rights, using the Bullying Incident Investigation Form.
 - a. If the target is injured, medical treatment will be provided without delay, and the student's parents will be notified immediately.
2. The Principal or designee will conduct an investigation to determine both whether an act of bullying or retaliation occurred, and which person(s) were responsible for the act(s) and/or played a role in perpetuating it. The Bullying Flowchart will be followed.
3. Other related complaints regarding the involved parties, including those from previous schools, will be reviewed as part of the investigative process.
4. The Principal or designee will contact the parents/guardians of all related parties in a timely manner in which the investigation was initiated and inform them of the status of the investigation.
5. Discussions with all parties should be documented by the investigating administrator as soon as possible after the event.

6. When an act of bullying or retaliation has been determined, the Principal or designee will apply consequences consistent with due process rights using the school Code of Conduct as a guide.
7. If the aggressor's actions are delinquent acts, they shall be reported by the Principal or administrative designee promptly to the responsible law enforcement agency according to the laws of the State of Massachusetts.
8. The Principal or designee will notify parents/guardians of all parties involved as to the specific actions taken relative to each person. Strict confidentiality will always remain in place when dealing with bullying or retaliation issues.
9. The Principal or designee will create a written record of the bullying incident and any disciplinary actions taken, as well as the statements of the victim, witnesses, and offender. No material records or evidence will be discarded until all students involved have left the school district.
10. The Superintendent shall be notified and will summarily document the investigation.

C. Procedures for Following Up Acts of Bullying or Retaliation

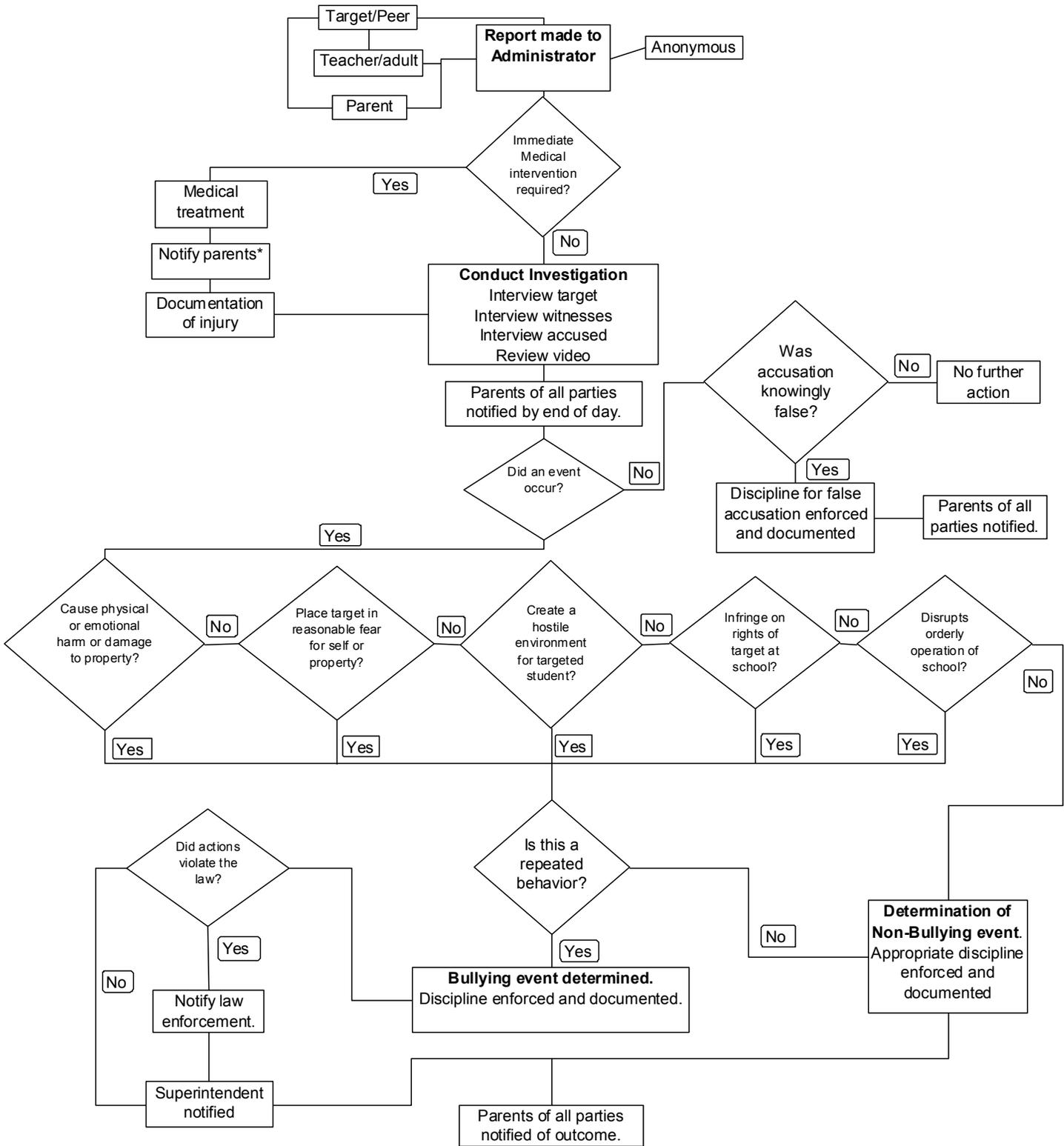
1. After the determination that an act of bullying or retaliation has occurred and after appropriate discipline has been enforced, the Principal or designee will develop with the target student and his/her parents or guardians a safety plan; and with the aggressor student and his/her parents or guardians a conduct plan; and with the person(s) who reports bullying, the person(s) who provides information during an investigation and witnesses to the bullying or retaliation incident a safety plan.
2. The safety plan for the target will include, but not be limited by, the following. A staff member (as designated by the administrator, student, and the parents/guardians) will be assigned as a check-in person to regularly meet with the student to ensure the following:
 - a. An immediate safety plan will be put in place to keep the target student in school without fear. The school will provide any support needed to allow the student to stay in school and feel safe at all times.
 - b. No acts of retaliation have occurred.
 - c. Strategies are provided for dealing with future incidents, emphasizing immediate reporting of any further acts.
 - d. Information regarding outside support services are provided to student and family.
 - e. The frequency and duration of check-ins will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
 - f. Information regarding outside support resources will be made available to the student and their parents/guardians.
3. The conduct plan for the aggressor will include, but not be limited by, the following: The Principal or designee will conduct compulsory conduct meetings to ensure the following:
 - a. A strong statement with very specific harsh consequences will be communicated to the student and parent in terms of retaliation or contact with the target student. Contact with the target will be prohibited and severe consequences will be given if this occurs. No further acts of bullying have been committed.

- b. The student has been educated regarding acceptable alternative behaviors.
 - c. The student has received further education of the school's anti-bullying policy, including the potential for more severe school consequences and/or criminal charges being filed.
 - d. The frequency and duration of these meetings will be decided on a case by case basis.
 - e. Information regarding outside support resources will be made available to the student and their parents/guardians.
4. The safety plan for the person(s) who reports bullying, the person(s) who provides information during an investigation and witnesses to the bullying or retaliation incident will include, but not limited to the following. A staff member (as designated by the administrator, student, and the parents/guardians) will be assigned as a check-in person to regularly meet with the student to ensure the following:
- a. An immediate safety plan will be put in place to keep the person(s) who reported a bullying or retaliation incident; a witness or a person(s) who provided information to an investigation in school without fear. The school will provide any support needed to allow the student to stay in school and feel safe at all times.
 - b. No acts of retaliation have occurred.
 - c. Information regarding outside support services are provided to student and family.
 - d. The frequency and duration of check-ins will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
 - e. Information regarding outside support resources will be made available to the student and their parents/guardians.

D: Availability of the Bullying Reporting Form

1. Schools will inform staff about the availability of the Bullying Reporting Form for their use during opening-of-school meetings and then periodically throughout the school year.
2. Schools will inform students about the availability of the form and its use during orientation sessions and periodically throughout the school year.
3. Samples of the form, as well as a description of the form's availability (as described below) will be included in the faculty and student/parent handbooks.
4. Forms will be available in the school's main office, counselor's office, library, and other locations as determined by the individual schools. Electronic versions of the form will be available on the district and individual school websites.
5. Each school will devise ways in which the reporting form may be submitted to school administration, including means to submit anonymously.

Adams – Cheshire Regional School District Bullying Flowchart



Adams – Cheshire Regional School District Bullying Flowchart

