

## **BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICY**

Harassment and bullying of students are against federal, state and local policy, and are not tolerated by Hope Learning Academies (HVA). HLAS/HLAE are committed to providing all students with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. To that end, HVA has in place policies, procedures, and practices that are designed to reduce and eliminate bullying and harassment as well as processes and procedures to deal with incidents of bullying and harassment.

Bullying and harassment of students by students, school employees, and volunteers who have direct contact with students will not be tolerated. HLAS/HLAE prohibits harassment, bullying, hazing, or any other victimization, of students, based on any of the following actual or perceived traits or characteristics: age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.

This policy is in effect while students are on property within the jurisdiction of HVA; while on school-owned or school-operated vehicles; while attending or engaged in school sponsored activities; and while away from school grounds if the misconduct directly affects the good order, efficient management and welfare of the school or Hope.

### **Definitions**

Harassment and bullying mean any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act of conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property
- Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

"Electronic" means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. "Electronic" includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, electronic text messaging, or similar technologies.

Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances:

- Verbal, nonverbal, physical or written harassment, bullying, hazing, or other victimization that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim
- Repeated remarks of a demeaning nature that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim.
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, property, etc. that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim
- Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at the student that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim; and/or
- Unreasonable interference with a student's performance or creation of an intimidating, offensive, or hostile learning environment. Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  - Submission to the conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term condition of the student's education or benefits
  - Submission to or rejection of the conduct by a school employee is used as the basis for academic decisions affecting that student; or
  - The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive education environment.
  - In situations between students and school officials, faculty, staff, or volunteers who have direct contact with students, bullying and harassment may also include the following behaviors:
    - Requiring that a student submit to bullying or harassment by another student, either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of the targeted student's education or participation in school programs or activities; and/or
    - Requiring submission to or rejection of such conduct as a basis for decisions affecting the student.

Individuals who knowingly file a false complaint may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Retaliation against a person because the person has filed a bullying or harassment complaint or assisted or participated in a harassment investigation or proceeding is prohibited. An individual who knowingly files a false harassment complaint and a person who gives false statements in an investigation may be subject to discipline by appropriate measures, as may a person who is found to have retaliated against another in violation of this policy. A student found to have retaliated in violation of this policy may be subject to measures up to, and including, dismissal from HLAS/HLAE.

The school will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying or harassment. In the event that a student is bullied or harassed by another student, the teacher, therapist, and/or principal will be responsible for handling all complaints alleging bullying or harassment. If a student is bullied or harassed by staff or volunteer, Hope Human Resource Department and Administrative staff will be responsible for handling all complaints and investigations. Hope employees are mandated reporters; if an employee reports bullying or harassment (abuse) by another employee, Hope will ensure that employees are protected from retaliation, per the Whistle Blower Policy.

HLAS/HLAE will annually publish this policy in the Hope Vocational Academy Student and Parent Handbook. This policy is in alignment with all other policies of the school board.

### **Bullying/Harassment Procedures**

Individuals who feel that they have been harassed should:

- Communicate to the harasser that the individual expects the behavior to stop, if the individual is comfortable doing so. If the individual wants assistance communicating with the harasser, the individual should ask a teacher, staff, or therapist to help.
- If the harassment does not stop, or the individual does not feel comfortable confronting the harasser, the individual should: tell a teacher, counselor or principal; and write down exactly what happened, keep a copy and give another copy to the teacher, counselor or principal including:
  - o what, when and where it happened
  - o who was involved
  - o exactly what was said or what the harasser did
  - o witnesses to the harassment
  - o what the student said or did, either at the time or later
  - o how the student felt; and
  - o how the harasser responded.

### **Formal Complaint Procedures**

An individual who believes that the individual has been harassed or bullied will notify a teacher, staff member, or therapist, who may request that the individual complete the Harassment/Bullying Complaint form and turn over evidence of the harassment, including, but not limited to, letters, tapes, or pictures. The complainant and parent/guardian shall be given a copy of the completed complaint form. Information received during the investigation is kept. Anyone may initiate a formal complaint of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, even if the informal complaint process is being utilized. Complainant(s) should not be promised confidentiality at the onset of an investigation. It cannot be predicted what will be discovered or what kind of hearing may result. Efforts should be made to increase the confidence and trust of the person making the complaint. Hope Learning Academy will fully implement the anti-

retaliation provision of this policy to protect complainant(s) and witness(es). Student complainants and witnesses may have a parent or trusted adult with them, if requested, during any direct initiated investigatory activities. The Programming or designated school administrator may conclude that the agency needs to conduct an investigation based on information in their possession regardless of the complainant's interest in filing a formal complaint. Therapists are on site to provide immediate services and interventions for the victimized student. Along with additional resources, Cognitive Behavior Therapy will be followed to help individuals break down overwhelming circumstances into smaller, more manageable issues, allowing for insight and connection. Support will be provided for individuals to understand that while they cannot control every aspect of their environment, they are able to gain control of how circumstances in their environment can be handled. In the event that the harassment warrants the need to contact law-enforcement, parents/guardian will be notified immediately. The following process shall be followed:

1. All informal complaints shall be in writing. Formal complaints shall set forth the specific acts, conditions, or circumstances alleged to have occurred that may constitute harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The administrator may draft the complaint, based on the report of the complainant, for the complainant to review and sign.
2. Regardless of the complainant's interest in filing a formal complaint, the administrator may conclude that the agency needs to draft a formal complaint based on the information in his/her possession.
3. The administrator shall investigate all formal, written complaints of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and other information in the administrator's possession that the administrator believes requires further investigation.
4. Hope Administration will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 days. A full written report of the complaint and the result of the investigation will be compiled. If the matter has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, then the Superintendent shall take further action on the report.
5. The Administration or designee shall report in writing to the complainant and the accused within thirty days, stating
  - a. That Hope intends to take corrective action, or
  - b. That the investigation is incomplete to date and will be continuing, or
  - c. That Hope does not have adequate evidence to conclude that bullying, harassment, or intimidation occurred.
6. Corrective measures deemed necessary will be instituted as quickly as possible, but in no event more than thirty days after the Administration's written response, unless the accused is appealing the imposition of discipline and the school is barred by due process considerations or a lawful order for imposing the discipline until the appeal process is concluded.

7. If a student remains aggrieved by the written response of Hope's Administration or designee, the student may pursue the complaint to the Human Rights Committee.
8. These procedures shall be reviewed and updated annually with board members, administration, Guardians, staff and Hope Community stakeholders. Reminders of the policy, posted on the website, will be included in the beginning of the year, mid year and end of year student family communication packets.

If after an investigation, a student is found to be in violation of this policy, the student may be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, dismissal from Hope Learning Academy. If after an investigation a school employee is found to be in violation of this policy, the Hope employee will be subject to Hope Policy and Procedure. If after an investigation a school volunteer is found to be in violation of this policy, the volunteer may be subject to appropriate measures up to, and including, dismissal from Hope Learning Academy. "Volunteer" means an individual who has regular, significant contact with students.

#### **Anonymous Reporting**

To support those who would like to submit an anonymous report, Hope has provided two options.

1. An email address: <https://hope.us/contact/>
2. Listening Ear Hotline 833-57LISTEN (833-575-4783)

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