



BULLYING POLICY

Helping Hand School Policy on Bullying

Updated January 16th, 2026, for School Year 2026-27

Helping Hand School is committed to providing a safe, caring and positive learning environment to maximize student progress and safety. Every member of this school community must take personal responsibility for the emotional and physical safety of one another and the environment. Consistent with policies of the school board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school. It is a violation of State and school policy for any student to bully, harass or intimidate another student.

Bullying may take various forms, which may be one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is illustrative and non-exhaustive. Helping Hand School adheres to Illinois laws regarding bullying, and acknowledges that bullying, intimidation, and harassment are detrimental to the learning environment.

Bullying, including “cyberbullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following: 1) Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property; 2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health; 3) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or 4) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

The Illinois laws regarding bullying, which includes cyber-bullying, are listed below:

Bullying/Harassment

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#) (2010) defines bullying and prohibits it in the school environment on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry,

age, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic. No student shall be subject to bullying during any school-sponsored education program or activity, while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the bus, at schools-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities, or through the transmission of information from a school computer, school computer network or other similar electronic school equipment. Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Cyber Bullying

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#) (Effective January 1, 2015) prohibits a student from being subjected to bullying through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed in school or at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying substantially interferes with or limits the victim's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school or substantially disrupts the educational process or orderly operation of a school. Provides that the definition of bullying includes cyber-bullying; defines "cyber-bullying". Provides that a school district's or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school's policy on bullying shall include a process to investigate whether a reported act of bullying is within the scope of the district or school and, if not, a process for referral of such an act to the appropriate jurisdiction.

[105 ILCS 135/1-2](#) (2008) defines harassment through electronic communications. The definition includes "making any obscene comment, request, suggestion or proposal with an intent to offend," and "threatening injury to the person or to the property of the person to whom the electronic communication is directed or to any of his family or household members." Violation of the provisions of the statute will result in a class B misdemeanor.

Cyber-bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation 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 system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a 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 effects enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Restorative measures means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

School personnel means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school guidance counselors, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Preventing students from engaging in these disruptive behaviors and providing all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment are important Helping Hand School goals. Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in each of the following situations:

1. During any school-sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school vehicles, waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph (item #4) applies only when a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred; it does not require staff members to

monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

Preventative Strategies

Should be based on the following principles:

- Effective leadership that promotes an open and honest anti-bullying culture.
- Use of learning opportunities that can be used to draw out anti-bullying messages.
- Reviewing the school/service environment. In particular looking at staff supervision
Patterns.

Anti-bullying Strategies

The aims of school/service anti-bullying strategies and intervention systems are:

- To prevent, de-escalate and/or stop any continuation of harmful behavior.
- To respond to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way.
- To safeguard the child or young person who has experienced bullying and to trigger
sources of support for him/her.
- To apply corrective and supportive strategies to the child or young person responsible for
the bullying and ensure that they can resolve and be equipped at their level of functioning
about potential causes.
- Any use of sanctions must be appropriate to the age, understanding and individual needs
of the child or young person.

Reactive Strategies

When bullying is suspected, staff intervenes immediately, reports this information to the school directors, documents the information, talks to the students involved separately and helps others understand how to prevent future incidents. The school directors and appropriate staff will consider whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability or a deliberate act of bullying. The

directors will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of a bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported bullying incident.

When bullying is **confirmed**, staff intervenes immediately, investigates, documents the information, and makes plans for remediating.

The most obvious reactive strategy is the use of disciplinary sanctions and learning programs as a consequence for children and young people who are found to be bullying. Sanctions should be applied fairly, proportionately, consistently and reasonably, taking into account the individual's autism diagnosis and any special educational needs.

Corrective treatments and supportive strategies have three main purposes, namely to:

- Enable the perpetrator to become aware of what he/she has done
- Enable him/her learning different responses and decrease the likelihood of this pattern of behavior to be repeated.
- To highlight the supportive culture and philosophy for both the perpetrator and victim (or alleged victim) that bullying is unacceptable.

If bullying continues, parent phone calls/conferences are made or scheduled by administration. This includes any acts of bullying that occur off school grounds that interfere with the school environment. Based on the severity and repeat-offenses, consequences and remediation is issued.

Based on House Bill 5707 (2014), Helping Hand School will conduct a review, reevaluate, and make any changes to its bullying policy every 2 years. Our review policy will consist of a policy review by staff and the number of documented bullying reports.

Response Plan

The Associate Director (AD) or designee shall develop and maintain a bullying prevention and response plan that advances the school's goal of providing all students with a safe learning environment free of bullying and harassment. This plan must be consistent with the requirements listed below; each numbered requirement, 1-12, corresponds with the same number in the list of required policy components in 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7(b) 1-12.

1. The school uses the definition of bullying as provided in this policy.
2. Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of this School. However, nothing in the school's bullying prevention and response plan is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of

religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

3. Students are encouraged to immediately report bullying. A report may be made orally or in writing to the Associate Director or any staff member with whom the student is comfortable working or communicating. Anyone, including staff members and parents/guardians, who has information about actual or threatened bullying is encouraged to report it to the Director or any staff member. Anonymous reports are also accepted.

Report to:

Associate Director of Administration-Julianna Pisarski

[Julianna.pisarski@helpinghand-il.org](mailto:julianna.pisarski@helpinghand-il.org)

9649 W. 55th St. Countryside Illinois, 60525

(708) 966-5761

4. Consistent with policies of the school board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school. Consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the Associate Director or designee shall promptly inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student involved in an alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. The student's home district will be notified by the Director of the alleged involvement of their student.
5. The Associate Director or designee shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying, by, among other things:
 - a. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of a bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported bullying incident.
 - b. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
 - c. Notifying the Associate Director of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.
 - d. Consistent with policies of the school board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school. Consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the Associate Director or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying. District representatives will participate as they see fit.

The Associate Director or designee shall investigate whether a reported incident of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction and shall require that the school provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the School, the Home District and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

6. The Associate Director or designee shall use interventions to address bullying, that may include, but are not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.
7. A reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.
8. A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the school's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.
9. The school's bullying prevention and response plan must be based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians.
10. This policy will be included in the parent handbook, and, where applicable, post it where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted. This policy will be sent to parents annually with the annual registration packet, and staff will review annually during their annual policy review up-date.
11. The Associate Director or designee shall assist with its evaluation and assessment of this policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, without limitation:
 - a. The frequency of victimization;
 - b. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school;
 - c. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
 - d. The types of bullying utilized; and
 - e. Bystander intervention or participation.

The evaluation process may use relevant data and information that the school already collects for other purposes. The Sr. Director or designee will send the information developed as a result of the policy evaluation to

parents/guardians, and school personnel.

School Response and Practices

School personnel must report and/or investigate all incidents of bullying immediately and take appropriate action whether they personally observe incidents or learn of them by some other means. Reporting, investigation and action must occur even if the victim does not file a formal complaint or does not express overt disapproval of the incident. Adult non-intervention establishes a climate of fear, reinforces students' beliefs that bullying is "normal" and must be tolerated, and enables the bullying behavior. Furthermore, non-intervention may expose the school to potential liability. The school identifies who, what, where, when why and how bullying took place. All bullying incidents should be recorded, investigated and tracked.

Staff Response Protocol

INTERVENE - Staff members must intervene immediately or as quickly as reasonably possible to address bullying behavior.

- Identify bullying behaviors.
- Focus on the behavior not the person.
- Refer to the classroom or school rules.
- Stop the behavior.

CONFERENCE with the student(s) SEPARATELY.

The staff person responsible for investigating or who receives the report about bullying behavior should:

1. Record details about the incident in a written report.
2. Interview student(s) exhibiting bullying behavior and the target/victim(s) *separately* to avoid further victimization of the target.

For the victim:

- a. Engage the target/victim
- b. Focus on his/her safety.
- c. Reassure the victim that the bullying behavior will not be tolerated and that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a recurrence.
- d. Ask what happened and how the victim feels about it. It is generally best to advise the student to walk away/ignore the behavior, tell the

bully to stop and/or seek help from an adult. It is not advisable to suggest the victim stand up to the bully or fight back.

- e. Involve the victim in a peer support group or offer counseling if needed.
- f. Ask students to report any future bully/victim situations for the purpose of providing documentation.

For the perpetrator:

- a. Help the student identify the problem using communication materials and style appropriate for the student's level of functioning.
 - b. Ask questions and gather information. Use positive reinforcement.
 - c. Provide alternatives to bullying behavior.
 - d. Remind the student of the school rules and policies, expectations for behavior and his/her personal responsibility for the learning environment.
 - e. Utilize remediation measures and consequences appropriate for the student's level of understanding and functioning.
- 4. Submit interview notes to the directors.
 - 5. Take interim action to prevent bullying or retaliation during the course of the investigation.
 - 6. Work in collaboration with the directors to determine remediation and consequences in cases of severe or repeated incidents. It may also be necessary to alert other teachers to the bullying behavior to ensure the safety of, and support for, the students involved.

If a student reports bullying behavior to a staff member, do not dismiss it as tattling, particularly if the student reporting is trying to keep another student safe. Thank the student who made the report.

REPORT - All bullying incidents should be reported to the directors.

- a. Repeated or severe incidents should be promptly referred to the school administration.
- b. All information concerning complaints or incidents of bullying should be treated confidentially at all times. When talking with parents, teachers and administrators **cannot name the other students involved and cannot indicate disciplinary measures utilized.**
- c. Inform the parents of the bully and the victim of the behavior as quickly as possible. A call home the same day is preferable, followed by an appointment at school with the parents if necessary. Early intervention is most effective before patterns of behavior are established.

REMIEDIATION AND CONSEQUENCES - It is the responsibility of the staff to use violations of the school rules as opportunities to help students improve their social and emotional skills, accept personal responsibility for their learning environment, and understand consequences for poor choices and behaviors. A clear distinction exists between remediation and consequences.

a. Remediation, intended to counter or “remedy” a behavioral mistake, can be an effective prevention practice. Remediation measures are intended to correct the problem behavior, prevent a reoccurrence, protect and provide support for the victim and take corrective action for documented systemic problems related to bullying and harassment. Remediation measures allow the student an opportunity to reflect on behaviors, learn pro-social skills and make amends to those affected.

b. Consequences, tend to be punitive in nature and should be used only when appropriate and almost always in conjunction with remediation measures.

<p style="text-align: center;">Low Severity/First Offense</p> <p>Consequences: Conference with student, parent notification.</p> <p>Remediation: Social skills training providing appropriate coping skills</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Severity/First Offenses</p> <p>Consequences: Add negative consequences to the student behavior plan, report to law enforcement, district and parent notification.</p> <p>Remediation: Apology, behavioral contract, parent meeting and district representative.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Low severity/Repeat Offenses</p> <p>Consequences: Loss of reinforcers, district and parent notification.</p> <p>Remediation: Apology, behavioral contract, parent meeting.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Severity/Repeat Offenses</p> <p>Consequences: District and parent notification, report to law enforcement, possible termination of</p> <p>Remediation: Apology, behavioral contract, additional pro-social skills training, restitution, restorative practices.</p>

REFERENCES:

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#) (2010)

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#) (Effective January 1, 2015)

[105 ILCS 135/1-2](#) (2008)

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7\(b\)](#) 1-12.

[House Bill 5707](#) (2014),

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and
Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.