

# Guidance on Bullying Prevention



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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education developed this guidance on bullying prevention, as required by Act 1029 of 2019, in consultation with state agencies, school personnel, advocacy organizations, and other interested parties, to support public school districts and public charter schools (hereafter referred to as “school districts”) in addressing the issue of school bullying. With the knowledge that bullying can be stopped with careful and sensitive interventions, this guidance is designed to be used by parents and legal guardians, students, and school districts/charter schools, in preventing, reporting, investigating, and responding to bullying behaviors. This document outlines the obligations of the school district/charter school as described in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514 and should be made available to all public school personnel. This guidance is provided as a resource and does not constitute legal advice nor relieve a school district/charter school of its obligation to comply with any state or federal laws, rules, or regulations not covered in this document.

## SECTION ONE: Bullying Defined

**A**rk. Code Ann. § 6-18-514 defines bullying as, “the intentional harassment, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, defamation, or threat or incitement of violence by a student against another student or public school employee by written, verbal, electronic, or physical act that may address an attribute of the other student, public school employee, or person with whom the other student or public school employee is associated and that causes or creates actual or reasonably foreseeable: a) physical harm to a public school employee or student or damage to the public school employee’s or student’s property; b) substantial interference with a student’s education or with a public school employee’s role in education; c) a hostile educational environment for one (1) or more students or public school employees due to the severity, persistence, or pervasiveness of the act; or d) substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school or educational environment.”

### What is bullying...

- Bullying is intentional.
- Bullying is initiated by a student and is directed toward:
  - Another student; or
  - A public school employee.
- Bullying involves using harassment, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, defamation, or threat or incitement of violence.
- Bullying is in the form of a written, verbal, electronic, or physical act.
- Bullying may or may not address an attribute of the person being bullied, or a person with whom the bullied person is associated with.
- Bullying causes or creates foreseeable at least one of the following:
  - Physical harm to student or public school employee.
  - Damage to student’s or public school employee’s property.
  - Substantial interference with a student’s education.
  - Substantial interference with a public school employee’s role in education.
  - Hostile educational environment for one (1) or more students due to the severity, persistence, or pervasiveness of the act.
  - Hostile educational environment for one (1) or more public school employees due to the severity, persistence, or pervasiveness of the act.
  - Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the public school or educational environment.

- Bullying includes harassment.
  - Harassment is a pattern of unwelcome verbal or physical act relating to another person's constitutionally or statutorily protected status that causes, or reasonably should be expected to cause, substantial interference with the others performance in the school environment
  
- Bullying includes cyberbullying.
  - Cyberbullying is bullying in the form of an electronic act. An electronic act is a communication or image transmitted by using an electronic device such as a telephone, wireless phone or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager.
  - If a communication or image is used to harass, intimidate, humiliate, ridicule, defame, or threaten a student, public school employee, or person with whom the other student or public school employee is associated; or incite violence to a student, public school employee, or person with whom the other student or public school employee is associated, it is cyberbullying.

**There are several forms of bullying behaviors...**

- Written bullying may include:
  - Derogatory drawings
  - Threatening notes
  - Printed graphic material
  
- Verbal bullying may include:
  - Name-calling
  - Inappropriate sexual comments
  - Taunting
  - Threatening to cause harm
  
- Physical bullying may include:
  - Hitting/kicking/pinching
  - Spitting
  - Tripping/pushing
  - Taking or breaking someone's things
  
- Cyberbullying may include:
  - Sending, posting, or sharing mean or inappropriate content
  - Sharing personal or private information to cause humiliation
  - Creating a hurtful webpage about someone
  - Pretending to be someone else online to solicit personal information

\*For additional examples see [Types of Bullying & Examples](#).

## **Bullying is not...**

- Teasing or kidding
  - Everyone appreciates someone with a good sense of humor. To be considered playful teasing both parties must feel that the behavior is funny and appropriate. Individuals self-monitor and read cues to know if lines are crossed and immediately stop the behavior when they know it is no longer funny to the other person.
  
- Conflict or an argument
  - It is normal for two people to disagree with each other at times. When some people are in a conflict, even though they might disagree, they are still able to express their own views and not have a fear of being hurt. Usually, when there is an argument both sides want the issue resolved and do not want the clash to continue. When someone bullies, they have a disregard for the feelings of others and intentionally want to harm them.
  
- Competitive or rough play
  - Students might play games competitively. In some cases, rough play among friends may appear to be bullying, but neither party has the intent of actually hurting the other. When one student is an unwilling participant in a rival interaction – when it is unwanted and unwelcome aggressive behavior – or in horseplay, the incident might constitute bullying.
  
- Social rejection or dislike
  - Non-aggressive social behaviors that convey a student's preference for which peers they choose to interact with might not constitute bullying if it is not intended to cause or is unlikely to cause an individual harm or distress or to create dislike by others of that individual.
  
- Assertive behavior
  - Assertiveness can be negative or positive. Students might at times pursue their aims vigorously – such as achieving top grades or making a team. When someone engages in bullying, they are forceful in a way that disregards another's feelings and intentionally cause harm.
  
- Acts of annoyingness, rudeness, meanness, or nastiness
  - Aggravating, bothersome, irritating, and/or pesky behaviors either done on purpose or accidentally might not constitute bullying if it is not intended to cause or is unlikely to cause an individual harm or distress as defined in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514. When examining such acts consider the context. Incidents of rudeness are often spontaneous, unplanned and thoughtless.

- Micro-aggressions
  - Brief exchanges (e.g., statements, expressions, actions, gestures) that send subtle messages to certain individual that because of their group membership they have little value can cause emotional harm and might be a form of bullying if the exchange meets at least one of the acts listed in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514 and causes or likely causes at least one of the listed harmful effects.
  
- Fighting
  - A fight might not be bullying, but bullying might lead to a fight. Effective investigations and inquiries help identify if bullying was the cause of other forms of student conflict. Addressing a fight might not fully prevent future fights if the root cause of the bullying is unaddressed.

Negative student behaviors or unresolved conflict have the potential to evolve into bullying. Student aggressive behaviors that meet other forms of student misconduct (≠ bullying) defined as a disciplinary infraction should be addressed through prescribed disciplinary procedures.

To accurately identify bullying behaviors, consider the context of the situation, knowledge of the students involved and how the behavior impacted others.

### **Common questions regarding the Arkansas definition of bullying...**

- Can it be bullying if at my school bus stop another student threatens to hit me daily?
 

*Yes. Bullying is not allowed in school, on school equipment or property, in school vehicles, on school buses, at designated school bus stops, at school-sponsored activities, or at school-sanctioned events.*
  
- Is it bullying if my teacher humiliates me in front of the entire class?
 

*No. Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514 defines bullying as an act that is initiated by a student. If you are being intentionally humiliated by your teacher, you should contact your principal or the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB) to file a complaint.*

- What is the difference between the Arkansas definition of bullying and other common definitions?

Arkansas Code Ann. § 6-18-514	Other Common Definitions
Intentional	Intentional, Unintentional or Accidental
Unwelcome (Harassment)	Unwelcome
Pattern (Harassment)	
Repetition not Required but may be Present (Other Acts)	Repetition or Highly Likely to be Repetitive
Imbalance of Power not Required but may be Present	Imbalance of Power Required
Written	Verbal
Verbal	Physical
Electronic	Social or Relational
Physical	
Directed at a Student or Employee	Directed at a Student
Focus of the Definition: A particular act must have a particular impact.	Focus of the Definition: An act that is unwanted, repetitive, and concerns a perceived imbalance of power.

- Is an imbalance of power required to constitute bullying under the Arkansas definition?

*No. An observed or perceived imbalance of power between students might be present, but it is not required to constitute bullying under the Arkansas definition. Given the sense of unequal power and control, students being targeted for bullying behaviors may not be able to defend themselves in that specific context – even though they may be able to in other situations. This sense of unequal power resulting in not being able to stand up for self or stop what is happening is not required, but it might be present. A student that does stand up for self might still be a target and the act constitute bullying.*

- Is it required that the behavior be repeated over time to constitute bullying under the Arkansas definition?

*It depends. To constitute bullying-based harassment under the Arkansas definition there must be a pattern of the behavior between the parties. Behaviors that are repeated, differentiates bullying-based harassment from other forms of bullying. To constitute bullying-based intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, defamation, threat, or incitement under the Arkansas definition a pattern of the behavior is not required, but it might be present.*

- How might it be determined that the behavior caused or created foreseeable substantial interference, hostile educational environment, or substantial disruption to constitute bullying under the Arkansas definition?

*Gather information on how the behavior impacted the targeted student, adult, peers, or others. Some questions might include:*

*Was the act cruel or harsh?*

*How persistent was the aggressor?*

*How ever-present or widely spread was the act?*

*An imbalance of power might be an indicator of the presence of a substantial interference, substantial disruption, or hostile environment. Learning the effect of the act in its totality on a person, their role, their education, the educational environment, and educational processes may be of assistance.*

*Once information is collected determine if a reasonable person would consider the act caused or was likely to cause a substantial interference, hostile educational environment, or substantial disruption under the Arkansas definition.*

## SECTION TWO: Public School District's and Public Charter School's Responsibilities

**E**very public school student in our state has the right to receive his or her public education, in a public school educational environment that is reasonably free from substantial intimidation, harassment, harm, or threat of harm by another student. Because of that right, school districts have an obligation to take a proactive approach to eliminate school bullying by strengthening standards and procedures for preventing, reporting, investigating, and responding to incidents of bullying. This section lists the minimum legal obligations according to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514.

- School Board shall adopt policies to prevent bullying.
- School District shall annually conduct a reevaluation, reassessment, and review of its bullying policies and make any necessary revisions and additions.
- School District shall provide training to all district employees responsible for reporting or investigating bullying.
- School District shall provide to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education the website address at which a copy of the policies may be found.
- School District Superintendent shall annually report data regarding the discipline in their district.
- School Principal, or his or her designee, shall report, investigate, and respond to incidents of bullying.
  
- **School Board shall adopt policies to prevent bullying**

Each policy adopted by the School Board shall:

- Clearly define the conduct of someone who exhibits bullying behaviors.
- Prohibit bullying while in school, on school equipment or property, in school vehicles, on school buses, at designated school bus stops, at school-sponsored activities, or at school-sanctioned events.
- Prohibit cyberbullying that results in substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school or educational environment.
- Prohibit cyberbullying, whether or not the cyberbullying originated on school property or with school equipment, if it is directed specifically at students or school personnel and maliciously intended for the purpose of disrupting school and has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose.
- State the consequences for engaging in the prohibited conduct.
- Require that a school employee who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student has been a victim of an incident of bullying report the incident to the principal as soon as possible.
- Require that any person who files a credible report or makes a complaint of bullying not be subject to retaliation or reprisal in any form.

- Require that notice of what constitutes bullying, that bullying is prohibited, and the consequences of engaging in bullying be 1) posted in every classroom, cafeteria, restroom, gymnasium, auditorium, and school bus in the district; and 2) require that copies of the notice be provided annually to parents and legal guardians, students, school volunteers, and employees of the public school.
- Require that a full copy of the policy be made available upon request.
- Describe the procedures for reporting an incident of bullying and the steps school employees may take.

A notice of the public school district's policies shall appear in any:

- Publication of the public school district that contains rules, procedures, and standards of conduct within the public schools.
- Student Handbook

➤ **School District Superintendent shall annually report data regarding the discipline in their district**

This data shall include without limitation:

- The number of incidents of bullying reported; and
- The actions take regarding the reported incidents of bullying.

This data shall be reported at a public hearing to the public school district board of directors.

➤ **School Principal, or his or her designee, shall report, investigate, and respond to incidents of bullying**

If an alleged incident of bullying occurs during school hours, as soon as reasonably practicable:

- Report to a parent or legal guardian that his or her child is believed to be the victim.
- Prepare a written report of the alleged incident of bullying.

Promptly investigate the credible report or complaint.

- The investigation shall be completed as soon as possible, but not later than five (5) school days from the date of the written report of the alleged incident of bullying.

Upon completion of the investigation:

- Notify the parent or legal guardian of the student who is determined to have been the perpetrator 1) of the incident of bullying; and 2) the consequences of the continued bullying behavior.
- If a student is a party to an incident of bullying, their parent or legal guardian is entitled within five (5) school days after the completion of the investigation to receive information, in accordance with federal and state law, about the investigation.
- Make a written record of the investigation and any action taken as a result of the investigation that includes 1) a detailed description of the alleged incident of bullying;

- and 2) a detailed summary of the statements from all material witnesses to the alleged incident of bullying.
- As appropriate, discuss the availability of counseling and other intervention services with the students involved.

**Although there are minimum legal requirements, school districts are strongly encouraged to be innovative and strategic in their approach to bullying prevention. The non-exhaustive list of practices and resources in Section Three of this guidance has been made available to guide school teams in their deliberate efforts to prevent bullying.**

### **Common questions regarding bullying prevention responsibilities of Arkansas school districts and charter schools...**

- What should be included in the notice of anti-bullying?  
*The notice should explain the behavior that constitutes bullying, prohibit bullying, and describe the discipline consequences of engaging in bullying. The notice must be posted in every classroom, cafeteria, restroom, gymnasium, auditorium, and school bus.*
- What are the Arkansas statutory timelines related to anti-bullying?  
*As soon as reasonably practicable, the school must report to the legal guardian that his or her child is believed to be the target of bullying and prepare a written report of the alleged bullying incident. The school system must promptly investigate credible bullying reports. The investigation must be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 5 school days from the date of the written report of the alleged bullying incident. Within 5 school days upon completion of the investigation, the school system must notify the parent of a student who is a party to an investigation of information about the investigation in accordance with federal and state privacy laws.*
- If an investigation finds that the bullying is based on a student's constitutionally protected status (age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, or sex), how might this impact the school system's response?  
*The school must promptly respond with steps that are reasonably calculated to end the bullying (beyond merely speaking to the aggressor), escalate efforts if the bullying continues and restore the student's access to the educational opportunities provided by the school. The failure to deliberately respond could violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.*

[Litigating Bullying Cases: Holding School Districts and Officials Accountable \(2017\).](#)

- If the alleged bullying occurred outside of school including not within school vehicles/buses, bus stops, or sponsored activities/events - such as occurring at a local park, how might the school respond?  
*The school must assess if the off-school incident resulted in possible bullying behaviors being exhibited within the school environment prompting an investigation. Cyberbullying, whether or not it originated on school property or with school equipment, if directed at a student or employee and is maliciously intended to and is likely to disrupt school must be responded to by the school.*
  
- If the behavior was found to not have caused or likely to cause physical harm, substantial interference, hostile educational environment, or substantial disruption how might the school respond?  
*The school may institute consequences in accordance with their code of conduct and interventions and provide information about the investigation to the parent. Describing the Arkansas definition of bullying to the parent may be of assistance.*
  
- If the bullying behavior continues after implementing the student consequences listed in the local board approved discipline policy, what can be done?  
*The school is encouraged to utilize their progressive discipline consequences in instances where bullying behaviors continue to be exhibited – just as the school system would respond to deter other negative behaviors.*  
  
*The school is also encouraged to juxtapose at any point the implementation of targeted interventions along with discipline consequences – meaning using the investigation findings to identify the root reasons for the bullying behavior and determining needed conversations or supports for the aggressors.*
  
- What are some root reasons for bullying that individuals preparing to respond and provide supports to the aggressor might keep in mind?  
*Possible causes of bullying include being envious, venting frustrations, maintaining reputation or admiration by others, feeling powerless, seeking revenge, or being previously bullied at home, school, club, etc. Address the inner motivation for bullying or replace the negative bullying behavior with an alternative way to deal with a problem.*

- How should interventions be documented in response to a finding of bullying?  
*If the student is currently being supported via an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, Behavior Plan, etc., it is encouraged that bullying prevention supports for either the aggressor or the targeted student be documented in those ongoing plans to ensure clarity and prevent repetitiveness. If there is no plan currently being used to support the student, interventions might be detailed in a bullying safety plan or plan of care locally developed by the school system. Counselor provided interventions might be documented similarly, communicating the impact of these supports to the appropriate individual and teams.*
- If an investigation finds that the aggressor is supported with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, how might this impact the school system's response?  
*The school must determine if the behavior was caused by the student's disability. The investigation findings should be helpful in this determination. If a team determines that the act was caused by the disability, they are expected to plan supports that will teach or aid the student to better manage their disability to prevent future bullying behaviors. The team must be familiar with requirements under IDEA and Section 504 regarding changing a student's placement if it is deemed appropriate. The school should closely monitor and support the student while ensuring the safety of others.*
- If an investigation finds that the targeted student is supported with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, how might this impact the school system's response?  
*The school should determine how the targeted student was impacted by the bullying act. The investigation findings should be helpful in this determination. If changes in the targeted student's behavior or academic performance indicate that they may not be receiving FAPE, the student's IEP or Section 504 Team (and as needed the school counselor) are encouraged to plan supports to restore the student's access to learning and the full educational program. This may include promptly providing additional services and increasing monitoring of the targeted student to prevent future bullying.*
- What is the role of teaching student grit and resiliency in schools?  
*Healthy school cultures and social environments teach individual fortitude and self-sufficiency. Schools should balance the need to reaffirm student resiliency skills just as equally as their diligence to ensure student safety in regard to bullying prevention. Student grit and bullying prevention go hand-in-hand in protecting student self-concept.*

### SECTION THREE: Effective Practices for the Prevention, Reporting, Investigation of, and Response to Bullying

A reduction in school bullying not only improves the quality of the school environment, but also translates to higher test scores and improved academic achievement. To increase opportunities for student success, students, parents, and educators work in partnership as a team in the implementation of the school district's/charter school's bullying prevention policy.

Effective implementation of bullying prevention policies should be guided by established practices that are clear and well-known by everyone. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are key to any implementation.

The role of each **local school board** is to adopt policies based on a review of local school data and evidence-based practices. This includes reviewing the superintendent's annual report on discipline data and analyzing the number of reported incidents of bullying and the actions taken (Act 1029 of 2019).

The role of each **Local Education Agency (LEA)**, public school district or charter school, is to support its students, parents, and employees in their roles of implementing the bullying prevention policy. Specifically, district/school teams should define terms undefined in the Arkansas statutory definition of bullying and must annually reevaluate, reassess, and review its bullying prevention policies and make needed revisions and additions based on this analysis (Act 1029 of 2019).



School identified bullying prevention practices and strategies should be developed collaboratively by all stakeholders, align with local school board approved policies, be appropriate for each school, and take into account student developmental stages and community contexts. What follows is a non-exhaustive list of practices and resources in the areas of bullying prevention, reporting, investigation, and response. School and district teams have discretion to select practices and resources that are not included in this document. Listed resources are examples and not directly endorse by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## Bullying Prevention

### School Leadership

- Understand terms in the Arkansas **definition** of bullying including terms not defined in the statute (e.g., credible, intimidation, etc.).
- Understand & **accurately identify** bullying behaviors.
- Convey a consistent **message** about the school's views toward bullying.
- Garner staff, parent, & student **support** for the bullying prevention policy.
- Form a **team** to coordinate the school's bullying prevention activities.
- Continually **assess**.
  - the number of bullying instances & staff response,
  - the level of communication of bullying behaviors, &
  - the understanding by staff/students of bullying behaviors
- Obtain **feedback** on implemented prevention and intervention programs.
- Utilize **evidence-proven strategies** to prevent bullying.
- Engage in **training** & train staff on bullying prevention policies, identifying harmful behaviors, & bullying prevention/response. Encourage teachers to focus some class time on bullying & peer relations.
- Ensure that **school counseling** & other services are aligned with student needs.
- Establish & enforce **policies/consequences** related to bullying.
- Increase scheduled adult **supervision** in areas (e.g., playground, hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, etc.) where bullying might occur & during break periods.
- Post a **notice** in every classroom, cafeteria, restroom, gymnasium, auditorium, and school bus in the district (per A.C.A. 6-18-514) of the following:

### School Leadership Bullying Prevention Resources & Examples

[Parent & School Leadership Meeting Tips](#) when discussing bullying prevention.

[Model Bullying Prevention Policy](#) for review and adaption to local needs.

[Bullying Prevention Policy Tips](#) for guidance on what must be included in the policy.

[Intervention Tips](#) for guidance and examples on identifying appropriate programs and supports.

[StopBullying.gov Bullying Prevention Training Course](#) a free training describing the use of long-term, community-wide prevention strategies.

[National Alliance for Youth Sports \(NAYS\): Bullying Prevention Training](#) a free training that provides valuable information & issue a certificate by the NAYS.

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) provides a measures review database of trauma-informed treatment & interventions.

[What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#) reviews evidence of effectiveness of programs & practices including those related to student behavior.

- [Caring School Community™](#)
- [First Step to Success](#)
- [Coping Power](#)
- [Social Skills Training](#)
- [Positive Action](#)
- [Fast Track](#)
- [Early Risers](#)
- [Functional Behavioral Assessment-based Interventions](#)
- [Too Good for Violence](#)
- [Connect with Kids](#)

[The Promising Practices Network](#) provides summaries of effective programs & lists research-based information on what works to positively impact children/families.

The [STRYVE Strategy Selector Tool](#) provides evidence-based strategies that have prevented youth violence in communities.

<p><a href="#">Substance Abuse &amp; Mental Health Service Administration</a> is a collection of scientifically- based resources &amp; tools to incorporate evidence-based practices.</p> <p><a href="#">School Climate Improvement Resource Package (SCRIP)</a> provides interactive activities to analyzing climate &amp; identifying effective programs.</p> <p><a href="#">Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions &amp; Supports (PBIS)</a> provides an implementation self-assessment of PBIS.</p>	<p><a href="#">Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development</a> provides a registry of experimentally proven programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Positive Action</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">KiVa Antibullying Program</a></li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Youth.Gov: Evidence &amp; Innovation</a> provides facts, funding resources, tools, &amp; searchable directory of evidence-based programs.</p> <p><a href="#">Office of Juvenile Justice &amp; Delinquency Prevention: Model Programs Guide</a> provides social science evidence of youth prevention programs &amp; practices.</p>
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**Teacher**

- Understand and **accurately identify** bullying behaviors.
- Post and **discuss agreed upon rules/consequences** related to bullying.
- Establish yourself as a **clear and visible authority** with responsibility for making the school experience safe/positive.
- **Reward** students for positive, inclusive behavior.
- Use activities designed to **build student self-esteem**, such as showcasing special talents, hobbies, interests, and abilities.
- Directly **teach cooperation** through projects that require teamwork.
- **Allow time** for students to talk about bullying and peer relations.
- Engage students in activities (e.g., role playing, writing) that help them **understand the harm** caused by bullying.
- As a member of Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams & Section 504 Teams determine if a **student’s disability** affects social skills development or is vulnerable to bully or be bullied. Consider accommodations to develop the student’s skills to prevent and respond to bullying.
- Utilize a **buddy system** for students who may be targeted by bullying to reduce the risk of attack or ridicule.
- Provide information to **parents** about bullying behaviors and encourage their involvement and support in addressing bullying issues.

**Teacher Bullying Prevention Resources & Examples**

<p><a href="#">Common Sense Education</a>® provides a free Digital Citizenship curriculum by grade that includes “Cyberbullying, Digital Drama, &amp; Hate Speech.”</p> <p><a href="#">Hidden Interactions &amp; Indicators of Bullying</a> provides guidance on covert bullying.</p>	<p><a href="#">Character Lab</a> provides usable resources to develop specific character strengths in students and includes classroom strategies.</p>
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**Students**

- Understand and **accurately identify** bullying behaviors.
- Shape peer **norms** that promote a school without cruelty or bullying.
- Provide **feedback** to leadership on school prevention/intervention programs
- **Avoid** engaging in acts of bullying.
- **Seek help** from an adult when there are feelings of hurt, guilt, and/or stress.
- Participate in a **buddy system** for students who may be targeted by bullying to reduce the risk of attack or ridicule.

**Student Bullying Prevention Resources & Examples**

[Student Roles in Bullying Interactions](#) describes the roles of students during bullying situations.

[Common Student Questions About Bullying](#) details questions & answers about bullying behaviors.

**Parent & Families**

- Understand and **accurately identify** bullying behaviors.
- Teach children to be **assertive and solve problems** without using violence & provide praise when they do.
- Give children **positive feedback** when they behave well to help build self- esteem and self-confidence to stand up for themselves.
- **Listen** to children talk about their day at school, social events, classmates, and any problems they have.
- Encourage the child to **help others** who need it.
- **Don't bully** or ridicule your children or others in front of them.
- Work with school staff in support of bullying prevention programs & **advocate** for any of the practices listed in this guidance.

**Parent & Family Bullying Prevention Resources & Examples**

[Parent & School Leadership Meeting Tips](#) when discussing bullying prevention.

**School Counselor**

- Understand & **accurately identify** bullying behaviors.
- Help students develop essential skills such as those found in the G.U.I.D.E. for Life.
- Support students who report being bullied.
- Work with students who bully, those who are the target of bullying, and those who witness bullying behaviors.
- Support **training** programs for school employees so that they can better recognize bullying behaviors and follow through with protocols when bullying takes place.
- Follow protocols for responding to bullying that is occurring in the school.
- Help students develop skills to be “upstanders” and reach out for help when they see bullying taking place.
- Give children **positive feedback** when they behave well to help build self- esteem and self-confidence to stand up for themselves.

**School Counselor Prevention Resources & Examples**

[G.U.I.D.E. for Life](#) provides guidance on the development of soft skills needed to get along with others, communicate well, and make positive contributions.

[Behavior Courses for Professional in Education](#) provides courses on student behavior and interventions.

[BX3 Project Initiative](#) provides coaching to building-level behavior teams that are working to develop tiered systems of behavior support.

[Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports \(PBIS\)](#) provides training modules on PBIS implementation.

[Model Programs Guide](#) provides information on health, welfare, & delinquency prevention programs about what works, what is promising, and what does not work.

[Guide to Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#) supports teams in implementing and improving SEL efforts through process tools.

[American Psychological Association Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - School](#) provides fast facts and technical packages on ways to prevent school violence.

[Violence: Prevention Tools and Resources National Crime Prevention Council](#) provides lesson plans, guidance to parents, and reproducible resources on bullying prevention.

[Common Sense Education](#) provides lesson plans on how to recognize cyberbullying.

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) provides resources for child trauma-informed care.

[SAMHSA Know Bullying Mobile App](#) free app that includes conversation starters about bullying.

[StopBullying.gov Bullying Prevention Training Course](#) that includes training modules and a community action toolkit.

## Reporting of Bullying

### School Leadership

- Establish an efficient **confidential reporting system**, including anonymous reports, for all students to report instances of bullying that includes various reporting methods (e.g., oral statement, Incident Reporting Form, voicemail box, dedicated mailing/email address) and age-appropriate means.
- Ensure that all students, parents, & school staff are **aware** of the reporting system & make forms available at the start of the year, in the student handbook, in the main office, counseling office, nurse office, and the website.
- Address the **student’s fear** of what might happen if they report bullying.
- Listen & accept **oral or written** reports while encouraging oral reports made by or to a staff member be recorded in writing by school staff.
- Convey that **retaliation** directed at reporters of bullying will not be allowed
- Encouraged reports to be made **timely**.
- Convey that knowingly making **false bullying reports** may lead to disciplinary action.
- **Report to the parent of the targeted student** that the student was a target of bullying behaviors (per Act 1029).
- Prepare a **written report** of the alleged bullying incident (per Act 1029).
- Upon completion of an investigation, **notify the parent of the aggressor** regarding the consequences of continued bullying (per Act 1029).
- 5 days upon completion of an investigation, **notify the parent of a student who is a party to an investigation** of information about the investigation (per Act 1029).
- Report the **team’s analysis** of the number of reported incidents of bullying and the actions taken to the district team.

### School Leadership Bullying Reporting Resources & Examples

[Rave Eyewitness](#) provides a two-way text messaging platform.

Listed below are varying methods to track bullying incidents:

- Computer Software Programs or currently used behavior tracking systems (e.g., eSchool, SWIS).

## Teacher

- **Listen** to parents and students who report bullying in your classroom
- Report bullying incidents to the principal (or designee) (per A.C.A. 6-18-514)
- Share in the report information on the other students that were present.
- **Refer** any student(s) affected by bullying to school counseling or mental health staff when appropriate
- Reports should not limit the responsibility to respond to bullying incidents consistent with classroom management procedures & district policies
- Share bullying concerns verbally & timely with colleagues (e.g., in grade-level team meetings, or 1-on-1 with other staff). If, for example, the 3rd period math teacher has observed bullying behaviors among 2 students, make a written report & discuss the issue quickly with the 4th period social studies teacher.

### Teacher Bullying Reporting Resources & Examples

[Types of Bullying & Examples](#) explains the language in the A.C.A. 6-18-514 bullying definition.

[Student Roles in Bullying Interactions](#) describes the roles of students during bullying situations.

## Student

- **Report** bullying incidents you experience or witness at school to an adult & ask for their help. Describe what you are experiencing to your parents, a family member, teacher, friend, or someone else who can help you.
- **Encourage others** to report bullying incidents and help them report if they cannot do it alone.
- Be aware that knowingly making **false bullying reports** may lead to disciplinary action.

### Student Bullying Reporting Resources & Examples

[Student Roles in Bullying Interactions](#) describes the roles of students during bullying situations.

[Common Student Questions About Bullying](#) details questions & answers about reporting bullying behaviors.

## Parents & Families

- Take bullying seriously. Many kids are embarrassed to say they have been bullied. You may only have one chance to step in and help.
- **Notify the principal** (or designee) after each bullying incident.
- **Request assistance** if needed from an employee to complete a written report.
- If bullying continues after a report has been made, utilize the **chain of comment** in your school system (e.g., the superintendent and local school board).

## School Counselor

- **Listen** to parents and students who report bullying in your classroom.
- Report bullying incidents to the principal (or designee) (per A.C.A. 6-18-514).
- **Refer** any student(s) affected by bullying to mental health staff when appropriate.
- Collaborate with teachers regarding suspected bullying behaviors and follow-up on concerns as necessary.

## Investigation of Bullying

### School Leadership

- Promptly follow established **district procedures for investigations** & if needed consult with legal counsel about investigation practices.
- Obtain facts by speaking with students, staff, witnesses, & parents to determine **evidence** that substantiate the bullying allegation. Convey their obligation to be truthful.
- Convey that **retaliation** against anyone providing information during the investigation as not allowed.
- During the investigation, alter the **aggressor’s ability to contact** the targeted student.
- Complete an **investigation of a report** of bullying as soon as possible – no later than 5 school days after a written report was submitted (per Act 1029).
- Upon completion of an investigation, **notify the parent of the aggressor** regarding the consequences of continued bullying (per Act 1029).
- Report investigation information to **all students who are party to an investigation** (per Act 1029).
- Maintain a written **record** of the investigation (per Act 1029).

### School Leadership Bullying Investigation Resources & Examples

[Sample Bullying Investigation Log](#) when documenting collected information.

[Responding to Bullying Behaviors Flowchart](#) for guidance once the school is aware of an allegation of bullying.

[Investigation Tips](#) when examining bullying allegations.

[A.C.A. 6-18-514 Bullying Definition Visual](#) for graphic representation of the Arkansas definition.

[Common Myths About Bullying](#) details faulty understandings of bullying behaviors

[Types of Bullying & Examples](#) explains the language in the A.C.A. 6-18-514 bullying definition.

### Teacher

- Provide a **record** of any action you have taken or suggested.

### Student

- Describe what you **experienced**.
- Describe what you believe are your **needs** to feel safe.

### Student Bullying Investigation Resources & Examples

[Student Roles in Bullying Interactions](#) describes the roles of students during bullying situations.

### Parents & Families

- Obtain the **full interpretation** of the bullying incident as possible from your child.
- Request and/or attend a **meeting** that includes the child’s teacher, principal, or school counselor to discuss bullying investigation facts.
- If appropriate, **inquire with child** on their ideas on what would be the best action to take to feel safe.
- Allow the school an appropriate amount of **time** to investigate and respond.
- **Document** the dates, times, locations, & names, not only of the bullying incidents, but those to whom a bullying report was made.

### School Counselor

- Document and provide a **record** of any action you have taken or suggested.

## Response to Bullying

### School Leadership

- Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations by taking steps reasonably calculated to **prevent recurrence**.
- Ensure that the targeted student is **not restricted in participating** in school or activities.
- Ensure that **interventions, school counseling, mental health supports, & other services** are provided & aligned with the needs of all involved students.
- Refer to Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams & Section 504 Teams for **plan review or evaluation** as needed.
- Implement board approved **consequences** for bullying when a bully report is substantiated.
- If at any point the principal has reasonable belief that **criminal charges** should be pursued, contact the school resource officer or local law enforcement.
- Convey that disciplinary action cannot be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an **anonymous report**.
- Establish **training** programs to reduce bullying (per Act 1029).
- Respond when needed to **staff noncompliance** of the bullying policy
- Upon investigation completion, **notify the parent of the aggressor** regarding the consequences of continued bullying (per Act 1029).
- 5 days upon investigation completion, **notify the parents of students who are party to the investigation** of information about the investigation (per Act 1029):
  - Existence of a credible report.
  - Whether the credible report was found to be true based on investigation.
  - Whether action was taken upon the conclusion of the investigation.
  - Communicate the need to report recurring bullying incidents.
- Ensure that notices to parents comply with state & federal **privacy laws**
- Make a written **record** of any action taken (per Act 1029).

### School Leadership Bullying Response Resources & Examples

[StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov) [Bullying Prevention Training Course](#) a free training describing the use of long- term, community-wide prevention strategies.

[National Alliance for Youth Sports: Bullying Prevention Training \(NAYS\)](#) a free training that provides valuable information & issues a certificate by the NAYS.

University of Arkansas: The College of Education and Health Professions skill training in [Social Emotional Learning](#) for youth ages 3-5.

Arkansas Teacher Excellence Support System (TESS) Informal Observation Data Collection.

[Parent & School Leadership Meeting Tips](#) when discussing bullying prevention.

[Responding to Bullying Behaviors Flowchart](#) guidance once the school is aware of an allegation of bullying.

[Intervention Tips](#) provides guidance and examples for supporting students after bullying has occurred.

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) provides a measures review database of trauma-informed treatment and interventions.

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) is a collection of resources & tools to incorporate evidence-based practices.

As district and school teams assess current bullying prevention practices, non-productive strategies may be identified. To determine this - students, parents, and educators should assess and evaluate the actual outcomes of current strategies being used in their school. Below are only a few strategies that might currently be used and in need of review for effectiveness.

<b>Assessment of Possible Non-productive Bullying Prevention</b>	
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Guiding Questions When these Strategies are Used</b>
Zero Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is its implementation practical &amp; realistic given the numbers of students involved?</li> <li>• Does it allow for intervention or consequences that teach and reinforce new skills?</li> <li>• Does the punishment deter reporting?</li> </ul>
Conflict Resolution & Peer Mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In bullying situations, does this imply that both parties bear responsibility?</li> <li>• In bullying situations, does this further victimize the target?</li> <li>• Does the aggressor use mediation as an opportunity to convey that the other student is at fault?</li> </ul>
Group Therapeutic Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do group members may model inappropriate behavior?</li> <li>• Does this reinforce bullying behavior in your school?</li> </ul>
Simplifying the Relationship between Bullying & Suicide  (Using terms like “bullycide” or “bullied to death”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does it suggest that bullying may be caused by only one factor?</li> <li>• Does it diminish the possibility that students overcome the cruelty at the hands of others?</li> </ul>
Simple, Short-term Solutions  (One-time assemblies, speakers, staff trainings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this likely to reduce bullying problems or make bullying problems worse?</li> <li>• Will staff be provided the practical tools to effectively prevent and respond to bullying in the moment?</li> </ul>

**Teacher**

- **Assess** whether the student is at risk of harm.
- **Intervene** quickly, consistently, and appropriately in bullying situations.
- Take immediate **action** when bullying is observed or reported by -
  - Directly addressing the student exhibiting bully behaviors in private.
  - Supporting the student(s) targeted and witnesses.
- **Report** allegations of bullying to the principal promptly.
- **Refer** when appropriate any student(s) affected by bullying to school counseling or mental health staff.
- Maintain a **record** of any action you have taken or suggested.

### Teacher Bullying Response Resources & Examples

[Verbal Responses to Student Bullying Allegations](#) guides educators in assessing effective verbal responses to allegations of bullying.

**Student**

- Understand the **role** students play in bullying behaviors.
- Support students who have been hurt by **offering kind words & help** if needed.
- Show your disagreement to the bullying behavior by **not joining in and do not participate** in gossip or rumors being spread.
- If you are a target to bullying, tell the other person “I don't like that” or “please stop doing that” using a strong and **confident** voice. Even if you don't feel strong and confident.
- Don't try to get back at the person who bullies you. It usually doesn't work, and you may end up in trouble.
- If the bullying happens on the phone or internet **don't respond** to the message.
- Seek help from an adult when there are feelings of hurt, guilt, and/or stress.
- If the bullying happens on the phone or internet, ask for help to put a **block** on your mobile device or social networking page so you don't get the bullying posts or texts.

### Student Bullying Prevention Resources & Examples

[Student Roles in Bullying Interactions](#) describes the roles of students during bullying situations.

### Parents & Families

- Convince the child that has been the target of a bully that it was **not their fault**, that they are valued and entitled to respect.
- Work with school staff to address a bullying incident by **advocating** for any of the practices listed in this guidance.
- Maintain accurate **records** of incidents.
- Request and/or attend a **meeting** that includes the child's teacher, principal, or school counselor to discuss practical advice or intervention.
- **Describe a child's experience** specifically when discussing resolution of a bullying incident with school personnel.
- In incidents of a **major harassment** such as a physical or sexual assault, contact law enforcement.
- Following a report of resolution **inquire with child** if the situation has improved.
- Determine if the child affected by bullying would benefit from **school counseling or mental health support**.

### Parent and Family Bullying Response Resources & Examples

[Parent and School Leadership Meeting Tips](#)  
when discussing bullying prevention.

[Verbal Responses to Student Bullying Allegations](#)  
guides educators in assessing effective verbal responses to allegations of bullying.

### School Counselor

- **Assess** whether the student is at risk of harm.
- **Intervene** quickly, consistently, and appropriately in bullying situations.
- Take immediate **action** when bullying is observed or reported by -
  - Directly addressing the student exhibiting bully behaviors in private.
  - Supporting the student targeted and as well as any witnesses.
    - Provide school counseling services and resources.
- Maintain a **record** of any action you have taken or suggested.

## SECTION FOUR: Resources

This section includes resources concerning bullying prevention. This information is provided for the reader's convenience and are shared in an effort to support multiple audiences (e.g., stakeholders, parents, students, advocacy groups, and educators). Resources include links to websites and information created and maintained by public and private organizations. The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Equity Assistance Center (EAC) do not guarantee the accuracy of the information contained within these resources, and do not endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.

- **Arkansas Office of the Attorney General** provides tips to parents and students in <https://arkansasag.gov/education-programs/internet-safety/tips-for-parents/>.
- **Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)** provides in [Safe and Sound: Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence Based Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Programs](#) consumer-oriented ratings of 80 classroom-based programs selected from nearly 250 that were reviewed and information about effective program implementation.
- **PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center** provides information on how to prevent peer-to-peer bullying for students, parents, and educators in <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/>.
- **Learning for Justice** is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center and provides resources on bullying, school climate, and other topic related to tolerance in <https://www.learningforjustice.org/>.
- **National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments** offers research, training and tools in a variety of areas including bullying, safety, and school climate in <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/safety/bullyingcyberbullying>.
- **Cyberbullying Research Center** provides information about the cause, nature, extent, and consequences of cyberbullying among youth in <https://cyberbullying.org/>.

## Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education

- **Guidance on *Responding to Bullying of Students with Disabilities*, October 21, 2014**  
Letter discusses the school's obligation to respond to the bullying of students with disabilities. It describes the actions schools must take when bullying interferes with the education of a student with a disability and provides insight into how OCR analyzes complaints involving bullying of students with disabilities.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-bullying-201410.pdf>

- ***Parent Fact Sheet: What Are Public Schools Required to Do When Students with Disabilities Are Bullied?***  
Parent guidance describing schools' obligations under federal law concerning bullying and students with disabilities.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-bullying-201410.pdf>

- **OCR Contact Information**

Information regarding federal civil rights laws or how to file an OCR complaint of alleged disability discrimination at schools.

Mailing Address: Kansas City Office  
Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
One Petticoat Lane  
1010 Walnut Street, Suite 320 – 3rd Floor  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Telephone: 816-268-0550

FAX: 816-268-0599

TDD: 800-877-8339

Email: [OCR.KansasCity@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.KansasCity@ed.gov)

Website: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>

## Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSEP) of the U. S. Department of Education Guidance

- **Guidance on *Bullying of Students with Disabilities*, August 20, 2013**  
Letter clarifies that when the bullying of a student with a disability results in the student not receiving meaningful educational benefit under Individuals with Disabilities Acts (IDEA), the school must remedy the problem, regardless of whether the bullying was based on the student's disability.

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/bullyingdcl-8-20-13.pdf>

- **Guidance on *Prohibited Disability Harassment*, July 25, 2000**  
In this letter OCR and OSEP explain that bullying based on disability may violate civil rights laws enforced by OCR as well as interfere with a student's receipt of special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/disabharassltr.html>

- **Parent and Educator Guide to School Climate Resources, April 10, 2019**  
Guide describing how to lead improvement for an effective school climate.  
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaguidetoschoolclimate041019.pdf>

## Model Bullying Prevention Policy

The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education developed the following model policy as a resource to assist public school districts and charter schools in preventing student bullying behaviors and complying with A.C.A. § 6-18-514. This model may be reviewed and adapted to local needs.

### A. Policy Statement

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert School District or Charter School*) in order to achieve our agreed district vision, believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment.
2. All public school students in the \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert School District or Charter School*) shall be provided a public school environment that does not infringe on safety and is reasonably free from bullying, substantial intimidation, harassment, harm or the threat of harm by another student through words or actions.
3. The Board of Directors of the \_\_\_\_\_ (*Insert School District or Charter School*) shall adopt policies to prevent bullying.

### B. Definitions:

1. "Attribute" means an actual or perceived personal characteristic including without limitation race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, socioeconomic status, academic status, disability, gender, gender identity, physical appearance, health condition, or sexual orientation;
2. "Bullying" means the intentional harassment, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, defamation, or threat or incitement of violence by a student against another student or public school employee by written, verbal, electronic, or physical act that causes or creates actual or reasonably foreseeable:
  - a. Physical harm to a public school employee or student or damage to the public school employee's or student's property;
  - b. Substantial interference with a student's education or with a public school employee's role in education;
  - c. A hostile educational environment for one (1) or more students or public school employees due to the severity, persistence, or pervasiveness of the act; or
  - d. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school or educational environment.
3. "Cyberbullying" means any form of communication by electronic act that is sent with the purpose to:
  - a. Harass, intimidate, humiliate, ridicule, defame, or threaten a student, public school employee, or person with whom the other student or public school employee is associated; or
  - b. Incite violence against a student, public school employee, or person with whom the other student or public school employee is associated;

4. "Electronic act" means without limitation a communication or image transmitted by means of an electronic device, including without limitation a telephone, wireless phone or other wireless communications device, computer, or pager;
5. "Harassment" means a pattern of unwelcome verbal or physical conduct relating to another person's constitutionally or statutorily protected status that causes, or reasonably should be expected to cause, substantial interference with the other's performance in the school environment; and
6. "Substantial disruption" means without limitation that any one (1) or more of the following occur as a result of the bullying:
  - a. Necessary cessation of instruction or educational activities;
  - b. Inability of students or educational staff to focus on learning or function as an educational unit because of a hostile environment;
  - c. Severe or repetitive disciplinary measures are needed in the classroom or during educational activities; or
  - d. Exhibition of other behaviors by students or educational staff that substantially interfere with the learning environment.

C. Bullying is prohibited:

1. While in school, on school equipment or property, in school vehicles, on school buses, at designated school bus stops, at school-sponsored activities, at school-sanctioned events or through cyberbullying. Students shall not engage in any of the following activities:
  - a. Cyberbullying that substantially disrupts orderly school operation and educational environment whether or not it generated on school property or with school equipment it was directed specifically at students or school personnel and maliciously intended for the purpose of disrupting school and has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose
  - b. Hurtful comments about race, color, religion, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical experience, sexual orientation or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability;
  - c. Manipulation;
  - d. Mocking or taunting;
  - e. Physical injury;
  - f. Public humiliation;
  - g. Purposeful social isolation;
  - h. Rumor spreading;
  - i. Threats (verbal, non-verbal, or electronic [including cyberbullying]);
  - j. Verbal assaults, such as teasing or name calling;
  - k. Any other verbal, non-verbal or electronic means (including cyberbullying) the administration deems as an attempt to bully;

- D. To build staff capacity to maintain a safe and healthy school environment, staff will engage in development and training on approved bullying prevention policies, bullying prevention, on the relationship between bullying incidents and suicide risk, on how to cultivate acceptance and understanding. School leadership teams shall be provided an opportunity

for school employees to participate in programs or activities designed to develop knowledge and skills to prevent and respond to bullying.

- E. Educators shall discuss the bullying prevention policy with students in age-appropriate ways and the school shall assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying.
- F. The procedures for reporting bullying incidents include:
  - 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Insert bullying reporting procedures)*
- G. Students are encouraged to report behavior that they consider to be bullying to a teacher or their principal. Any student who reports bullying shall not be subject to retaliation.
- H. School employees are required to report as soon as possible to the principal alleged bullying incidents that they have witnessed or when they have reliable information that a student has been a target of bullying. School employees who witness such acts shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. School employees that report bullying incidents shall not be subject to retaliation and shall be immune from tort liability that may arise from the failure to remedy the reported incident.
- I. Each report of bullying shall be promptly investigated.
- J. The steps that must be taken by principal, or his or her designee, to address a report of an alleged incident of bullying:
  - 1. Prior to investigation:
    - a) Report to the parent of the targeted student that the student was a target in a credible bullying report.
    - b) Prepare a written report of the alleged incident of bullying.
  - 2. A written record of the investigation shall be maintained. It should include:
    - a) Detailed description of alleged bullying incident.
    - b) Detailed summary of material witness statements to the alleged bullying incident.
  - 3. Upon investigation completion, notify the parent of the proven aggressor regarding the consequences of continued bullying.
  - 4. Five (5) days upon investigation completion, notify the parents of students who are party to the investigation of information about the investigation:
    - a) Existence of a credible report.
    - b) Whether the credible report was found to be true based on investigation.
    - c) Whether action was taken upon the conclusion of the investigation.
    - d) Communicate the need to report recurring bullying incidents.
  - 5. Notices to parents shall comply with state and federal privacy laws.
  - 6. A written record of any action shall be maintained.
  - 7. If needed, align counseling and intervention services with the needs of students involved in the bullying incident.

- K. Students found through investigation to have engaged in bullying are in violation of this policy and subject to disciplinary action. Consequences for bullying:
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Insert consequences - may vary depending on student age or grade)*
  3. \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Insert consequences for retaliation)*
- L. The superintendent shall report to the school board of directors at a public hearing data regarding discipline, including the number of incidents of bullying reported and the actions taken regarding incidents of bullying.
- M. A notice of the behaviors that constitute bullying, the prohibition of bullying, and the consequences of engaging in bullying shall be clearly posted in every classroom, cafeteria, restroom, gymnasium, auditorium, and school bus in the school system.
- N. Copies of the notice of the behaviors that constitute bullying, the prohibition of bullying, and the consequences of engaging in bullying shall be provided annually to students, parents and legal guardians, employees, and school volunteers. A full copy of this policy shall be made available upon request.
- O. A notice of the school district's policies to prevent bullying shall appear in the student handbook and the publication of the comprehensive rules, procedures, standards, and code of conduct for each school.
- P. The school district shall provide the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with the website address at which a copy of the policies adopted in compliance with Act 1029 may be found.

## Bullying Prevention Policy Tips

Public school districts and charter schools **MUST** ensure that the policy:

- Clearly **defines** the conduct that constitutes bullying as defined by A.C.A. § 6-18-514(b).
- Expressly **prohibits** bullying (including cyberbullying) while in school, on school equipment or property, in school vehicles, on school buses, at designated school bus stops, at school-sponsored activities, or at school-sanctioned events.
- States the **consequences** for engaging in the prohibited conduct.
- Require that school employees who have witnessed or maintain reliable information that a student has been bullied to **report to the principal** the incident as soon as possible.
- Require that reporters will not be subject to **retaliation** or reprisal in any form.
- Describe the **procedures for reporting** bullying incidents and the **steps** that must be taken by employees to address the report.
- Require that **notice** of the below listed items be clearly posted in every classroom, cafeteria, restroom, gymnasium, auditorium, and school bus in the school system:
  - Behaviors that constitute bullying
  - Prohibition of bullying
  - Consequences of engaging in bullying
- Require that **copies** of the notice be provided annually to parents, students, school volunteers, and employees of the notice of what constitutes bullying, that bullying is prohibited, and the consequences of engaging in bullying. A full copy of this policy must be made available upon request.
- Require that bullying prevention **policies appear** in the student handbook and the publication of the comprehensive rules, procedures, standards, and code of conduct for each school.

Public school districts and charter schools are **ENCOURAGED** to include within the policy:

- Examples of strategies used in their schools for promoting positive behavior being practiced by its school community.
- Training conducted for teachers and staff about how to appropriately prevent, report, investigate, and respond to instances of bullying.

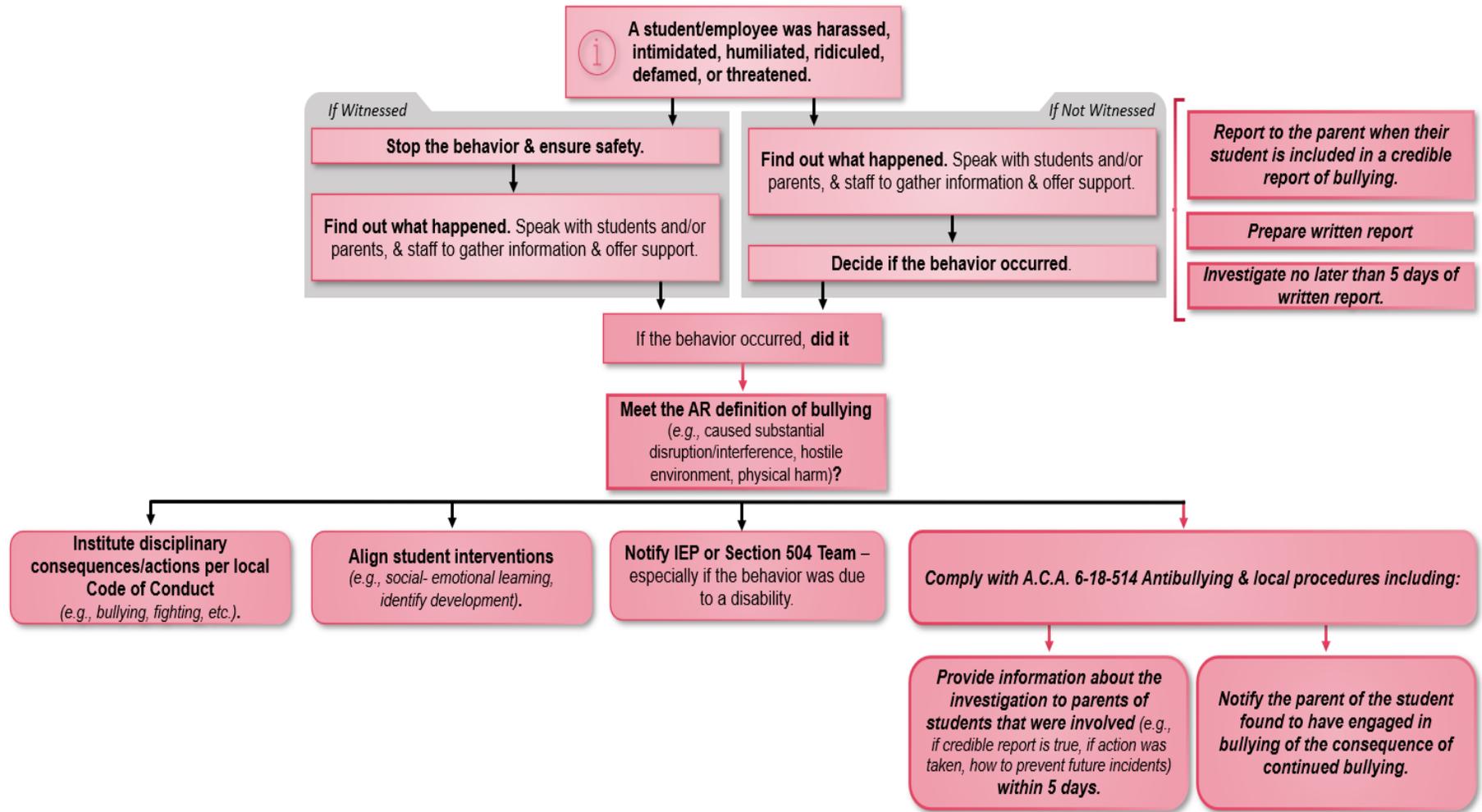
# Responding to Bullying Behaviors Flowchart



AR DESE Equity Assistance Center:  
Responding to Bullying Behaviors

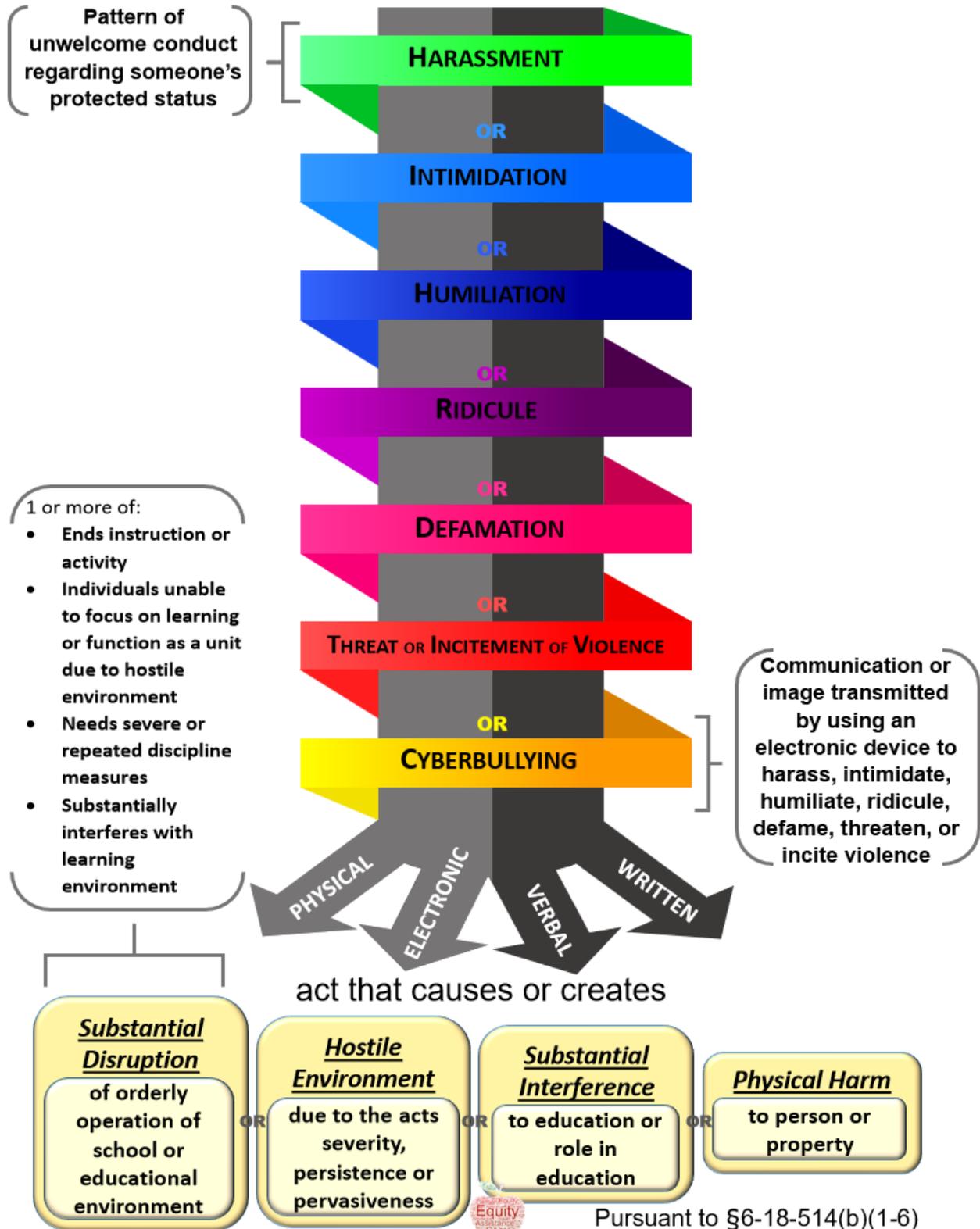


A resource to **principals & designees** when responding to incidents of student aggression. Local school district & charter school procedures must be followed. This resource is not legal advice & is subject to change without notice.



Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514 Bullying Definition Visual

**Bullying is intentional**



## Types of Bullying & Examples

Understanding the words and language used to describe bullying help be able to identify specific negative behaviors when they are observed or heard. Increased awareness of specific behaviors aids in monitoring and quick and appropriate responses.

### Definitions: Developing a Local Understanding of Undefined Terms

There are a variety of ways to identify the most appropriate definitions of terms that are not defined in A.C.A. § 6-18-514. One central element of this process is collaboration with the school community - students, staff, and parents. Two methods are below.

#### One Method:

- Ask a diverse group of individuals within the school community to collaborate and identify student behaviors that have the potential to harm another individual.
- Categorize these specific acts into the listed terms in A.C.A. § 6-18-514.

#### Another Method:

- Gather information about the listed terms in A.C.A. § 6-18-514 including common definitions and understandings of those terms from individuals in the school community.
- Identify a common and agreed-upon definition of the undefined terms.
- Identify the specific behaviors and acts that meet the agreed-upon definitions of each term.

### Definitions: Common Understandings of Undefined Terms

Listed below are Merriam-Webster's dictionary definitions of some terms listed in A.C.A. § 6-18-514 including common synonyms. The below definitions and language are a resource and should not be interpreted as required use.

<b>A.C.A. § 6-18-514 Undefined Term</b>	<b>Merriam-Webster's Definition</b>	<b>Common Synonym</b>
Intimidate	To make timid or fearful To frighten or terrify To compel or deter	Scare
Humiliate	To reduce someone to a lower position in one's own eyes or others' eyes To make someone ashamed or embarrassed To mortify	Demean
Ridicule	To make fun of To condescend To laugh at	Mock
Defamation	To communicate false statements about someone that injures their reputation	Slander
Threat (of Violence)	An expression of intention to inflict injury or damage	Endanger

Incitement (of Violence)	To move to action To urge on	Instigate
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\*The terms “harassment” and “cyberbullying” are defined in A.C.A. § 6-18-514.

\*\*The term “credible” might need to be defined by the school district or charter school to effectively comply with the A.C.A. § 6-18-514.

### Possible Examples of Bullying Behaviors (non-exhaustive)

Bullying behaviors should be examined on a case-by-case basis. Bullying behaviors can include the following:

- Taunting
- Derogatory jokes (e.g., making fun of)
- Written or graphic material, including graffiti, photographs, drawings, or videos, containing comments or stereotypes that are derogatory of others
- Repeatedly sending insulting electronic messages
- Repeatedly and intensely denigrating someone online
- Sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- Pretending to be someone else online and sending or posting material
- Aggressive or menacing gestures
- Trying to make a student do things against their will
- Hazing
- Pushing, shoving, tripping, spitting on
- Stalking
- Threatening notes

### **Definition: Two-Part Understanding**

Terms regarding the act and the impact of the act must both be understood. In addition to the occurrence of an act, it must also cause or be likely to cause physical harm, substantial interference, a hostile educational environment, or substantial disruption as defined by A.C.A. § 6-18-514(b)(2)(A)(i-iv).

Some examples might include -

- *Harassment* leading to *physical harm to a person.*
- *Intimidation* leading to *physical harm to property.*
- *Humiliation* leading to *a substantial interference with a student’s education.*
- *Ridicule* leading to *substantial interference with an employee’s role in education.*
- *Defamation* leading to *a hostile educational environment for students.*
- *A threat of violence* leading to *a hostile educational environment for staff.*
- *Incitement of violence* leading to *a substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.*
- *Cyberbullying* leading to *a substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the educational environment.*



### Possible Examples of the Impact of Bullying (non-exhaustive)

The effects of bullying should be examined on a case-by-case basis. Bullying behaviors can result in the following:

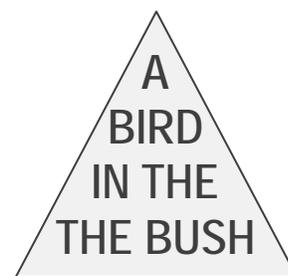
- Physical bruises
- Damaged property
- Decreased academic achievement (e.g., late assignments, lower classroom test grades)
- No longer engaging in class discussions due to feelings of apprehension or anxiety
- Being late for class or skipping a specific class
- Asking to go to the restroom or water fountain often in the middle of a specific class
- Not walking in the classroom (e.g., to sharpen a pencil, get a book, hand in a paper, etc.) to not be noticed by an aggressor(s)
- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Damaged friendships
- Changing the way they dress and clothing choice
- Increased health complaints and requests to see the school nurse
- No longer eating at lunch due to sadness or loneliness
- Walking a longer route to their destination to dodge an aggressor(s)
- A class lesson ended to address possible bullying behavior
- Repeated classroom disciplinary measures needed to address possible bullying behavior

To identify bullying behaviors pursuant to A.C.A. § 6-18-514, consider the context of the situation, knowledge of the individuals involved, and how the behavior impacted the school environment.

## Hidden Interactions & Indicators of Bullying

### What Do you See?

Read the words of the common phrase in the triangle as quickly as possible. If it took a moment to notice that “the” appears twice, you will understand that we often see what we expect to see. Because many of us are familiar with the common phrase, we can make unconscious assumptions about what is actually there.



Here is another example. View the common FedEx logo.



Have you ever noticed the middle arrow pointing to the right within the letter “E” and “x”? Because many of us are familiar with this image, we may not have ever seen the arrow.

Some bullying behaviors might not be as overt as physical bullying or verbal bullying. Negative behaviors may be quiet, subtle, or hidden from others. Some behaviors may only happen within student social groups. When it comes to bullying behavior, it is important that we have a clear sense of what it looks like so that we can avoid making assumptions about what we see or fail to see as a possible form of bullying.

In a 2006 study of preservice teacher responses to bullying scenarios, bullying within relationships and student social situations was perceived as less serious than other forms of bullying – physical and verbal bullying.

*Discomfort with ambiguity may have an influence. When a teacher observes an incident of physical bullying, the teacher may feel that the duty to intervene is clear. Many schools now have zero tolerance for violence, providing guidelines for this type of behavior. Thus, the teacher is not faced with uncertainty about the best course of action. This is likely to be the case with verbal bullying (name-calling or threats). [...]*

*Relational bullying is more ambiguous and may be difficult to detect. Behaviors used in relational bullying are less likely to be expressly forbidden by policy. When a teacher observes a child being repeatedly excluded by classmates, what is the best course of action? The teacher may believe that requiring the other children to include an ostracized child is counterproductive. A child who is included only because of a teacher's demand is unlikely to feel more accepted.*

*They had less empathy for victims of relational bullying, were less likely to intervene in relational bullying, and would take less severe actions toward relational bullies and victims than those involved in physical or verbal bullying*

Source: Bauman, Sheri & Rio, Adrienne. (2006). Preservice Teachers' Responses to Bullying Scenarios: Comparing Physical, Verbal, and Relational Bullying. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 98. 219-231. 10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.219.

Although the impact of hidden or indirect bullying is difficult to quantify, if it causes harm to a student, it should be identified and responded to promptly.

## Bullying Indicators

If the visibility of bullying is covert, being aware of and alert to subtle warning signs of bullying might inform educators, parents, and student peers on when to inquire about the welfare of a student, offer help, and report bullying to the school.

When a student is involved in any way (e.g., target, aggressor, witness) in a bullying interaction some indicators could include:

- Poor school performance, including lower grades and test scores.
- Poor classroom attendance or not liking school.
- Negative physical and mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, involvement in sexual violence, substance abuse, and poor social functioning.
- Increased perceptions that adults have little control and/or do not care about them.

When a student is the target of bullying behaviors, the harm can be broader possibly persisting into adulthood, and could include:

- Physically hurt.
- Increased health complaints, headaches, stomach aches, changes in sleep and eating patterns, or loss of interest in activities.
- Unable to focus on their work, get poor grades, begin to withdraw from classroom activities, or be increasingly absent - missing, skipping, or dropping out of school altogether.
- Social isolation or avoidance of social situations
- Lack quality friendships at school or increased feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Depression, anxiety, or suspicion of others.

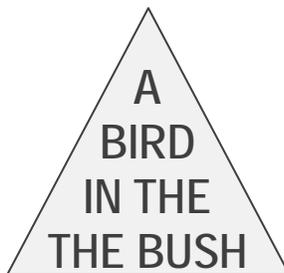
When a student is exhibiting bullying behaviors, some indicators could include:

- Disconnected feelings from school and feeling like they do not belong.
- Blame others for problems.
- Increased risk of getting into fights or damaging property.
- Sent to the principal's office frequently.
- Have friends who exhibit bullying behaviors.

When a student sees bullying behaviors, some indicators could include:

- Increased feelings of powerlessness, fear, and guilt.

Now that you have seen the extra word, it's impossible not to see it a few minutes later.



The more we learn about bullying (what it might look like at school, and which behaviors may indicate that bullying is occurring), the better we will be able to detect multiple types of bullying and respond. To identify bullying behaviors, consider the context of the situation, knowledge of the students involved, and how the behavior impacted everyone.

Adapted from Diamanti, K., Duffey, T., & Fisher, D. (2018). *Creating a safe and respectful environment in our nation's classrooms*. Washington, DC: National

Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments.

[https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/NCSSLE-Safe-Respectful%20Mod-1-SlfStdy-508\\_0.pdf](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/NCSSLE-Safe-Respectful%20Mod-1-SlfStdy-508_0.pdf)

## Investigation Tips

The investigation of a credible report of bullying should be confidential, fact-finding in nature, professional, impartial, and timely.

### Investigation Process

1. Accept a **credible report** of bullying.
2. Determine if there is an issue concerning:
  - a. Commitment of a **crime or child protection or abuse**.
    - i. If yes, contact child protective services or local law enforcement.
  - b. Title IX **Sexual Harassment**.
    - i. If yes, contact school district or charter school Title IX Coordinator.
  - c. A **constitutionally protected status** (age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, or sex).
    - i. If yes, contact school district or charter school Title VI Coordinator.
3. Be aware of any tendency to make assumptions about the incident or the persons involved. Be objective and unbiased.
4. Gather **factual information** on what happened and did not happen:
  - a. Interview all parties and witnesses separately and as needed collect written statements.
    - i. When speaking with the accused student advise that if the conduct has occurred, it must cease immediately.
  - b. Collect information such as:
    - i. What has happened?
    - ii. Who has been affected/involved/witnessed?
    - iii. Where, when, and how did the incident(s) occur?
    - iv. How often did the incident(s) occur and over what period of time?
    - v. How persistent was the aggressor(s)?
    - vi. What was the impact on the targeted student(s)? What feelings or behavior did the student(s) experience? Was there an impact on attendance, academic performance, participation in extracurricular activities, or social interactions?
    - vii. What was the impact on anyone else? What feelings or behavior did they experience?
    - viii. Video surveillance or audio recording
  - c. Document the date of each collected statement or interview.
5. When **determining if the behaviors constitute bullying** compare them to the Arkansas definition of bullying in A.C.A. § 6-18-514.
  - a. Was the behavior harassment (as defined), intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, defamation, threat of violence, incitement of violence, or cyberbullying (as defined)?
  - b. Would a reasonable person consider the act caused or was likely to cause a substantial interference, hostile educational environment, or substantial disruption cause (as defined)?

6. Maintain a written record of the investigation - include a detailed
  - a. Description of the alleged incident
  - b. Summary of the statements from all material witnesses to the alleged incident of bullying

#### Post-investigation Process

1. When **determining a response based on the investigation**, take into account the individual incident, the nature of the behavior, the impact of the behavior, the developmental age of the students, student safety concerns, and a student's history of prohibited conduct and performance.
2. If another incident is reported and a plan was in place to prevent a **recurrence** of bullying determine if the plan was appropriate and/or implemented.
3. Maintain a written record of any action taken as a result of the investigation.

## Sample Bullying Investigation Log

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time  (or time frame)	Description		Definition Applied		Actions	
	What happened?  Who did it?  Who saw it?  Where did it happen?	How was the student affected?  How were other students affected?	Was the conduct: <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment <input type="checkbox"/> Intimidation <input type="checkbox"/> Humiliation <input type="checkbox"/> Ridicule <input type="checkbox"/> Defamation <input type="checkbox"/> Threat or Incitement of Violence <input type="checkbox"/> Cyberbullying	Did the act cause or create foreseeably: <input type="checkbox"/> Substantial Disruption <input type="checkbox"/> Hostile Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Substantial Interference <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Harm	What action(s) or plan will be made? <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Training <input type="checkbox"/> Interventions <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Safety Plan <input type="checkbox"/> No-Contact Agreement <input type="checkbox"/> Code of Conduct Consequences <input type="checkbox"/> Share with student's IEP or Section 504 Team  What are the expected outcomes of these actions?	<u>Progress Monitor:</u> What is the actual impact of the actions?

Adapted from the Anti-Bullying Alliance

## Intervention Tips

### Intervention Guidance

After determining that bullying has occurred, the response to support students should be in accordance with the local school board approved consequences for the misconduct as well as teaching appropriate skills and behaviors. This recognizes that bullying is a learned behavior and acknowledges that behaviors can be changed, and that each student has the capacity for change.

Students should be given meaningful & appropriate **consequences** that fit the misconduct.



Students should be given **supports** based on:  
How they can be made to feel safe again (target). Why they are engaging in bullying behaviors (aggressor).

### Facts to Keep in Mind

Students need to realize the hurt they cause.

Students need to understand the impact their behavior has on others.

Many students may not recognize their behaviors as harmful or bullying, but as “just having fun.”

Many students are developing the skills needed to maintain healthy relationships and form their identity.

For some students bullying behaviors are the result of a disability due to certain emotional or behavioral disorders.

Intervention effectiveness depends greatly on the context, school culture, climate, and the way in which each intervention is carried out.

### Intervention Examples

The below non-exhaustive list of interventions may be used as a resource with the understanding that interventions should be student-centered. Student skill-building approaches might include:

- Identify a **trusting adult who** agrees to daily check-in with the student. Check-in support may range from listening to the student, offering encouragement, confirming if the student has done the right thing, relaying that mistreatment is not their fault, and affirming that things will get better.
- Increase adult **supervision** and/or video monitoring in areas where the student has been bullied.
- **Inform other teachers/staff** as appropriate about concerns so they are better aware and able to maintain safety.
- Provide **safety adjustments** (e.g., move desk, change locker, go to the bathroom at a different time, eat at a different table or with teacher) for the student that exhibited bullying behaviors. The targeted student should not be required to rearrange their routine for safety.
- Provide academic and nonacademic **positive behavioral supports** to teach prosocial ways to achieve goals.
- Provide relevant educational **activities for individual students or student groups** in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate personnel.

- Offer individualized **skill-building sessions** based on the board approved bullying prevention curricula (e.g., problem solving skills, social skills, life skills, anger management, social-emotional intelligence).
- **Reenact** or **role-play** appropriate and constructive ways to achieve feelings of acceptance, belonging, and control of one's environment when socializing with others.
- Use behavioral **plans** to progress monitor the development of specific social skills particularly if a student has been found to have engaged in bullying more than once in the same school year. It may take time to change a behavior.
- Refer for **evaluation** of a disability and/or counseling or mental health services.
- Meet with parents to engage support in reinforcing skill-building sessions and the **bullying prevention curricula at home**.

## Student Roles in Bullying Interactions

Bullying behaviors are almost always exhibited in front of other students. These individuals also play a role in the interaction. The following are a few of the roles in student bullying interactions:

- Student(s) who are targeted in bullying behavior.
- Student(s) who initiate the bullying behavior.
- Student(s) who assist may not start or lead the bullying behavior, but they join in.
- Student(s) who reinforce and give bullying an active audience - laughing, clapping, or indirectly encouraging the student engaged in the bullying behavior.
- Student(s) who defend the targeted student(s) - act on behalf of the student being bullied, discourage the initiator(s), provide comfort, or get help.
- Student(s) who are bystanders or outsiders remain separate or stay away from the situation, neither reinforcing the bullying behavior nor defending the student being bullied. Even if they say nothing, their behavior or silence might provide passive support or approval to the student doing the bullying. Outsiders may also be unaware of the interaction.

Adapted from Diamanti, K., Duffey, T., & Fisher, D. (2018). *Creating a safe and respectful environment in our nation's classrooms*. Washington, DC: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. [https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/NCSSLE-Safe-Respectful%20Mod-1-SlfStdy-508\\_0.pdf](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/NCSSLE-Safe-Respectful%20Mod-1-SlfStdy-508_0.pdf)

## Common Student Questions About Bullying

- Am I a bully because I like to tell jokes and tease?  
*Everyone appreciates someone with a good sense of humor. Laughter is contagious and at times can make other people feel better regardless of what they are going through. As in any situation, you should always be respectful of your audience and look for warning signs that they are being hurt. Change your behavior if needed to create a friendly atmosphere for all students and public school employees.*
  
- Am I being bullied?  
*If you are unsure about the tone of a certain conversation, encounter, or “friendship” ask yourself: Are we equals in the situation or friendship”? Do I feel targeted by a person or group? Do I feel that a person or group has intentionally caused me harm? Do they ignore signs that I am uncomfortable with an interaction? Do I feel safe? If you are still unsure talk to an adult that you trust and get help sorting out the situation or relationship.*
  
- What can I do if I am bullied after school hours?  
*Notify a trusted adult. If the behavior impacts or interferes with school report the incident to school officials as soon as possible. You may also send an email to the principal to let them know what happened and that you will be following up with them on the next school day.*
  
- What if I told an adult and the bullying continued?  
*Do not give up. You have the legal right to feel safe at school. The way that you feel is important. Whether or not the adult did not know how to help or did not understand the situation, keep going. Reach out to another trusted adult and ask for help. Let them know that you would not be coming to them if you could fix the situation on your own.*

## **Parent & School Leadership Meeting Tips**

As a parent dealing with your student being bullied is a situation that evokes strong feelings. In such situations it is important for everyone to remain calm and focused on the facts to ensure effective collaboration and that effective steps are identified to resolve the concern.

Initial meetings and follow-up meetings may have some slight variation of the meeting tips shared below. Listed meeting tips do not remove the meeting procedures when supporting a child/student under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

### **Keep Notes & Follow Up**

All meeting participants are recommended to keep notes on any communication and if possible, send a follow-up communication after the meeting. Participants are encouraged to keep track of written correspondence on the issue.

### **During the Meeting**

#### Setting the Agenda & Structure for the Meeting

To ensure a successful meeting within the scheduled time have an outline or agenda to ensure the discussion remains on track to the purpose of the meeting. Allow for some flexibility to this outline and if needed schedule an additional meeting. Ensure that the necessary preparations are made prior to the meeting to minimize wasted time.

#### Building Rapport

These meetings, as noted above, may be challenging, so it can be helpful to take a little time to get to know everyone and to learn their role in the school or family. Participants may want to clarify and verbally commit that everyone present has the child's/student's best interest and is committed to their well-being and overall success.

#### Understanding School Policy & Practices

Ensure that there is a common understanding of the school's prohibition of bullying, the bullying prevention policy, the Arkansas definition of bullying, discipline practices, and bullying intervention practices. This might be a good time for school administrators to explain the general actions they have taken involving bullying without violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a law that protects the privacy of other students. Parents may want to inquire on the following:

- What is the policy regarding bullying? May I have a copy?
- What is the Arkansas definition of bullying?
- How are bullying reports submitted and to whom?
- What is the school's procedure for investigating a bullying report?
- What are the actions that can be taken to help the student who has been bullied to feel safe again at school?
- What are the actions available when the school responds to a student who has bullied another student?

### Considering Multiple Perspectives

Allow time to gain the perspective of all participants. The parent can relay the child's experience of an alleged bullying incident or consider the use of one or more of the below reflection statements.

- My child has experienced (describe the bullying experience) at school.
- My child (and/or I) reported this verbally/in writing to (Name).
- My child (and/or I) described (name[s]) observed the experience.
- My other concerns for my child include (share your concerns).
- My child (and/or I) request (describe the suggested resolution) to feel safe at school.

### Addressing the Needs of the Child/Student

When needed, identify a plan to help the child/student be safe at school that does not disrupt their routine. Once a plan is established, participants are encouraged to answer the following questions:

- What can we do to ensure the plan is implemented?
- How will we know if the plan is working and how will this be reported to the team?
- Should a time be scheduled to review this plan?

Adapted from the Minnesota Department of Education  
<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/safe/bprev/MDE087161>

## Verbal Responses to Student Bullying Allegations

As individuals consider their responses when bullying allegations are told to them some non-productive responses may be identified. To determine if a response is effective consider the outcome it might have and the below guiding questions.

<b>Assessment of Verbal Responses concerning Possible Bullying Allegations</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Guiding Questions When these Responses are Used</b>
To a possible student aggressor and student target of bullying: “Work it out by yourselves.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is one student unable to defend themselves?</li> <li>• Is adult intervention needed to ensure an equitable and fair outcome?</li> </ul>
To a possible student aggressor: “This kind of behavior will make others dislike you.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the student have a group of peers who either approve of this behavior or remain silent for fear of being targeted themselves?</li> <li>• Can the student be guided to meet their need to control their environment in a constructive way?</li> </ul>
To a possible student target of bullying: “Stand up for yourself.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the student know the difference between assertive and aggressive when responding to an act?</li> <li>• Are levels of aggression likely to increase?</li> <li>• Will the possible student aggressor seek revenge or retaliation?</li> </ul>
To a possible student target of bullying: “Don’t be sad.” “Try not to be upset.” “Words don’t hurt.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the student’s emotions be acknowledged?</li> <li>• Should the student’s desire to be accepted and belong be recognized?</li> </ul>
To a possible student target of bullying: “Just ignore them and they will stop.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the student already tried to ignore the behaviors?</li> <li>• Will ignoring the interactions prevent them, make them worse, or protect the aggressor?</li> <li>• Will the aggressor gain a sense of more power or control?</li> </ul>
To a possible student target of bullying: “She/He really didn’t mean what she/he said.” “Maybe he/she didn’t have breakfast and is grumpy.” “Sometimes people say mean things because they are not happy inside.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this minimize the negative interaction or impact on the student?</li> <li>• Does this amount to automatic excusal of the behavior?</li> <li>• Should all students be accountable for the negative behaviors that they exhibit or harm they cause?</li> </ul>

## **Language to Connect**

It can be difficult for students to talk about negative interactions for the following reasons:

- Embarrassed about what's happening.
- Afraid of retaliation.
- Worried that telling someone else could make matters worse.
- Feel as if no one cares.

## Supporting the Student

If a student feels bullied, it is important to be supportive of them. Whether it is behavior that constitutes bullying under the Arkansas definition or not, help the student feel valued and let them know you are there for them.

When speaking with a student empathize with their problem and validate and acknowledge how they feel. Describe a related experience to theirs to show that they are not alone or deserving of the negative feelings. Suggest to them actionable next steps in addressing the situation and plan to follow-up with them later. Try statements such as:

- "It's totally natural that you would feel this way."
- "It may feel like no one understands, but I'm listening."
- "Here's what I'm hearing you say: \_\_\_\_."
- "It is never okay to feel mistreated."
- "I might not have had the exact same experience, but when \_\_\_\_ [similar experience] I also felt \_\_\_\_."
- "Let's discuss this all with \_\_\_\_."

## Questioning a Student

Keep the lines of communication open. Ask open-ended questions about the situation when gathering additional information. Take the time to allow them to tell their story and express their feelings about the experience. Listen to the situation respectfully. Try questions such as:

- "Help me understand what happened?"
- "Is there an underlying issue?"
- "Has it happened before?"
- "Do you think it will continue tomorrow?"
- "Has the situation become worse?"
- "How did it make you feel?"
- "How would you prefer the situation to improve?"
- "How would you prefer that I help?"

Help students understand what defines bullying including specific terms and the impact those acts have. The [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-514 Bullying Definition Visual](#) and the [Types of Bullying & Examples](#) resources might be of assistance in this conversation.

## Common Myths About Bullying

- MYTH: Boys are natural bullies and girls rarely bully.  
*FACT: Negative aggression to hurt others is not normal and is often a learned behavior no matter the individual's gender. Learned behavior is developed based on past experiences or reinforcement over time. Girls may not physically bully as often as boys, but bullying can also be verbal, written, and electronic.*
- MYTH: Bullying is a natural part of childhood and is a good way to make children stronger and tougher.  
*FACT: Bullying is never acceptable. The perception that it is normal might be because of how often the experience occurs. Aggression toward another student to inflict harm is not normal and does not lead to an appropriate learning environment. Bullying often leads to lower self-esteem and self-worth and increased fear and anxiety.*
- MYTH: Telling a teacher about bullying is tattling.  
*FACT: Tattling is done with the full purpose to get someone in trouble or to gossip about them. Telling someone about a negative and hurtful experience is done to protect themselves or someone else.*
- MYTH: The popular kids are the only ones who engage in bullying behaviors.  
*FACT: There is no stereotype for a student that will bully. This behavior can be acted out by a popular or unpopular student. We should not be looking for an attribute to determine if someone is a bully, instead, we should be looking at an individual's actions and behaviors.*