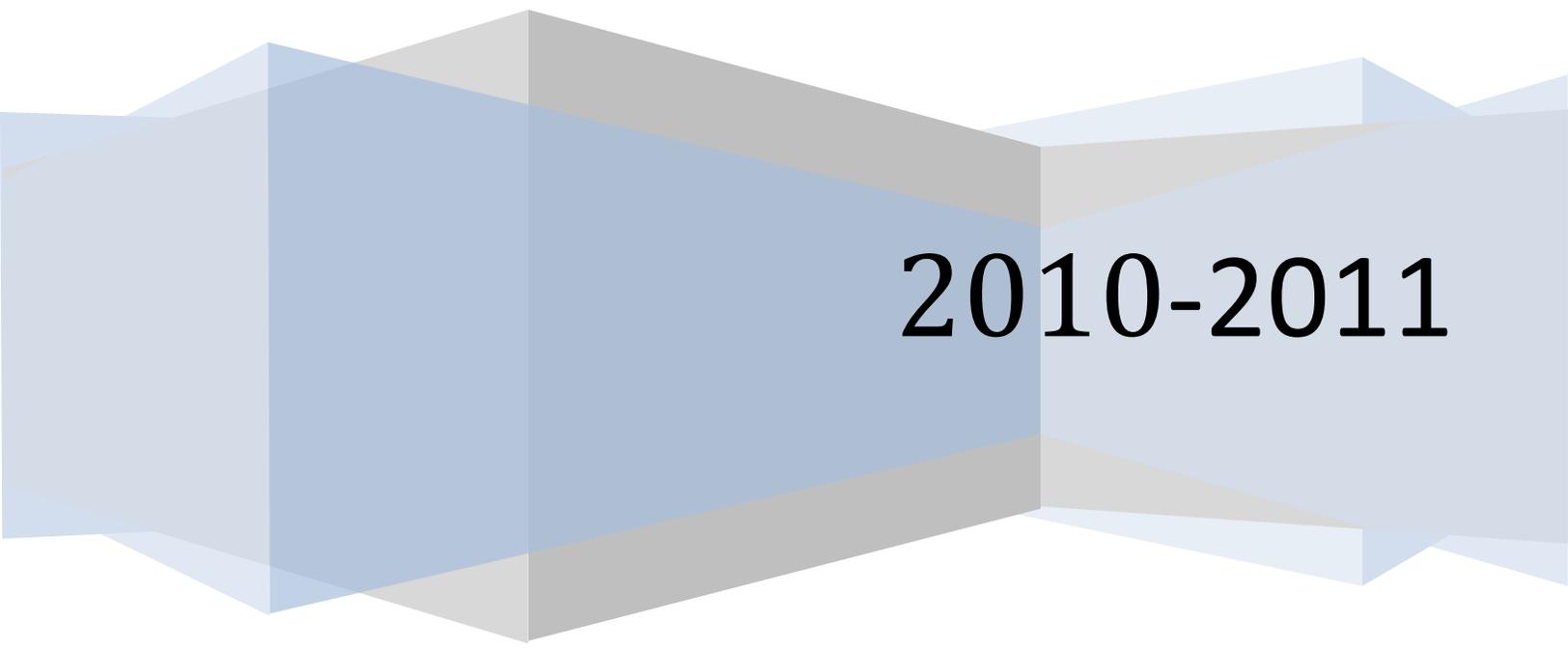


**Longmeadow Public Schools**

# **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

**Guide for staff, parents and students**



**2010-2011**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. LEADERSHIP.....3
- II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....4
- III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES.....4
- IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.....4
- V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION.....5
- VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES.....9
- VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION.....9
- VIII. DEFINITIONS.....10
- IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS.....10

*APPENDIX A: BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM.....11*

## PRIORITY STATEMENT

*The Longmeadow Public Schools is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that fosters respect, character and integrity. We seek to eliminate all forms of bullying and cyber-bullying and all other harmful and disruptive behavior that may impede the learning process. This commitment is an integral part of our mission as a learning community.*

Bullying as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

The following Plan addresses the nine mandated areas of compliance which are required under M.G.L. c. 71, S 370, better known as the Massachusetts' Bullying Prevention Plan. In addition to the following current efforts, the administration, faculty and staff of Longmeadow Public Schools commit to continue to improve, enhance and update both the Plan and its implementation annually in order to best serve the students, parents and citizens of Longmeadow.

### **I. LEADERSHIP**

Longmeadow Public Schools recognizes that leadership at all levels plays a critical role in developing and implementing Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students to be civil to one another and to promote understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leaders are responsible for staying up-to-date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to bullying.

This Plan is an integral part of the Longmeadow Public Schools' comprehensive effort to promote learning and eliminate all forms of violent, harmful and disruptive behavior; all students require this support to achieve their personal and academic potential. The Longmeadow Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, in our schools or during school-related activities. All reports of bullying will be promptly investigated by the Longmeadow Public Schools.

- A. This draft will be presented to the School Councils, and the general public, including parents and community members. Student input will provide input and feedback. Opportunities will be made available to all of these groups of people in order to respond to this draft and offer suggestions for improvement.
- B. Longmeadow Public Schools will formally survey the students regarding school climate and school safety issues. Building-specific data will be collected and analyzed in order to identify patterns of behavior and areas of concern. This data will also inform decision making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula and in-school support services.

- C. The Principal, or his/her designees on the faculty, is/are responsible for the following aspects of the Plan: (1) receiving reports on bullying, (2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data, (3) creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, (4) planning for the required professional development of teachers, (5) planning supports that respond to the needs of the targets and aggressors, (6) deciding on the curricula that the school will use, (7) developing and revising policies and protocols, including an Internet Safety Plan, (8) amending student and staff handbooks, (9) leading the parent/family engagement efforts and drafting parent information materials and (10) reviewing and updating the Plan yearly or more frequently.
- D. Longmeadow Public Schools will adopt a Priority Statement. A proposed Priority Statement is listed at the very beginning of this document.

## **II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- A. There will be annual staff training to discuss this Plan which will specify policies and procedures used when investigating and dealing with issues regarding bullying. Staff members hired after the beginning of the year will be given building-based information and training regarding bullying.
- B. There will be on-going professional development aimed at building staff skills to prevent, identify and respond to bullying. The professional development will be informed by research and will focus on information which is age and/or developmentally appropriate for the students of the school.
- C. Professional development will also address ways to prevent and to respond to the needs of IEP students under the law, especially students whose disability affects social skills development.
- D. The school or district will provide all staff with yearly access to the Plan in the employee handbook.

## **III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

- A. Identifying Resources –
  - Longmeadow High School, Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, School Nurse, Substance Abuse Counselor, Special Education Director, Department Chairs, Teachers, Paraprofessionals and Administrators will all work together to prevent and address bullying issues.
  - Middle Schools – Health Teachers, Guidance Counselor, Adjustment Counselor, School Nurse, Special Education Director, Teachers, Paraprofessionals and Administrators will all work together to prevent and address bullying issues.
  - Elementary Schools – Adjustment Counselor, School Nurse, Special Education Director, Teachers, Paraprofessionals and Administrators will all work together to prevent and address bullying issues.
- B. Depending on the school level, (high school, middle or elementary) counseling is available to students either through their Guidance Counselor, Adjustment Counselor and/or Social Worker and/or the Substance Abuse Counselor. Services and counseling will be provided for both targets and aggressors.
- C. Students with Disabilities – As required by the Bullying Prevention Law, the IEP team will decide what should be included in the IEPs of students who may be vulnerable to bullying or harassment because of their disabilities.
- D. Referral to outside services – When and where it is appropriate, Guidance Counselors, Adjustment Counselors, Social Workers, Substance Abuse Coordinator or Administrators will make outside referrals to out-of-school services for students and families.

#### IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

- A. Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:
- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills
  - Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance
  - Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance
  - Emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
  - Enhancing students' skills to increase engagement in healthy relationships and respectful communications
  - Facilitating students' learning in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Students will be educated regarding the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The Plan will be reviewed with students at the beginning of each school year.

- B. General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:
- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
  - creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students and/or students who may be perceived as such;
  - using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
  - using positive behavioral supports;
  - encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
  - modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
  - using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
  - using the Internet safely; and
  - supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

#### V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

- A. **Reporting bullying or retaliation** – Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing. A school or district staff member is required to report immediately to the principal or designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or

witnesses. Reports made by students, parents, or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. Reports made anonymously will be fully investigated; however, the investigation may be limited due to lack of information and therefore there is no guarantee of resolution. The school or district will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Report Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address, and an email address.

Use of an Incident Report Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The school or district will:

- 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the beginning of the year packets for students and parents or guardians;
- 2) make it available in the school's main office, the counseling office, the school nurse's office, and other locations determined by the principal or designee; and
- 3) post it on the school's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents or guardians.

At the beginning of each school year, the school or district will provide the school community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources, including the name and contact information of the principal or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school and/or district websites, and information about the Plan will be made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by staff

A staff member will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

2. Report by Students, Parents or Guardians and Others

The school or district expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety Plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the

aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation. See individual school handbooks for more detailed information.

## 2. Obligations to Notify Others

- a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
- b. Notice to another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
- c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and the Memorandum of Understanding Agreement established between the Longmeadow Police Department and the Longmeadow School Department. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

- C. Investigation. The principal or designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved.

During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee will remind the

alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

- D. Determinations The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

E. Responses to Bullying

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skill-building

Once the principal or designee has determined that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the school or district use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (d) (v)

3. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the district's Code of Conduct.

Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with state laws regarding student discipline.

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

- A. Parent education and resources – The school and/or district will post on the school and district websites information pertaining to bullying prevention and steps that parents can take at home to support the prevention of bullying.
- B. Notification requirements – Each year the school and/or district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This information will include information about the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying.

## VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

*According to Massachusetts General Law M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 (b):*

Acts of bullying, which include cyber-bullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

## VIII. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71 S 370 and will help to create for the faculty, staff, students, parents, etc. a common language regarding the issue of bullying.

**Aggressor** is a student who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

**Bullying**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Cyber-bullying**, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 for the legal definition of cyber-bullying

**Hostile environment**, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

**Retaliation** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**Staff** includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, and bus drivers, and athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

**Target** is a student against whom bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school or district, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H or 37H½, other applicable laws, or local school or district policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

APPENDIX A

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. Check whether you are the: Target of the behavior  Reporter (not the target)

3. Check whether you are a:  Student  Staff member (specify role) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent  Administrator  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Your contact information/telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

4. If student, state your school: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If staff member, state your school or work site: \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time When Incident(s) Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Student  Staff  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.

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FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10: Form Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. INVESTIGATION**

1. Investigator(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Position(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Interviews:

- Interviewed aggressor      Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interviewed target      Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interviewed witnesses      Name: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor?       Yes       No
- If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously?       Yes       No
- Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION       Yes       No

Summary of Investigation: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

**III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION**

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

YES

NO

- Bullying
- Retaliation

Incident documented as \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline referral only \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contacts:

Target's parent/guardian      Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Law Enforcement      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Aggressor's parent/guardian      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Action Taken:

- Loss of Privileges       Detention       Suspension
- Community Service       Education       Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe Safety Planning: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ Initial and date when completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Report forwarded to Principal: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date \_\_\_\_\_

(If principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_