



## “Bullying” TIP SHEET Addressing Parent/Caregiver Concerns



Recently, national media has focused needed attention on the issue of bullying. President Barack Obama has provided a “Personal Message” on this serious issue that can be viewed through the link on our Student Support Services Department’s website at [www.healthiersf.org](http://www.healthiersf.org) located on the right side of the website’s home page.

SFUSD has experienced an alarming increase in the frequency of phone calls from parents and caregivers reporting bullying incidents in our schools. We appreciate the feedback from parents and caregivers and encourage members of our school communities to report every instance of bullying that occurs whether before, during, after, or traveling to and from school. Members of every school community should be reminded of the Safe School Hotline: 241-2141, to report incidents of bullying or other safety concerns. Ensuring a Safe School Environment is the responsibility of all School District staff. As such, parents and caregivers can report bullying incidents to any district employee who then has a responsibility to report the incident to a school administrator, the Safe School Hotline, or our **School Health Programs Office at 242-2615**.



**As a school district employee, if you receive a report of bullying or other school safety issue, it is important to keep in mind the following key points:**

- **Remember that bullying can happen anywhere;** our best attempts to create a safe school cannot control what happens out of our presence or when students are communicating through social media. Try not to sound dismissive or doubtful of the incident regardless of how much you may want to defend your school. The safest of school is never immune to incidents of bullying.
- Before the person begins to describe the incident, inform the caller that you need to document the call and will be taking notes. The information the caller offers could be an important tool when the bullying incident is investigated. At the conclusion of the call, review and confirm the details you recorded for accuracy with the parent/caregiver.
- **Listen patiently** to what the parent has to say and **speak to him/her respectfully**. The parent/guardian may be upset and angry and these emotions may be targeted toward you. This means you may be in a position to ask the parent/guardian to speak calmly and repeat information so you can understand everything s/he needs to say. Understand that parents and guardians have an expectation and confidence in our ability to ensure the safety of their child. When this fails to occur, parents/caregivers may express disappointment and possibly a fear of what may happen next. Allowing an opportunity for them to express their frustration and other feelings will help the parent/caregiver reduce their anxiety.
- **Explain that the District has a clear policy** regarding behavior, and the SFUSD Positive Code of Conduct, found in the Parent/Guardian/Student Handbook (pp. 44-45) defines appropriate behavior. In addition, there are School Board policies that identify the forms of bullying, hazing, or name-calling that can also be found in the Handbook (pp 52-54). Further Disciplinary Guidelines can be found on pages 55 – 58 along with State Education Codes that address school behavior.
- Explain that, **after taking the report** from the parent/guardian, you, or the staff person identified, will **conduct an investigation** that will include an interview with the bullying target and any witnesses to gain first hand knowledge of the incident. Staff will then conduct an interview with the alleged bully or perpetrator; this may include the presence of the alleged bully’s parent/caregiver.

- Inform the parent that **there are many possible consequences** as a result of the incident, some of which are outlined in the Parent/Guardian/Student Handbook. Explain that consequences may range from a peer-mediation session to a formal suspension. There are extreme cases where a student may be recommended for expulsion and those are also explained in the Student Handbook. It may be important to mention that the district is implementing Restorative Justice Practices that have proven to be quite successful in assisting the bully to focus on his/her behavior and the harm that was caused as a result of bullying. Restorative Justice Programs also assist the student to make an effort to address the consequences of bullying and to reflect upon their inappropriate behavior as well as to make better, safer, healthier choices in the future.
- Inform the parent that you or the designated staff **will get back to him/her at the conclusion of the investigation** to report the findings and, in some cases, inform them of the consequences identified by School District staff. It may be important to mention that in some cases student confidentiality may prevent us from full disclosure of the details. In the event that the parent/guardian requests an opportunity to speak with the bully in person, inform them that you will make a note of this request. This is subject to the discretion of the administrator, but is never permitted without the presence of the parent/caregiver of the bully/perpetrator. School district staff is also charged with protecting the confidentiality of every student; we do not provide any personal information of a parent/caregiver or student to another party.
- During the follow-up conversation, it is important not only to address the incident, but also **specific ways in which the school community will continue to ensure all students have a safe place to learn** so that a similar incident will not be replicated by other students. This might include mentioning “anti slur” campaigns, re-emphasizing the school rules regarding appropriate and positive behavior, implementing classroom activities as found in the Comprehensive School Health curriculum, utilizing Student Support Services staff including School District Nurses, Learning Support Professionals, Wellness Coordinators or Community Health Outreach Workers to enhance school safety and positive peer interactions.



For the reference of school district staff, please review the **attached list of Bullying and Violence Prevention Resources**. Many schools have teachers or staff who have received professional development training in these programs and the materials to support implementation may actually be at your school site. It may be helpful to survey the staff at your school to identify the individuals that can serve as a reference for specific programs.

SFUSD’s School Health Programs Office also offers a variety of **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** to all staff throughout the school year. You can access this menu at: **[www.healthiersf.org](http://www.healthiersf.org)** and click on Professional Development on the left side of the home page. In some cases, School Health Programs staff may be able to provide school site training on site.

Lastly, in support of **Violence Prevention month in January**, 2011, Student Support Services will be disseminating an updated, enhanced, organized and easily accessible menu of resources and support materials specifically targeted to **END BULLYING HERE AND NOW**.



**For more information, you may contact our School Health Programs Office at 242-2615**

**Your Student Support Services Department knows that School Safety and Violence Prevention are very important to all staff at every school in our district and we deeply appreciate and value all the personal efforts, commitment, and support for this essential district priority.**