

HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION & BULLYING

New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act

What Is Considered Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying Under the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act?

Any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident **or** a series of incidents.

The gesture(s) is reasonably perceived as being motivated by either an actual or perceived characteristic such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or mental, physical or sensory disability or by any other distinguishing characteristic **and that**

A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that it will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging a student's property or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or his property; or
Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; **or**

Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

[Bergenfield Public Schools: Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying Policy](#)



Where Can Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Take Place?

On school property (in class, at lunch, on the playground, in the locker room, in the hallways, etc.)

At any school-sponsored function

On a school bus

Off school grounds providing if it substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students

Types of Bullying

There are many different forms of bullying. **Remember that in order to be considered bullying under the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, whatever is said or done needs to be motivated by a distinguishing characteristic and create a hostile educational environment for the victim. If it does not meet the above criteria, it is a violation of a school's code of conduct.** An act that is proven to be a violation of the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act is always a code of conduct violation. However, a code of conduct violation is not always a violation of the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights.

Verbal Bullying: This involves using words to hurt people.

- ❖ Teasing
- ❖ Name-calling
- ❖ Inappropriate sexual comments
- ❖ Taunting
- ❖ Threatening to cause harm

Cyber-bullying: Using technology as a vehicle for acts of cruelty. This can take the form of verbal or social bullying that is perpetuated and spread through the internet or other forms of technology such as texting and/or posting on social media sites such as Snapchat, Instagram or Twitter.

Social Bullying: This is something commonly referred to as “relational aggression” and involves hurting someone socially by

- ❖ Continuously spreading rumors
- ❖ Excluding someone purposefully; telling other kids not to be friends with someone
- ❖ Manipulating others to leave a person out of a group

Physical Bullying: This includes repeated aggressive physical acts that hurt somebody's body or hurts or destroys someone's property or possessions. Physical bullying includes consistent acts of aggression such as

- ❖ Hitting, kicking, pinching
- ❖ Spitting
- ❖ Tripping or pushing
- ❖ Taking or breaking someone's things

Bullying in the Elementary Years

Early childhood is a vulnerable period for many young children because it can be the first time they are with other kids their own age, and they are still learning how to make friends. These children may not be mature enough to “use their words” and they don’t always understand the consequences of aggressive behavior. Young victims, however, may not be able to verbalize what is happening if they are being bullied at school.

Signs indicating that an elementary school student may be a victim of bullying:

- ❖ Child has continued and excessive withdrawal or depressed mood.
- ❖ Child refuses to engage with you, even after repeated attempts to involve him/her.
- ❖ Child has regressive and/or anxious behaviors over an extended period of time.



Bullying can start as early as preschool and kindergarten.

Bullying in Middle & High School

The transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school is often stressful for students. Kids must adjust to new surroundings, new people and new social rules. Changing from one school to another can increase emotional and academic issues, including isolation, anxiety and poor academic performance.

Experts believe that bullying behavior peaks in middle school because this is the time when students begin to gain some independence from their parents and peer groups become more important.

Research has shown that when kids try to find their place in a new social scene, they may begin to exhibit bullying behavior. This may originate from the adolescent’s feelings of insecurity; to combat that feeling, a student may choose to use forms of bullying to gain power.

Signs indicating that a middle or high school student may be a victim of bullying:

- Child does not want to go to school.
- Child no longer sees his/her usual group of friends.
- Child’s grades suffer.
- Child constantly appears stressed or depressed.
- Student seems constantly unfocused or unmotivated.

Bullying vs Conflict

During a conflict, name-calling, threats and other conduct that might look like bullying can occur. However, conflict and bullying are very different. Unlike bullying, during a conflict, people are equally involved in some type of disagreement. Conflict is considered mutual, meaning everyone is more or less evenly involved.

Bullying, on the other hand, involves one or several people (the bullies) intentionally committing a mean or violent act against another person(s) or a group of people (the victims). When bullying occurs, there is no mutual participation in the disagreement; it is one sided.



Conflicts and bullying can interrupt the school day, damage property and cause injuries to the people involved. However, when the behavior involves a conflict, the school will take action based on its code of student conduct instead of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

If the action(s) does not target a distinguishing characteristic or is a result of a conflict, the school's code of conduct is followed, not the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

What is a Student Code of Conduct?

A school's student code of conduct is a set of the school's rules, expectations, policies and procedures that are supported by the Bergenfield Board of Education policies and New Jersey State Statutes and Codes. It is separate from NJ's Anti- Bullying Bill of Rights Act

[Bergenfield Public Schools: Code of Conduct Policy](#)

What Can Parents Do?

1. Set expectations for your child's behavior, in and out of school.
2. Provide a trusting and loving environment at home.
3. Teach your children healthy conflict resolution behavior.
4. Teach your children how they can stop or try to stop bullying when they witness it.
5. Encourage him/her to confide in a trusted adult.
6. Talk to your child about your own experiences with bullying; listen to his/her concerns.
7. Show your children the difference between being assertive and aggressive. Allow your child to practice being assertive with you.
8. Teach your child the social skills he/she needs to navigate school and social situations.
9. In the case of cyberbullying; if your child is being cyberbullied, you should immediately remove your child from the situation (shut down computers and mobile devices).
10. Additionally, in the case of cyberbullying, parents should consider copying and saving the malicious online texts or posts in case the bullying is ongoing and needs to be reported..

Resources

New Jersey Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention

Dedicated to increasing community awareness of bullying. Provides information and training on bullying prevention.

www.njbullying.org

(908) 552-2581

Stop Bullying.gov

This website provides information from various government agencies on ways children, teens, young adults, parents, educators, and others in the community can prevent or stop bullying.

www.stopbullying.gov



Cyberbullying Resources

Commonsense Media, Cyberbullying Toolkit- This toolkit is accessible online, it provides tips and resources for educators, parents and youth on the topic of cyberbullying.

www.common sense media.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit

BERGENFIELD HIB TIMELINE

Timeline
All acts of possible HIB shall be reported verbally ON THE SAME DAY on which a person becomes aware that a potential HIB event has occurred.
Inform the parents/guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident ON THE SAME DAY ON WHICH THE POTENTIAL HIB EVENT OCCURS and provide reference to counseling or intervention services as warranted.
Initiate investigation within <u>ONE SCHOOL DAY</u> of initial report.
The teacher, volunteer, paraprofessional etc, who believes that an incident of HIB has taken place must submit a written report to the school principal within TWO SCHOOL DAYS after initial verbal report.
The HIB investigation shall be completed within TEN SCHOOL DAYS of receipt of <u>written</u> report. Please note that parents will NOT be informed of any decision as to the outcome of the investigation until the determination has been made by the Superintendent of Schools and accepted by the Bergenfield Board of Education.
The Anti-Bullying Specialist will provide the Superintendent of Schools with the written report within TWO SCHOOL DAYS of completion of the investigation.
Each investigation shall be reported to the Board of Education no later than the date of the school board's next meeting after the completion of the investigation.
A written notification will be provided to the parents of those party to the investigation WITHIN FIVE SCHOOL DAYS after the results of the investigation are reported to the Board of Education.
After receiving information on the findings of the incident, parents may request a hearing in front of the Board of Education. The hearing shall be held within TEN SCHOOL DAYS of the written request.
At the Board of Education meeting following the hearing, the school board shall issue a decision in writing to affirm, reject, or modify the Superintendent's decision.
The parent may appeal the school board's decision to the Commissioner of Education NO LATER THAN 90 DAYS after issuance from the BOE.
Parent, student, guardian, or organization may file a complaint with the Division of Civil Rights within 180 days of the occurrence of any incident of HIB.