

Charms Collaborative Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan

The following Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying. Charms Collaborative is committed to working with students, staff, families, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

I. LEADERSHIP

A. Plan Development

Through input from the following constituent members, Charms Collaborative is committed to create structures within its programs that promote supportive school environments to reduce barriers to learning. Input from the following members of the Collaborative community was sought in the development of this plan: the Operating Committee, administrators, staff (professional and non professional), and parents. Input from these constituents was sought through meetings and requests for feedback.

The Program Director in conjunction with the Executive Director is responsible for the implementation and oversight of this plan.

B. Assessing Needs and Resources

It is the intention of Charms to enhance its capacity to prevent and respond to issues of bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of this process, Charms will:

1. identify current programs in place throughout the organization that address the social and behavioral well being of our students.
2. assess the effectiveness of these programs through the monitoring of bullying incident reporting data, and develop/modify/critique the action plan as a result of those incidents that work to prevent reoccurrence.
3. review all behavioral incident reports to identify those behaviors that may be characteristic of bullying, and follow up on those behaviors.
4. identify individuals within the organization to receive training in issues around bullying that will promote a positive school climate. Following the training of specified staff, opportunities for professional development for all staff will be created to train on methods, curriculum, etc.
5. develop a Board policy prohibiting bullying.

The intended outcome of the assessment aspect of this plan is to develop, revise, and/or implement policies and procedures to promote a positive school climate.

C. Planning and Oversight

If a reported incident of bullying occurs the following actions will be taken:

1. Staff will report any bullying incident using the Charms Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form.
2. The report will be reviewed and signed by the Program Director.
3. Tracking of reported incidences will be conducted by the Program Director with noted attention given to targets and aggressors.
4. Analysis of bullying incidents and their resulting outcomes will be conducted in meetings of the Program Teacher(s) and Program Director. During the review process consideration will be given to the need for action and prevention plans and/or supports for the needs of targets and aggressors.
5. Professional development on positive school climate, bullying identification and prevention techniques will be provided to Charms staff. A review of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be shared with all staff at the first all-staff meeting of each school year. Subsequent trainings will take place either in further staff meetings or classroom meetings.
6. With input from trained staff, age and ability appropriate curriculum will be identified by February of 2011 with implementation to begin/continue immediately thereafter.
7. Should the development or implementation of any portion of this plan affect the Board approved Policy prohibiting bullying, the Executive Director will bring it to the attention of the Board for consideration.
8. As a result of the bullying plan and policy, Charms handbooks will be modified by June, 2011.

D. Priority Statements

Charms Collaborative expects that all members of the Charms community treat each other in a civil manner with respect for individual differences. Charms is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We at Charms understand that certain students, such those who are gay/lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; are homeless; and/or have disabilities, may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing in our own programs or in our host school environments. Charms will take steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations and provide its students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Charms will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our programs, on school grounds, or in school related activities. We will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

II. TRAINING and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Annual Staff Training

Charms will provide annual training on bullying prevention and intervention at an all-staff meeting. This training will include, but not limited to: an overview of the bullying prevention curricula, and steps the Program Director will take upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation.

Staff members hired after the start of the school year will be trained by the Program Director.

B. Ongoing professional development.

Professional development will be offered to staff to build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. This training will be site based and delivered through staff meetings and/or classroom meetings. The content of the trainings will include the following:

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying.
2. Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents.
3. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying.
4. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment.
5. Information on the incidence and nature of cyber bullying; and
6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' IEPs, with particular focus on students with ASD or whose disability affects social skills development. It will be the responsibility of the Program Director along with the Out of District Coordinator to ensure this topic is addressed by the Team and changes are made to the IEP as appropriate and in accordance to input from the Team.

C. Written notice to staff

The Policy prohibiting bullying, along with this plan, will be available to Charms staff in the employee manual. Staff will be notified of this during the first all-staff meeting of each school year.

III. ACCESS to RESOURCES and SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families and others are addressed. If a student has been identified as a target or as an aggressor the following supports will be made available.

A. Identifying Resources

Charms Collaborative educational programs offer support to students in a protected environment with small class sizes with a high teacher to student ratio. In addition to teaching and therapy staff, students/families have access to support either through a behavioral consultant or through social workers assigned to specific programs. Should a student require additional counseling or agency resources, Charms staff work closely with families to identify need, and to provide community resources.

Home visits/behavioral supports may be conducted if parents need additional supports/information. The program staff, under the supervision of the Program Director, will work with families to identify needs and to make connections to outside agencies, either directly or through the sending school district. By June 2011, Charms will identify local agency resources for additional student/family support.

B. Counseling and other services.

Should behavioral incident reports or bullying incident reports indicate a need for further counseling supports, the Program Director will make an immediate referral to one of the Charms counselors on staff. Additionally, positive behavioral support plans may be developed or modified based upon incident reporting through the intervention support of the Program Director. It is at the discretion of the Program Director, classroom staff, and counselors to develop a plan for involving parents relative to behaviors.

- Should acts of bullying occur, staff will identify common times students are together and work to separate students whenever possible.
- The identified aggressor will receive increased adult supervision.
- Program staff, under the advisement of the Program Director, will refer students to counseling as appropriate.
- Counselors, along with Program Director and program staff, will work with families to identify an action plan with a built in re-evaluation period.
- The need for a behavior management plan will be assessed and implemented as needed.

- If the bullying behavior becomes a pattern, it will be addressed in the student's IEP.

C. Students with disabilities

As a special education service provider, the Charms staff is sensitive to the needs of its students and families. The Program Director will make available to staff the DESE *Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2011-12: Bullying Prevention and Intervention*. Together with the District Out of District Coordinators, the Program Director will direct the Team to consider the student's social skills and identify behaviors that affect the student's learning, the learning of others, and the student's ability to interact with others in positive ways.

During the evaluation process, the Team will gather data and information relative to a student's social skills. That data will be used as a source for discussion of potential student supports.

D. Referral to outside services

Staff will refer students to an outside agency as warranted. The determination will be made on an individual basis.

IV. ACADEMIC and NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

A. Specific bullying prevention approaches

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 cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Each year, classroom staff will instruct students in age appropriate and developmentally appropriate language to recognize bullying and to take the necessary steps to respond and report to such acts.

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, and transgender students, and homeless students;
- 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

1. Reporting by staff: A member of Charms or host school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional, shall immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation s/he has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or designee. In the case of an incident involving a Charms student, the incident should also be reported to a teacher in the Charms program, who shall report it to the Program Director. Staff will report the incident using the Charms Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form.
2. Reporting by students, parents or guardians, and others: Charms Collaborative expects students, parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Program Director or program teacher, who will then report it to the Program Director. An individual may make an anonymous report of bullying or retaliation; however, no disciplinary action may be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

B. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

1. Safety: Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Program Director 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 Program Director or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. Additionally, the Program Director 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.
2. Obligations to notify others:
 - a. Notice to parents or guardians: The Program Director or designee will notify the parent/guardian of the alleged target and the alleged aggressor of a report of bullying or retaliation once the outcome of an investigation has been determined. If the alleged target and alleged aggressor attend different schools, the Program Director receiving the report shall inform the principal of the other student's school, who shall notify the student's parents of the report and procedures.
 - b. Notice to another school district: If an incident of bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school or collaborative school and the Charms Collaborative is the first to be informed of the bullying or retaliation, then the Executive Director of Charms Collaborative or designee must, consistent with state and federal law, promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school district or school so that both may take appropriate action.
 - c. Notice to law enforcement: At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, or during or after an investigation, if the Charms program Director or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that the incident may involve criminal conduct, the Charms Program Director or designee will notify the local law enforcement agency. In addition, if an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in a local school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school or collaborative school, the Executive Director of

Charms Collaborative or designee will notify local law enforcement if s/he believes that criminal charges may be pursued.

C. Investigation

The Program Director or designee, in collaboration with host school administration, as warranted, shall investigate promptly a report of bullying or retaliation, giving consideration to all the circumstances at hand, including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved. The following are general guidelines for responding to a report of bullying or retaliation. The guidelines will be adapted as necessary to respond appropriately to the complaint.

Pre-Investigation: Even before fully investigating allegations of bullying or retaliation, Collaborative personnel in cooperation with host school administration will consider whether there is a need to take immediate steps to support the alleged target and/or protect the alleged target from further potential incidents of concern. In taking any such action, however, the rights of both the alleged target and alleged aggressor must be considered.

Written statement of the complaint: The investigator will seek to determine the basis of the complaint, gathering information from the complainant, including such matters as: what specifically happened, who committed the alleged acts, who was present or may have information about the events, when the events occurred (date, time of day), and where the events occurred.

It is helpful to have these facts in writing. If age appropriate, the complainant may be asked to put the complaint in writing and to sign and date it. If the complainant cannot or chooses not to write a complaint, the investigator will record the allegations, read them to the complainant to confirm accuracy, and ask the complainant to sign the document. If the complainant cannot or chooses not to sign, the investigator may sign and date the document her/himself.

Interviews: Once the allegations of the complainant are established, the investigator will gather other evidence, which often involves interviews of the alleged aggressor and/or other witnesses. If appropriate, the investigator should remind the alleged aggressor and witnesses that retaliation against persons whom they believe might have reported the incidents or cooperated with the investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Confidentiality: The confidentiality of the complainant and the other witnesses will be maintained to the extent practicable given the Collaborative's obligation to investigate and address the matter. The names of individuals involved will not be

released to other parties.

D. Determinations

The Program Director or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Program Director 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 Program Director 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 Program Director 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 Program Director 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 Program Director 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. Response to bullying.

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-Building

Upon the Program Director or designee determining 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)]. Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:

- offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the program's/school's/district's anti-bullying curricula;
- providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel;
- implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;

- meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- making a referral for evaluation.

2. Taking Disciplinary Action

If the Program Director or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Program Director 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 student's individual behavior plan and/or IEP.

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

3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The Program Director 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 Program Director 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 Program Director 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: Parents of Charms students will be eligible to attend local trainings through their sending districts as sponsored by the local PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations. Individual parent trainings will be provided by Charms on a case specific basis.

B. Notification requirements: Each year in the beginning of school either through

the welcoming packet or the student handbook, Charms will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety, as well as the student-related sections of the Plan and Charms Collaborative's internet safety policy. Charms will post the Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING and RETALIATION

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, 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, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires the Collaborative to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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.

Cyberbullying 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, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. RELATIONSHIP to OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the school, district, or Collaborative, 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.