**Medford Township Public Schools**

**Office of Educational Support Services**

**Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Overview**

**for Parent Volunteers**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the *Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act* is to strengthen the standards and procedures for preventing, reporting, investigation and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) of students that occur on school grounds and off school grounds under specified circumstances.

**HIB DEFINITION**

HIB means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a **single incident** or as **series of incidents**, that:

* Is reasonably **perceived as being motivated** either by an **actual or perceived characteristic,** such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or an mental, physical or sensory disability, or by **any other distinguishing characteristic**;
* Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus; or off school grounds (see note below)
* Substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students; **and that**

***(Must meet one of the following conditions in addition to causing substantial disruption or interference)***

* A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of **physically or emotionally harming** a student or **damaging the student’s property** or placing a student in reasonable **fear of physical or emotional harm** to his person or damage to 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 hard to the student.

**HIB OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS**

School districts have the right to impose consequences on a student for conduct away from school grounds. Schools are required to address HIB occurring off school grounds, when there is a nexus between the HIB and the school (i.e. the HIB substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students).

**CONFLICT vs. BULLYING**

Bullying is not a phase young people must endure or outgrow. Bullying is not a conflict between students or among groups of students. Conflict is a mutually competitive or opposing action or engagement, including a disagreement, an argument or a fight which is a normal part of human development. *Bullying* is *one-sided*, where one or more students are victims or one or more person’s aggression, which is intended to physically or emotionally hurt the victims.

**FOUR TYPES OF BULLYING BEHAVIORS**

There are generally four types of bullying behaviors. These behaviors and some examples are identified below:

* Verbal—Includes taunting, name calling, malicious teasing or making threats
* Psychological—includes spreading rumors, purposefully excluding people from activities, breaking up friendships
* Physical—includes hitting, punching, shoving, spitting or taking personal belongings
* Cyberbullying—includes using the Internet, mobile phone or other digital technologies to harm others.

**STAFF FUNCTIONS**

**District Anti-Bullying Coordinator** (Dr. Gale Ferrarogferraro@medford.k12.nj.us)--coordinates policies, collaborated with school anti-bullying specialists, Board of Education, Superintendent, provides data to NJ Department of Education

**School Anti-Bullying Specialist** (School Counselors)—leads the investigations of HIB reports, primary official responsible for preventing, identifying and addressing incidents

**REPORTING OBLIGATIONS/INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE**

* Parent volunteer must make a verbal report to a staff member on the same day the incident occurs. \*
* Staff member makes verbal report to the principal the same day they are informed.
* Principal notifies parents of the alleged victim and alleged harasser/bully that an investigation is being conducted.
* Follow-up written report with 48 hours of verbal report (done by the staff member with input from volunteer).
* Investigation is initiated by Anti-Bullying Specialist within one day of receiving verbal report.
* Investigation determines one of the following outcomes: No evidence of HIB, inconclusive, does not meet the definition of HIB, Yes—violation of policy
* Investigation completed within 10 school days from date of written report.
* Parents of the alleged victim and alleged harasser/bully are notified by the Principal the outcome of the investigation.
* Report submitted to District Anti-Bullying Coordinator.
* Report to Superintendent with 2 school days of completion.
* Superintendent reports incidents to the Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting.
* Board of Education decides to accept, reject or modify the superintendent’s decision.
* Letter of Board’s decision is sent to parents of alleged victim and alleged harasser/bully.

\*Note—It is not the responsibility of the parent volunteer to determine the validity of the shared or witnessed incident. Any conversation, accusation or witnessing of something that could potential fall under the HIB definition, it to be reported. The Anti-Bullying Specialist will determine if an investigation is warranted and the investigation will conclude if whether or not the incident meets the criteria.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

New Jersey Department of Education: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/>

District Anti-Bullying Coordinator: gferraro@medford.k12.nj.us