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Hazing and Bullying Prevention Policies with Intervention Plan

Overview

Springdale Education Center (SEC) will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of hazing, bullying, cyberbullying or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of hazing, 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.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying and the school or district is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening and responding to incidents of bullying, hazing, cyberbullying and retaliation. The Director is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

During our Fall Open Houses, we invite members of the school and general community to shape and review current bullying prevention and intervention plans and policies.

Policies, Definitions and Plan

A. Acts of hazing and 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 or hazing, provides information during an investigation of bullying or hazing or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited. As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 or c. 269 §§ 17 - 19, nothing in this Plan requires the district or school to staff any non-school related

activities, functions, or programs.

B. Definitions:

Aggressor is a student who engages in hazing, 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: causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property; creates a hostile environment at school for the target; infringes on the rights of the target at school alternatively, materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying is bullying using 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.

Hazing is any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization whether on public or private property which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. See M.G.L. c. 269 § 17 for the full definition of hazing.

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 hazing or 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, clinicians, interventionists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, monitors, and athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

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

C. Relationship to other laws:

Consistent with state and federal laws and the policies of SEC, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to SEC or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study in SEC because of race, color, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. Nothing in the Plan prevents SEC 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 SEC 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.

D. Annual staff training on the Plan:

Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan; an overview of the steps that the director or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year is required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired; unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

I. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify

and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent hazing and bullying;
- (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop hazing and bullying incidents;
- (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target and witnesses to the bullying and hazing;
- (iv) research findings on hazing and bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to hazing and bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas identified by the school for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

E. Access to Resources and Services:

I. Identifying resources. Springdale Education Center provides counseling and other services for targets, aggressors and their families via its Clinical team of social workers, licensed mental health counselors and psychologists. As well, all staff is trained in Crisis Prevention De-escalation techniques and Creating Safe Environments that encourage introspective dialogue about affect. Staff also employs Second Step curriculum to address bullying and violence in their school and larger communities.

II. Counseling and other services. Springdale Education Center employs clinically trained staff who communicates in Spanish and American Sign Language so student populations who are more comfortable speaking in those languages can do so when expressing discomfort around a bullying event. SEC also has relationships with the regional CSAs – the Carson Center, Behavioral Health Network and Baystate Health Network to provide additional support to students, family members and staff as the need arises.

III. Students with disabilities. As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is

vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

IV. Referral to outside services. Each SEC student has a Case Manager who identifies outside supports as needs arise in conjunction with the Team recommendations. The student and their parents can also request the referral information directly of the Case Manager via phone, email or written request.

F. Academic and Non-Academic Activities:

I. Specific bullying prevention approaches

Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research that, 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 hazing, bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of hazing, bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

II. Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Hazing, Bullying Prevention, and Intervention Plan. Students and parents will be informed during intake meeting and annual IEP meetings about the Plan.

III. 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;
- 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
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

G. 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. An SEC staff member is required to report immediately to the director 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. SEC will make a variety of reporting resources available to the school community including, but not limited to, an Incident Reporting Form, a voicemail box, a dedicated mailing address and/or and an email address.

I. Use of an Incident Reporting 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 director 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 SEC 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 director or designee, will be incorporated in student and staff handbooks, on the school or district website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents or guardians.

1. Reporting by Staff

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

2. Reporting by Students, Parents or Guardians, and Others

SEC expects students, parents or guardians and all others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the director or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely based on 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 director or designee.

II. Responding to a report of bullying or retaliation

1. Safety

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the 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 director or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The 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. (Include locally established student safety planning policies and procedures here.)

2. Obligations to Notify Others

a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the director 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 director 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 director or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the director 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 director or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the director will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. In addition, 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 director 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 director will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable SEC policies and procedures, consult with any other individuals the director or designee deems appropriate.

III. Investigation

- 1.) The director 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.
- 2.) During the investigation, the director or designee will, among other things,

interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The director or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

- 3.) The director or designee, other staff members as determined by the director or designee and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate may conduct interviews. To the extent practicable, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the director or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The director or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.
- 4.) Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school policy for internal investigations. If necessary, the Director or designee will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

IV. Determinations

1.) The director or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, hazing, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the 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 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 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 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 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.

V. Responses to Bullying

1.) Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building

Upon the director or designee determining that hazing, bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that SEC 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 director or designee may consider include:

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

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

2.) Taking Disciplinary Action

If the director or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined based on facts found by the 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 school's code of conduct.

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

Given the mandate of our school and the special needs of our population, The Springdale Education Center does not suspend or terminate students for any reasons. Therefore, Disciplinary actions may include:

- Meeting with administrators, parents and authorities;
- Referral to law enforcement
- Separation from the classroom (as per our separation policy)
- Mandated Additional psycho-educational curriculum
- Mediation with the targets (with target's approval)
- Restitution plan developed in accordance with aggressor's developmental levels, emotional and learning disabilities and identified special needs which placed the aggressor at Springdale Education Center
- Change in bus, classroom, lunch time or other scheduling issues.

4.) Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

The 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 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 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 director or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

VI: Parent education and resources

1. SEC will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, or similar organizations.

2. Pamphlets of information (cyber bullying, socials networking, dynamics of bullying, strategies for parents about bullying, etc.) are sent home via regular mailings of report cards and/or progress reports. These reports are sent out five times per year that affords SEC the opportunity to provide one short pamphlet each mailing. These pamphlets and other bullying prevention and protection information is kept in the waiting area for parents and other guests at the school to peruse.
3. Case managers remain in constant contact with all parents and guardians discuss any strategies the school uses and ways they can assist their child.

VII: Notification requirements.

Each year SEC 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. SEC will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school or district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. SEC will post the Plan and related information on its website.