

Hardee District Schools

Policy Against Bullying, Including Cyberbullying, and Harassment

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF HARDEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, IS COMMITTED TO PROTECTING ITS STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES, AND APPLICANTS FOR ADMISSION FROM BULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR DISCRIMINATION FOR ANY REASON AND OF ANY TYPE. THE SCHOOL BOARD BELIEVES THAT ALL STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES ARE ENTITLED TO A SAFE, EQUITABLE, AND HARASSMENT-FREE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE. BULLYING, INCLUDING CYBERBULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR DISCRIMINATION WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND SHALL BE JUST CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION. THIS POLICY SHALL BE INTERPRETED AND APPLIED CONSISTENTLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS AND THE BOARD'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS. CONDUCT THAT CONSTITUTES BULLYING, HARASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION, AS DEFINED HEREIN, IS PROHIBITED. HARDEE DISTRICT SCHOOLS' *POLICY of NONDISCRIMINATION Rule 2.43*, ADDRESSES REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DEFINED FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PROTECTED CATEGORIES OF PERSONS.

Definitions

Bullying includes cyberbullying and means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It is further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student or adult, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

1. Teasing
2. Social Exclusion
3. Threat
4. Intimidation
5. Stalking
6. Physical violence
7. Theft
8. Sexual, religious, or racial/ethnic harassment
9. Public or private humiliation
10. Destruction of property

Cyberbullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including, but not limited, electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication device to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Harassment means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

1. Places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberstalking as defined in s. 784.048(1)(d), F.S., means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

Bullying and harassment also encompasses:

- A. Retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.
- B. Perpetuation of conduct listed in the definition of bullying (including cyberbullying) or harassment by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause emotional or physical harm to a student or school employee by:
 1. Incitement or coercion
 2. Accessing or knowingly and willingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system
 3. Acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying or harassment "**Bullying**," "**Cyberbullying**," "**Harassment**," and "**Discrimination**" (hereinafter referred to as bullying, as defined above, for the purpose of this Policy) also encompass, but are not limited to, unwanted harm towards a student or employee in regard to their real or perceived: sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability (physical, mental, or educational), marital status, socio-economic background, ancestry, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, linguistic preference, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or social/family background or being viewed as different in its education programs or admissions to education programs and therefore prohibits bullying of any student or employee by any Board member, District employee, consultant, contractor, agent, visitor, volunteer, student, or other person in the school or outside the school at school-sponsored events, on school buses, and at training facilities or training programs sponsored by the District. For Federal requirements when these acts are against Federally identified protected categories, refer to HDS Non Discrimination Rule 2.43.

Accused is defined as any District employee, consultant, contractor, agent, visitor, volunteer, student, or other person in the school or outside the school at school sponsored events, on school buses, and at training facilities or training programs sponsored by the District who is reported to have committed an act of bullying, whether formally or informally, verbally or in writing, of bullying.

Complainant is defined as any District employee, consultant, contractor, agent, visitor, volunteer, student, or other person who formally or informally makes a report of bullying, orally or in writing.

Expectations

The Hardee County School District expects students and employees to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and

welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment.

The school district believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents/legal guardians, staff, and community members producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of students, staff, and community members. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers will demonstrate appropriate behavior; treat others with civility and respect, and refuse to tolerate bullying or harassment.

- A. The School District prohibits the bullying of any student or school employee:
1. During any school-related or sponsored educational activity conducted by HDS or on a HDS school bus;
 2. Through the use data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network that is physically located on school property or at a school-related or school-sponsored program or activity.
 3. Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the bullying substantially interferes with or limits the victim's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school or substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph does not require a school to staff or monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

While the District does not assume any liability for incidences that occur at a bus stop or en route to and from school, a student or witness may file a complaint following the same procedures for bullying against a student and the school will investigate and/or provide assistance and intervention as the principal/designee deems appropriate, which may include the use of the School Resource Officer. The principal/designee shall use all District Reporting Systems to log all reports and interventions.

- B. All administrators, faculty, and staff, in collaboration with parents, students, and community members, will incorporate systemic methods for student and staff recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self discipline, good citizenship, and academic success, as seen in the individual school student discipline plan.
- C. Student rights are explained in this policy as a citation and excerpt from the Hardee County School's Code of Student Conduct, Students, Rights and Responsibilities.
- D. Proper prevention and intervention steps shall be taken based on the level of severity of infraction as outlined in the HDS Student Code of Conduct.
- E. At the beginning of each school year, the school principal/designee and or appropriate area/district administrator shall provide awareness of this policy, as well as the process for reporting incidents, investigation and appeal, to students, school staff, parents, or other persons responsible for the welfare of a pupil through appropriate references in the Student Code of Conduct, Employee Handbooks, the school website, and/or through other reasonable means.

Student Responsibilities

This policy by reference and quote incorporates the philosophy, rights responsibilities and roles of students

articulated in the Hardee County School Board Code of Student Conduct as follows:

PHILOSOPHY

Florida Statute 1006.07(2) requires each school district to distribute to students, parents, guardians, teachers, and other school personnel a code of student conduct developed cooperatively by students, parents and teachers. The District Code of Student Conduct is based on School Board rules which will be enforced fairly throughout the District. This Code is in force not only on school grounds and on school buses during regular school hours, but also at other times and places (field trips, athletic functions and other school-sponsored events) where school authorities have jurisdiction over students.

*It is the policy of the School Board of Hardee County not to discriminate against employees or students by either deliberate or inadvertent bias based on race, color, sex, age, national origin, handicap, marital status, or religion. It is further recognized that a passive policy of nondiscrimination will not of itself result in providing opportunities to those individuals who might otherwise be adversely affected. It is for this reason that the School Board commits itself to a program of affirmative action designed not to discriminate against anyone. It is the intent of this Code to be a strict disciplinary guide with its "minimum consequences" listed. **Consequences over the "minimum" may be assigned by the principal.***

STUDENTS' ROLE

STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- 1. Be informed of all school rules and the consequences of breaking those rules.*
- 2. Be shown personal respect by all other students and school personnel.*
- 3. Make appropriate use of school facilities, properties, and materials.*
- 4. Attend school and benefit from quality educational opportunities.*
- 5. Have access to an appropriate education, including instruction and use of materials and tests at a level which allows an opportunity for success.*
- 6. Hear, examine, and express divergent points of view, including freedom of speech, written expression, and symbolic expression.*
- 7. Know in advance how grades in a class will be determined.*
- 8. Enjoy a reasonable degree of personal privacy.*
- 9. Participate in extracurricular activities and clubs if they qualify academically and/or meet eligibility requirements. Students may not be excluded on the basis of sex (except as allowed under Title IX), color, race, ethnic origin, religion or handicap.*
- 10. Choose whether or not to participate in patriotic or religious activities.*
- 11. Receive personal, academic and vocational counseling.*
- 12. Receive due process in all disciplinary actions, including an appeal procedure.*
- 13. Dress comfortably in a way appropriate to a school setting.*
- 14. Assemble peacefully on school grounds.*
- 15. Participate in school government based on a democratic process.*
- 16. Remain in the school program if married, if a parent, or if pregnant.*
- 17. Have access to records and/or transcripts as provided by statute.*
- 18. Use a language other than English if the student is of different national origin, minority or limited English proficient without fear of disciplinary action.*

STUDENTS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- 1. Observe all school rules or suffer the consequences of unacceptable behavior. Students will be familiar with the District Code of Student Conduct and the school Student Handbook.*
- 2. Show respect to all other students and school personnel.*
- 3. Respect and protect school facilities, properties, and materials.*

4. *Attend school and all classes on a regular basis.*
5. *Participate in educational opportunities, completing classroom assignments and homework to the best of their abilities.*
6. *Consider and respect the divergent point of view of others. Be sure that personal expressions (speech, written or symbolic) do not infringe on the rights of others.*
7. *Understand the teachers' grading systems, monitoring their own progress in each class.*
8. *Keep their persons and property free of dangerous or illegal objects, materials, and substances.*
9. *Abide by the rules of extracurricular activities - display school spirit and good sportsmanship.*
10. *Respect the rights of others to participate in patriotic or religious activities.*
11. *Seek personal, academic, and vocational counseling.*
12. *Cooperate with school personnel in cases involving disciplinary actions, following prescribed steps for an appeal and accepting final decisions.*
13. *Dress in a way not offensive to others.*
14. *Assemble so as not to disrupt the educational process.*
15. *Take an active interest in student government.*
16. *Seek medical advice when a health condition affects school attendance.*
17. *Provide the school with all information relevant to making educational decisions.*

Consequences and due processes for a person who commits an act of bullying under this policy.

Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all of the facts and surrounding circumstances, followed by the determination of disciplinary sanctions appropriate to the perpetrator's position within the District.

- A. Consequences and appropriate interventions for students who commit acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to, but not limited to suspension, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and this Policy.
- B. Consequences and appropriate interventions for a school/district employee found to have committed an act of bullying will be instituted in accordance with District policies, procedures, and relevant agreements. Additionally, egregious acts of bullying by certified educators may result in a sanction against an educator's state issued certificate (Rule 6B-1.006 F.A.C.).
- C. Consequences and appropriate intervention for a visitor or volunteer, found to have committed an act of bullying shall be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.
- D. These same actions will apply to persons, whether they are students, school employees, or visitors/volunteers/independent contractors, who are found to have made **wrongful and intentional accusations** of another as a means of bullying.

Reporting an act of bullying

- A. At each school, the principal/designee is responsible for receiving oral or written complaints alleging violations of this policy, as with all infractions from the Student Code of Conduct.
- B. All District faculty and staff are required and must report, in writing, any allegations of bullying or violations of this Policy to the principal/designee or appropriate district administrator. Failure to report will result in action(s) or discipline, consistent with the collective bargaining agreement provisions.
- C. Any other members of the school community who have credible information that an act of bullying has taken place may file a report of bullying, whether a victim or witness.
- D. Any student (and/or the parent on that complainant's behalf if the complainant is a minor) who believes he/she is a victim of bullying (or any individual, including any student who has knowledge of any incident(s) involving bullying of students) is strongly encouraged to report the incident(s) in writing to a school official. Complaints should be filed as soon as possible after the alleged incident and noted on the specified data system, but must be filed within ninety (90) school days after the alleged incident (i.e., within 90 school days of the last act of alleged bullying). Failure on the part of the complainant to initiate and/or follow up on the complaint within this period may result in the complaint being deemed abandoned.
- E. The principal of each school in the District shall establish, and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents, how a report of bullying may be filed and how this report will be acted upon.
- F. A school district employee, school volunteer, contractor, student, parent/ or other persons who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying to the appropriate school official, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in this District Policy, is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments within the HDS.
- G. Administrators/principal/designee(s) shall document in writing and/or via the specified data system all complaints regarding bullying, as with all infractions of the Code of Student Conduct, to ensure that

problems are appropriately addressed in a timely manner, whether the report is made verbally or in writing.

- H. Anonymous reports may be made to the school site or any School District office. Anonymous reports may also be made on the district website: hardee.k12.fl.us. Any written or oral reporting of an act of bullying or harassment shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s). Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Administrators shall use the specified data system to log all reports and interventions.

Bullying Complaints and Resolution

- A. The investigation of a reported act of bullying of a student, school-based employee, or other persons providing service to the school is deemed to be a school-related activity and begins with a report of such an act.
- B. The principal/designee shall document all complaints in writing and/or through the appropriate data system to ensure that problems are addressed in a timely manner. Although this Policy encourages reporters to use a formal written complaint, school officials "should investigate all complaints and reports of harassment, whether or not the complaint is in writing," as stated by the Office for Civil Rights in *Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime: A Guide for Schools, Part II* (1999).
- C. If the complaint is about the principal or a district's staff member's direct supervisor, then the Superintendent/Designee or appropriate district administrator shall be asked to address the complaint.
- D. Informal Resolution - where the administrator, along with the complainant and the accused/student, may agree to informally resolve the complaint. The incident and the resolution must be documented on the appropriate data system.

If a mutual resolution has not been achieved, a formal written appeal must be filed within five (5) work days after the informal meeting and submitted to the principal or appropriate district supervisor.

- E. Formal Resolution - the complainant/student/employee or parent(s), on behalf of the student, may file a written complaint with the principal/designee or appropriate district administrator.

According to the level of infraction, parents will be promptly notified of any actions being taken to protect the victim via telephone or personal conference; the frequency of notification will depend on the seriousness of the bullying incident. The principal, or designee, shall promptly **report via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of bullying or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved** on the same day an investigation of the incident(s) has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

- F. The resolution, all interviews and interventions that take place and the corresponding dates shall be documented in writing and/or noted in the district specified data system.

Investigation requirements for reported acts of bullying under this policy

- A. The procedures for investigating school-based bullying include the principal/designee in the case of student- to- student bullying. The principal or designee shall be trained in investigative procedures and

interventions as outlined in this Policy. For incidents at the district level, the appropriate administrator will be responsible for the investigation as outlined in this policy.

- B. The investigator may not be the accused or the alleged victim.
- C. The principal/designee or appropriate area/district administrator shall begin a thorough investigation and interviews with the complainant(s), accused, and witnesses within two (2) school days of receiving a notification of complaint. Interviews with victim, alleged perpetrator(s), and witness shall be separate, private, documented and confidential. At no time will the perpetrator and victim be interviewed together. (The Florida Department of Education requires that school administrators/designees provide immediate notification to the parents of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator of an act of bullying or harassment.) The investigator shall collect and evaluate the facts including, but not limited to:
- Description of incident(s) including nature of the behavior; context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred, etc.;
 - How often the conduct occurred;
 - Whether there were past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior;
 - The relationship between the parties involved;
 - The characteristics of parties involved (i.e., grade, age, etc.);
 - The identity and number of individuals who participated in bullying or harassing behavior.
 - Where the alleged incident(s) occurred; and
 - Whether the conduct adversely affected the student's education or educational environment.
 - Whether the alleged victim felt or perceived an imbalance of power as a result of the reported incident.
 - The date, time, and method in which the parents/legal guardians of all parties involved were contacted.
- D. During the investigation, the principal/designee or appropriate district administrator may take any action necessary to protect the complainant, other students or employees consistent with the requirements of applicable regulations and statutes.
1. In general, student complainants will continue attendance at the same school and pursue their studies as directed while the investigation is conducted and the complaint is pending resolution. Any legal order of a court will prevail.
 2. When necessary to carry out the investigation or for other good reasons, and consistent with federal and state privacy laws, the principal/designee or appropriate district administrator also may discuss the complaint with any school district employee, the parent of the complainant or accused, if one or both is a minor (or has given consent or is an adult who has been determined to be incompetent or unable to give informed consent due to disability), and/or child protective agencies responsible for investigating child abuse.
 3. During the investigation where an employee is the accused, the principal/designee or the appropriate district administrator may recommend to the Superintendent/designee, any action necessary to protect the complainant, or other students or employees, consistent with the requirements of applicable statutes, State Board of Education Rules, School Board Policies, and collective bargaining agreements.
- E. Within ten (10) school days of the filing of the complaint, there shall be a written decision by the Principal/Designee or appropriate district administrator regarding the completion of the investigation.

The principal/designee shall make a decision about the validity of the allegations in the complaint, whether the facts and circumstances constitute a violation of this policy, and about any corrective action, if applicable, consistent with the Code of Student Conduct.

- F. The Principal/designee or appropriate district administrator will inform all relevant parties in writing of the decision and the right to appeal. A copy of the decision will be sent to the originating school and be noted in all relevant data tracking systems including, but not limited to the SESIR and the Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data system.
- G. If the accused is an employee, discipline may be taken, consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreement provisions, to resolve a complaint of bullying. The supervisor/designee (e.g., principal/designee for school-based employees) of the employee shall discuss the determination and any recommended corrective action with the Superintendent.
- H. No retaliation of any kind is permitted in connection with an individual's having made a bullying complaint. If retaliation occurs, it shall be deemed an additional act of bullying as stated herein this Policy.
- I. If the act is outside the scope of the school district, and the act is determined to be a criminal act, the appropriate law enforcement agency will be notified. If the act is determined not to be a criminal act, the parents/guardians of all students involved will be notified.

Parental Notification

The principal, or designee, shall promptly **report via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of bullying or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved** on the same day an investigation of the incident(s) has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

If the bullying incident results in the perpetrator being charged with a crime, the principal, or designee, shall by telephone or in writing by first class mail, inform parents/legal guardian of the victim(s) involved in the bullying incident about the Unsafe School Choice Option (No Child Left Behind, Title IX, Part E, Subpart 2, Section 9532) that states "...a student who becomes a victim of a violent criminal offense, as determined by State law, while in or on the grounds of a public elementary school or secondary school that the student attends, be allowed to attend a safe public elementary school or secondary school within the local educational agency, including a public charter school."

Once the investigation has been completed and it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, all appropriate local law enforcement agencies will be notified by telephone and/or in writing.

Referral for Intervention

The following procedure will be used for intervening when bullying or harassment is suspected or when a bullying incident is reported. The procedure shall be as follows:

- A. The teacher or parent/legal guardian may request informal consultation with school staff (e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, etc.) to determine the severity of concern and appropriate steps to address the concern by making a request of the principal/designee.

- B. A referral for professional assistance or services which includes:
- School personnel or parent/legal guardian may refer a student to the child study team (or equivalent school-based team with a problem-solving focus) for consideration of appropriate services. (Parent or legal guardian involvement is required in this process.)
 - If a formal discipline report or formal complaint is made, the principal or designee must refer the student(s) to the child study team for determination of counseling support and interventions. (Parent or legal guardian involvement is required in this process.)
- C. A school-based component to address intervention and assistance as determined appropriate by the child study team that may include:
- Counseling and support to address the needs of the victims of bullying or harassment
 - Research-based counseling/interventions to address the behavior of the students who bully and harass others (e.g., empathy training, anger management)
 - Research-based counseling/interventions which include assistance and support provided to parents/legal guardians, if deemed necessary or appropriate by the child study team.

Incident Reporting Requirements

- A. The procedure for including incidents of bullying or harassment in the school's report of data concerning school safety and **discipline data** is required under s. 1006.09(6). The report must include each incident of bullying or harassment and the resulting consequences, including discipline and referrals. In a separate section the report must include each reported incident of bullying or harassment that does not meet the criteria of a prohibited act under this section with recommendations regarding such incidents:
- B. The school district will utilize Florida's School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data, which includes **bullying (BUL)**, **harassment (HAR)**, **unsubstantiated bullying (UBL)**, and **unsubstantiated harassment (UHR)** as an incident code as well as **bullying-related** as a related element code. The SESIR definition of bullying/harassment is unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment, cause discomfort or humiliation, or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation.

If a bullying and/or harassment incident occurs then it will be reported in SESIR with the **bullying/harassment** code. If the bullying/harassment results in any of the following SESIR incidents the incident will be coded appropriately using the relevant incident code AND the related element code entitled **bullying-related** code. Those incidents are:

- Arson
- Battery
- Breaking and Entering
- Disruption on Campus
- Major Fighting
- Homicide
- Kidnapping
- Larceny/Theft
- Robbery
- Sexual Battery
- Sexual Harassment

- Sexual Offenses
- Threat/Intimidation
- Vandalism
- Weapons Possession
- Other Major (Other major incidents that do not fit within the other definitions)

Discipline and referral data will be recorded in Student Discipline/Referral Action Report and Automated Student Information System.

The Hardee County School district will provide bullying incident, discipline, and referral data to the Florida Department of Education in the format requested, through Survey 5 from Education Information and Accountability Services, and at designated dates provided by the Department.

Procedure for Instruction and Notification

The district ensures that schools sustain healthy, positive, and safe learning environments for all students. It is important to change the social climate of the school and the social norms with regards to bullying. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment – teachers, administrators, counselors, school nurses other non-teaching staff (such as bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and/or school librarians), parents/legal guardians, and students.

Students, parents/legal guardians, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers shall be given instruction at a minimum on an annual basis on the district's Policy and Regulations against bullying and harassment. The instruction shall include evidence-based methods of preventing bullying and harassment, as well as how to effectively identify and respond to bullying in schools.

Victim’s parents/legal guardians’ protection notification

The principal or designee shall by telephone and/or in writing report the occurrence of any incident of bullying as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved on the same day an investigation of the incident has been initiated. According to the level of infraction, parents/legal guardians will be notified by telephone and/or writing of actions being taken to protect the child; the frequency of notification will depend on the seriousness of the bullying or harassment incident. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Public Notification

At the beginning of each school year, the Superintendent or designee shall, in writing, inform school staff, parents/legal guardians, or other persons responsible for the welfare of a student of the district’s student safety and violence prevention policy.

Each Hardee District school shall provide notice to students and staff of this policy through appropriate references in the code of student conduct and employee handbooks, and/or through other reasonable means. The Superintendent shall also make all contractors contracting with the district aware of this policy.

Each school principal shall develop an annual process for discussing the school district policy on bullying and harassment with students in a student assembly or other reasonable format. Reminders of the policy and bullying prevention messages such as posters and signs will be displayed around each school and on the district school buses.