Bullying & Cyberbullying
Frequently Asked Questions

Developed by the Office of School Culture and Climate
Division of Student Support Services
Introduction

The Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) Education Bargain with Students and Parents is the District’s strategy to increase student achievement across all schools. The New Education Bargain is simple: The District will guarantee pathways to opportunity that will lead to achievement and success in exchange for hard work, commitment, and collaboration of our students and parents.

Services for Our Neediest Children and Families serves as one of the focus areas of the District in executing its commitment to students and parents. This component ensures that all schools are provided with services to address the social, emotional, health and wellness needs of all students to achieve success in school and beyond. This is accomplished by:

- Identifying and deploying resources that will address student and parent needs.
- Aligning internal and external supports and resources to increase impact.
- Collaboratively developing strategies with students, parents, and community partners to address student and parent needs.
- Providing capacity building opportunities to staff, parents, community partners, and students.
- Strengthening the District’s relationship with parents to forge and cultivate a partnership that will guarantee student success.

A critical component of all of student success is promoting the physical and mental health and well-being of our students. Student support services are designed to ensure we can deliver on that objective. This document will provide answers to frequently asked questions about bullying and cyberbullying. However, if there are questions that this document does not address contact Nicole Bycina at 816-3007. New questions will be included in updates to this document.
TOPICS COVERED

A.) Bullying
B.) Cyberbullying
C.) Reporting Bullying and Cyberbullying
D.) Bullying Laws and Policy
E.) Local and National Resources
F.) Important BPS Contact Numbers for Assistance
Frequently Asked Questions

Bullying

1. What is bullying?
   - Bullying abuse is a form of aggressive behavior that is intended to cause harm. When bullying occurs, there is an imbalance of power between the peer (or group of peers) bullying and the victim. Bullying usually happens over and over.
   - Bullying abuse can take both direct and indirect forms including:
     - **Direct** bullying or identifiable bullying actions may include:
       - Hitting, tripping, shoving, pinching, and excessive tickling
       - Verbal threats, name calling, racial slurs, and insults
       - Demanding money, property, or some service to be performed
       - Stabbing, choking, burning, and shooting
     - **Indirect** bullying may be more difficult to detect and may include:
       - Rejecting, excluding, or isolating target(s)
       - Humiliating target(s) in front of friends
       - Manipulating friends and relationships
       - Sending hurtful or threatening e-mail or writing notes
       - Blackmailing, terrorizing, or posing dangerous dares
       - Relational bullying (ganging up, spreading rumors, gossiping)
       - Cyberbullying (harm inflicted via computers, cell phones, electronic means, developing a Web site devoted to taunting, ranking, or degrading a target and inviting others to join in posting humiliating notes or messages).
   - Bullying abuse is not conflict, where two parties have a disagreement or misunderstanding. It is also different from playful teasing or rough-and-tumble play, which is a give-and-take where both people see it as fun and good-natured.

2. What are some signs that my child may be being bullied?
   - The impact of bullying is different for every child. Typical signs that a child may be being bullied are:
     - change in behavior
       - not interested in doing things that he/she used to like doing
       - withdrawn
     - not wanting to go to school or be in social situations
     - unexplained illnesses, cuts, or bruises
     - most children who are bullied tend to be quiet at home and classroom. A smaller number
engage in offensive or irritating behaviors that may make the bullying worse.

3. **What are some signs that my child may be bullying others?**
   - Similar to its impact on children being bullied, the indicators for those that are engaging in bullying behavior can be different for each child. Some typical signs may include:
     - referring to others negatively
     - lacking empathy
     - possessing a strong need to get his or her own way
     - having hostile/defiant attitude
     - angering easily and/or quickly
     - denying involvement or blaming others when behavior is addressed

4. **What can I do to prevent bullying?**
   - Preventing bullying from occurring is very important in the positive development of children. The responsibility of preventing bullying should be shared by every adult, as adults are models for appropriate behavior. To impact the positive development of all youth adults should:
     - be a positive role model
       - talk with and listen to your child
       - treat others with dignity and respect
     - get involved in school, community, and at home
     - know the school’s policies in terms of bullying prevention and intervention
     - teach children good habits early and consistently
       - establish high expectations for behavior and low tolerance for being mean
     - teach responsible use of technology; supervise and limit electronic activities
       - for example, have computers in common areas (not bedrooms), know child’s password, be their friend on Facebook
       - Bring cell phones and computers into the parents’ room to charge overnight.

5. **What can the community do about bullying?**
   - Bullying doesn’t happen only at school. Community members can use their unique strengths and skills to prevent bullying wherever it occurs. Bullying can be prevented, especially when the power of a community is brought together. Community-wide strategies can help identify and support children who are bullied, redirect the behavior of children who bully, and change the attitudes of adults and youth who tolerate bullying behaviors in peer groups, schools, and communities. Preventing and responding to bullying is the responsibility of the entire community (i.e. school administrators, teachers, staff members,
students, parents, and community based organizations. The entire community must recognize the responsibility to create a climate in which bullying is not tolerated. Following are a few effective ways the community can address bullying:

- Organize a solution oriented open forum where members of the community can come together to discuss collective strategies for addressing bullying.
- Raise awareness of bullying and its impact of positive youth development. Develop and distribute print media. Encourage local radio, TV, newspapers, and websites to give public service announcement space. Introduce bullying prevention information, strategies, and programming to community youth groups (i.e. community centers, athletic coaches, youth leaders, etc.).
- School Parent groups can organize and identify antibullying resources that can be shared with other parents to review and go over with their children.
- Partner with school and other youth development officials to develop an aligned response to bullying.

**Cyberbullying**

1. **What is cyberbullying?**
   - Cyberbullying is deliberate and repeated acts of harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.
   - Electronic devices are used to harass, threaten, humiliate, and hassle peers. This includes posting obscene, insulting, and slanderous messages or photos, as well as developing websites to promote and distribute hateful or hurtful content.
     - Cyberbullying can be carried out through many different communication modalities, including:
       - text messages, emails, video, phone calls, chatrooms, instant messages, blogs, websites, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr), and internet gaming
     - The kinds of behaviors being transmitted through these modalities include:
       - harassment - aggressive pressure or intimidation.
         - sexual harassment – unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, taking or sending sexually explicit videos, pictures or auditory recordings or other inappropriate verbal, written or physical conduct of a sexual nature, directed toward others.
       - denigration - the action of unfairly criticizing someone or something.
o **impersonation** - an act of pretending to be another person for the purpose of entertainment or fraud.
 o **outing** - the act or practice of revealing, exposing someone when not desired
 o **tricking** - deceive or outwit (someone) by being cunning or skillful.
 o **exclusion** - deny (someone) access to a place, group, or privilege.
 o **cyberstalking** - the repeated use of electronic communications to harass or frighten someone, for example by sending threatening emails.
 o **happy slapping** - the practice whereby a group of people assault a stranger at random while filming the incident on a mobile device, so as to circulate the images or post them online.

2. **What are some signs that my child may be a victim of cyberbullying?**
   o A child may be a victim of cyberbullying if he or she:
     - unexpectedly stops using personal technology (e.g., cell phones, computer, games)
     - appears nervous or jumpy when (s)/he receives messages via electronic devices
     - appears angry, upset, depressed, or frustrated after using the computer or his or her cell phone
     - avoids discussions about activities on the computer or cell phone
     - becomes unusually withdrawn from friends and/or family members
     - has thoughts of harming themselves or committing suicide

3. **What are some signs that a child may be cyberbullying others?**
   A child may be cyberbullying others if (s)he:
   - quickly switches screens or closes programs when someone walks by
   - becomes unusually upset when personal device uses are restricted
- avoids discussions about activities on the computer or cell phone
- uses multiple online accounts or an account that is not his or her own

In general, if a youth significantly changes his or her behavior when using technological devices, steps need to be taken to find out why.

4. What common apps should I be aware of in monitoring my child’s use of technology?

Please note that the above apps are not a complete list. Also note that presentation of these apps suggest that if your child uses them they are being cyberbullied or engaging in cyberbullying.

More Information on Parental Monitoring of Technology/Apps:
https://cyberbullying.org/parental-monitoring-apps-cyberbullying-review-recommendation
Reporting Bullying and Cyberbullying

1. What can I do if my child is being bullied or cyberbullied?
   o The Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) takes incidents of bullying and cyber bullying very seriously. BPS is committed to creating a safe and supportive learning environment to ensure that every school is thriving and that every student graduates college and career ready.
   o If your child is being bullied:
     • listen and empathize (for example, “Tell me what happened, that must have been very scary for you.”)
     • take it seriously
     • work with the child to find out more about the situation
     • if you suspect your child is being bullied at school, you may contact your child’s teacher, counselor, social worker or Administrator for assistance and support
     • to file a report of bullying, contact the building Principal (the Dignity Act Coordinator) or making an Online Bullying Report on your child’s school webpage found here https://www.buffaloschools.org/

   Make a Report:
   - go to your child’s school webpage by visiting www.buffaloschools.org
   - click Tab along top that says Schools (See picture to right)
   - find your child’s school and click on Number (ex. PS3)
   - scroll to quick links section (see picture to right)
   - click on Bullying online Reporting
   - Fill out form

5. What will happen when an incident of bullying is reported?
   o The Buffalo Public Schools takes student safety and reports of bullying very seriously.
     • Buffalo Public School Principals (DASA Coordinators) conduct a detailed investigation of the bullying incident that is witnessed or reported
     • Upon investigating Principals take immediate and appropriate action to address the allegation.
This includes making sure that the student who has been bullied is safe and addressing the misbehavior of the bully.

6. **What happens to students who bully?**
   
   ○ Bullying is a violation to the BPS Code of Conduct. Per the Code of Conduct:

   - Intentional bullying (verbal, physical or written) or electronic communication that is threatening or seriously intimidating and substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school can result in:
     - Level One Intervention: Classroom support and student support team involvement (See Code of Conduct for complete list of interventions that can be applied).
     - Level Two Intervention: School administration involvement (See Code of Conduct for complete list of interventions that can be applied).

   - Serious bullying (bullying that is repeated that adversely affects another student’s ability to participate in or benefit from a school’s education or extra-curricular program) can result in:
     - Level Three Intervention: Short Term Suspension (1 to 5 days)
     - Level Four Intervention: Long Term Suspension (6 or more days)
     - Level Five Intervention: Law Enforcement Involvement (only in extreme cases)

7. **In what other ways does the Buffalo Public Schools address bullying?**
   
   ○ As part of its efforts to maintain an environment that is safe and conducive to learning and instruction the Buffalo Public Schools addresses the positive social, emotional and wellness development of all students by:
     - Co-facilitating an Anti-Bullying taskforce made up of BPS administrators and board members, parents, students, county officials, community based organizations and experts. The purpose of this Task Force is to examine bullying throughout the City of Buffalo, identify its root causes, assess the laws and regulations that may affect our efforts, evaluate interventions that have been successfully used in other cities and help develop a plan to address bullying throughout the community.
     - Training school staff on how to recognize and address bullying in schools.
     - Conducting School Climate Walks and working with school community staff in strengthening the school climate.
     - Creating anti-bullying resources for students, parents, and school staff.
     - Providing support to students who are victim to bullying.
     - Developing an enhanced student support response to students who engage in bullying.
     - Empowering student leadership teams to address bullying by establishing peer support groups, and anti-bullying campaigns and activities in schools and community.
     - Conduct student focused school climate surveys and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys to capture student voice on their school experiences. This information is used to develop programming and resources to address student need.
     - Engaging parents in Parent Center Academy Learning Sessions on Bullying and Cyberbullying.
Bullying Laws and Policy

1. What laws are established to addresses bullying in schools?
   - In 2010 New York State passed a law (Dignity for All Students Act) that is designed to provide all public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus, or at a school function. While the law was adopted in 2010, its implementation started July 2012.

2. How does the Buffalo Public Schools implement the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)?
   - In accordance New York State Education Law, each school is required to have a Dignity Act Coordinator who is thoroughly trained in responding to and investigating instances of harassment, bullying, and discrimination.
   - The Buffalo Public Schools’ Office of School Climate provides training and awareness to Dignity Act Coordinators on the reporting/investigation process, as well as anti-bullying resources for teachers, parents and students to include training, information, updates and activities.
   - Dignity Act Coordinators are required to:
     - provide annual instruction to faculty and students on the Dignity for All Students Act;
     - to foster an environment free from intimidation, harassment or discrimination and;
     - respond quickly and thoroughly to reports of bullying.

Local, State and National Resources

1. What Buffalo Public School based resources are available to families and students?
   - **Training** – Parents are provided Training in bullying and cyber-Bullying via the BPS Parent Center
   - **Programs** - Check In/Check Out, Counseling, Social Skills groups, Mentoring and Mental Health Clinics are available in each school
   - **Online Resources** - can be found at [www.buffaloschools.org](http://www.buffaloschools.org) click Bullying and Harassment (quick link)
2. What are the local community based resource for families and students who need help?

- Family Support Centers: (716) 892-2172/ www.joanamale.org
- Prevention Focus/Teen Focus: (716) 884-3256/ www.pfocus.org
- Catholic Charities: (716) 218-1400/ www.ccwny.org
- Buffalo Crisis Services Hotline: (716) 834-1144 or 1-800-KIDS-400
- GLBT National Help Center www.glnh.org/index2.html
- Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) www.pflag.org
- The Trevor Project www.thetrevorproject.org

3. What are some State and National Resources available?

Websites
- Netsmartz https://www.netsmartz.org/Home
- Alberti Center for Abuse and Prevention https://ed.buffalo.edu/alberti.html
- Stop Bullying https://www.stopbullying.gov/

Hotlines
- LYRIC Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-7743
- National Suicide Prevention Helpline: 1-800-273-TALK
- GLBT National Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-PRIDE
- Peer Listening Line for LGBT Youth: 1-800-399-PEER
## Important BPS Contact Numbers for Assistance

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office/Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Extension</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education Switch Board Operator</td>
<td>816-3500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Processing Center (Registration and Transfers)</td>
<td>816-3717</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidance and Counseling</td>
<td>816-3702</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Related Services</td>
<td>816-3912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Schooling Office</td>
<td>816-3715</td>
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<td>Homeless Education Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Instruction</td>
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<td>Medical Leave Instruction</td>
<td>816-3624</td>
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<td>Language Assessment</td>
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<td>Multilingual Education</td>
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<td>Neglected and Delinquent At Risk Youth Program</td>
<td>816-3172</td>
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<td>Office of Parent Advocacy</td>
<td>816-4678</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of Parent and Family Engagement</td>
<td>816-3170</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>816-3707</td>
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<td>Special Education</td>
<td>816-3060</td>
<td>ext. 1</td>
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<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>816-3060</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program</td>
<td>816-3912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Support Services(Suspension Hearings)</td>
<td>816-3547</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superintendent’s Office</td>
<td>816-3575</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truancy Prevention Hotline</td>
<td>816-3806</td>
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Updates and revisions will be made to this FAQ document. If you have any questions about bullying or harassment at the Buffalo Public Schools, contact Nicole Bycina, Office of School Climate at the Buffalo Public Schools, 716-816-3007, ncbycinabuffaloschools.org