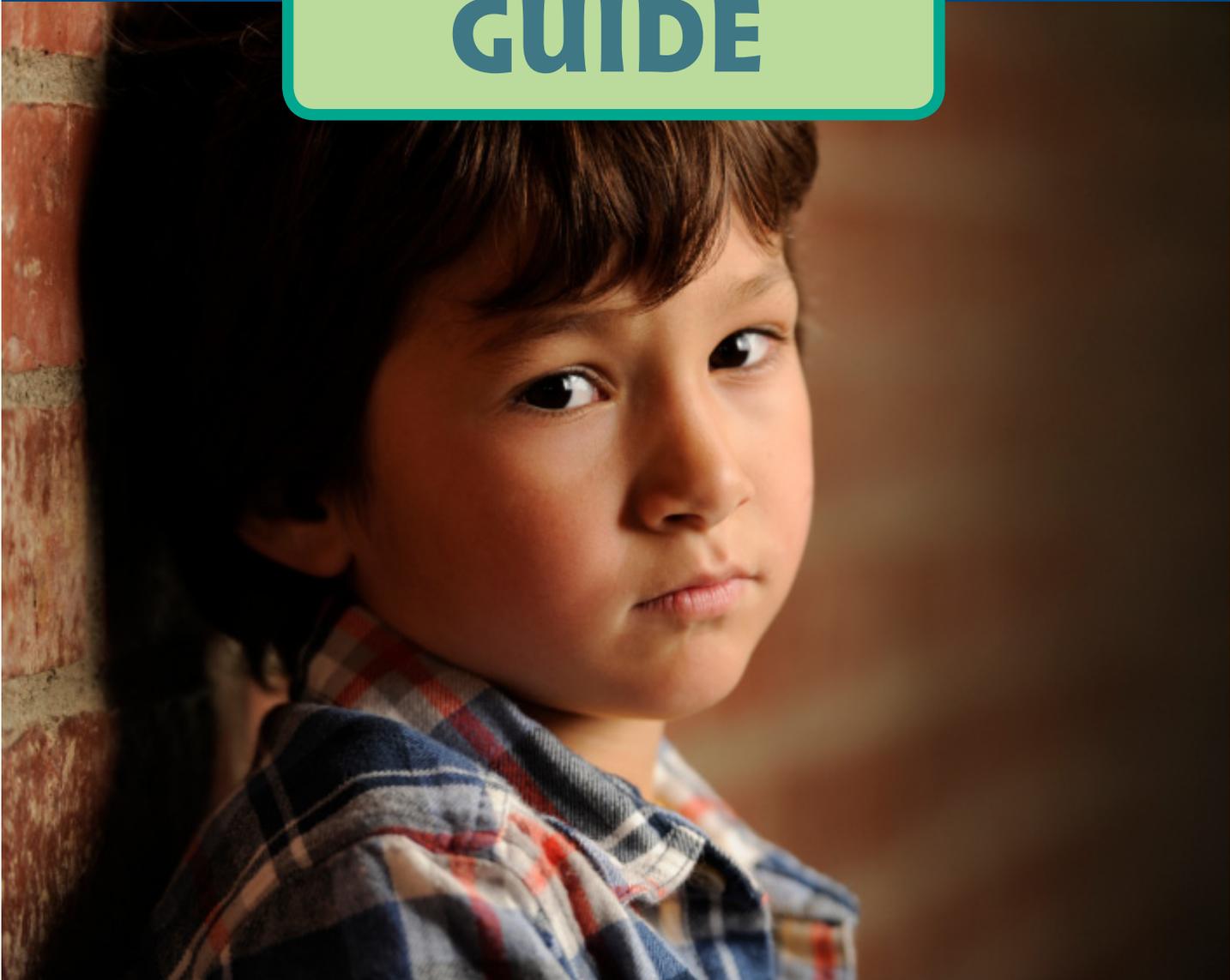


A Parent's **GUIDE**



HOW TO REPORT: bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation against students



Resolving School Concerns & Complaints

It is a belief of the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) System that all students have a right to learn in a safe and nurturing educational environment. This aligns with the Board of Education of Harford County Goal 4: To provide safe, secure, and healthy learning environments that are conducive to effective teaching and learning. Harford County Public Schools' safe-school efforts are supported by legislation passed by the 2010 Maryland General Assembly. The Safe Schools Reporting Act, effective July 1, 2005, and revised in 2010, requires all Maryland school systems to report incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation against students attending public schools to the Maryland Department of Education.



Definitions

Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation is intentional conduct including verbal, physical or written, or an intentional electronic communication that creates a hostile educational environment by substantially interfering with a student's educational benefits, opportunities or performance or a student's physical or psychological wellbeing and is motivated by an actual or perceived personal characteristic including race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, familial status, physical or mental ability or disability; or is:

1. Motivated by an actual or perceived personal characteristic including race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, familial status, physical or mental ability or disability.
2. Threatening or seriously intimidating and occurs on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus that substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

Electronic communication means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer or pager.

Student means any person enrolled for the purpose of receiving education services from HCPS.

Reprisal or retaliation means unlawful acts or acts which violate Board of Education of Harford County or school policy which are taken against an individual specifically because he/she reported acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation.

Reporting of Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment or Intimidation

1. If a student reports that he/she is currently the victim of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, the staff member shall respond accordingly and appropriately to investigate and intervene, as safety permits.
2. If a student expresses a desire to discuss an incident of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation with a staff member, the staff member shall make an effort to provide the student with a practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate way of doing so.
3. The Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form may also be submitted by a student, parent or guardian, close relative, or staff member to school administration.
4. The Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form shall be included in the beginning-of-the-year packets for students and their parents.
5. Neither victim nor witnesses will be promised confidentiality at the onset of an investigation. It cannot be predicted what will be discovered or if a hearing may result from the ultimate outcome of the investigation.
6. Information obtained from the Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form shall be recorded for data collection, storage, and submission according to the requirements of Education Article §7-424, Annotated Code of Maryland.
7. The central office personnel shall provide summary information obtained from the Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form to their schools.

Reporting Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment or Intimidation:

Forms may be obtained at the school's main (front) office, school counseling office, media center, cafeteria, and health room or electronically from the school system's website (www.hcps.org) or a school's website.

If the student feels uncomfortable submitting the reporting form in person, he/she may deposit the completed form in a security box placed in a location or locations selected by school administration.

Awareness Programs

- School administrators shall inform students about the availability of the form and its use during orientation sessions in classes during the first week of school.
- Forms shall be included in the beginning of the year packet for students and their parents.
- A description about the availability of the form and its use shall be published in each school's student/parent handbook and in its Code of Conduct.
- A description about the availability of the form and its use shall be published on the local school system's website (www.hcps.org) which should include the capability for downloading the form.
- Messages will be posted on the School Resource Officer's mobile sign boards around the campus to increase awareness.
- Survey forms will be distributed to students and parents to gauge awareness.
- Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation brochures are available to students, parents, and staff.
- Regional bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation presentations will be presented to parents and community members.
- Live streaming of presentations will be available on the system's website (www.hcps.org).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What happens once a report is filed?

A. Once a form is received, the principal and/or the principal's designee is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy.

Q. Will the parents be notified of the allegation of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation?

A. Yes, the school principal or the principal's designee shall promptly notify parents of the victim and offender of the incident.

Q. Will The Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form be a part of my child's record?

A. No, in accordance with the Safe Schools Reporting Act, the Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form is confidential and may not be made part of a student's permanent educational record.

Q. Are students and parents entitled to know the outcome of the investigation?

A. It depends on the relationship of the parties involved. Although all reports of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation are thoroughly investigated, Maryland Law prohibits discussing the contents of student discipline records with individuals other than the student's parents or legal guardians.

Q. Can I file a report confidentially?

A. Yes, but your anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Due to the nature of the complaint, actions may be difficult to pursue without your cooperation.

ANONYMITY

Neither victim nor witnesses can be promised confidentiality at the onset of an investigation. It cannot be predicted what will be discovered or if a hearing may result from the ultimate outcome of the investigation.



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