

Lyndhurst School District



Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

A Handbook for Caretakers and Students

September 2016

Introduction....

While New Jersey has had a Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) law to protect students for several years, this law was amended most recently in 2011. The revised components of the law outline very clear standards and timelines for how schools must comply when responding to potential HIB incidents that occur both on and off school grounds.

This handbook, created by members of the Anti-Bullying team within Lyndhurst Public Schools, is intended to help you understand the law, the district's responsibilities and each school's responsibilities, and your rights as a student and a parent.

Read on and help us to take a stand against acts of HIB in our community!



IMPORTANT HIB ACRONYMS & DEFINITIONS

ABC: Anti-Bullying Coordinator

~Responsible for coordinating and strengthening the school district's HIB policies and procedures

ABR: Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act

~Also referenced as the New Jersey HIB law

ABS: Anti-Bullying Specialist

~Responsible for leading all HIB investigations and facilitating SST Meetings in addition to preventing, identifying and addressing HIB incidents in the school

CSA: Chief School Administrator

~Also known as the Superintendent of Schools

HIB: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

~See page 5 for complete definition

Offender

~The individual(s) accused of committing a HIB-related behavior

SST: School Safety Team

~Must include the principal, a teacher, the ABS, and a parent

~Responsible for strengthening school climate, addressing patterns of HIB behavior and highlighting potential HIB challenges in the building

~Required to meet twice per year

Victim

~The individual(s) who is the alleged recipient of the HIB-related behavior



KEY PLAYERS!

Individuals that assist in fulfilling responsibilities outlined by the NJ ABR

Superintendent	Mrs. Shauna DeMarco
Assistant Superintendent	Dr. James Corino
Anti-Bullying Co-Coordinator	Ms. Chelsea Trump Ms. Maryann Mulé
Columbus School	
ABS	Mrs. Maria Fagan
Principal	Mr. Robert Giangeruso
Franklin School	
ABS	Ms. Susan Leidermer
Principal	Mr. Peter Strumolo
High School	
ABS	Ms. Maryann Mulé
Principal	Ms. Laura Vuono
Assistant Principal	Mr. Frank Venezia
Jefferson School	
ABS	Ms. Jennifer Claydon
Principal	Mr. Joseph Vastola
Lincoln School	
ABS	Ms. Christina Tenore
Principal	Mr. Michael Rizzo
Memorial Campus	
ABS	Ms. Susan Leidemer
Principal	Mr. Michael Rizzo
Roosevelt School	
ABS	Ms. Alyssa Frank
Principal	Mr. Joseph DeCorso
Washington School	
ABS	Mrs. Maria Fagan
Principal	Mrs. Elba Castrovinci

Other crucial members involved in HIB prevention and the HIB investigation process:

Board of Education Members

District Child Study Team and High School Counselors

Students, Caretakers, and Community Members

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Definition

“Harassment, intimidation, or bullying” means **any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication**, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14, whether it be a **single incident or a series of incidents*...** that meets the following criteria:

1. Causes **substantial disruption** to the orderly operation of the school or a student’s rights;
2. Was motivated by actual or perceived **distinguishing characteristics**;
3. Meets one of the following
 - a. Caused physical or emotional **harm** to a student or his or her property or there was **fear of harm** to student or property
 - b. Had the effect of **insulting or demeaning** a student or group of students;
or
 - c. The act created a **“hostile educational environment”** that interfered with a student’s education.



****These acts can happen ON or OFF school grounds.***

If a potential act of HIB is brought to our attention, even if it happened in Australia, Lyndhurst Public Schools is required to investigate, per the law!

To read more about this definition and the words bolded above, please refer to the New Jersey ABR. A link directly to this law can be found on the “Important Resources!” section of this handbook on page 6.

Important Resources!

www.lyndhurstschools.net

~Lyndhurst School's web page

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/ParentGuide.pdf>

~Guidance for Parents on the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/>

~State of New Jersey Department of Education website on HIB

http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/PL10/122_.PDF

~The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/faq/AntiBullyingQA.pdf>

~Questions and Answers related to the ABR

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/index.html>

~A federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://stompoutbullying.org>

~A National Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Organization

Timeline of the HIB Investigation Process

1. A school employee/contracted service provider verbally reports the information regarding a potential HIB act to the principal on the same day that the HIB behavior was witnessed or reliable information was received.
2. Potential areas of safety are addressed and police are involved if needed.
3. The principal contacts all parents of students allegedly involved and offers availability of counseling and other intervention services, if appropriate.
4. The principal designates the ABS and/or additional personnel to assist in the investigation within **one day** of the verbal report.
5. The school employee/contracted service provider who observed the potential HIB behavior writes an “Initial Report” **within two days** of when the behavior was observed and of when the verbal report was made to the Principal.
6. The ABS “leads” and conducts the investigation...
 - a. Victims and Offenders are interviewed by the ABS and/or his/her designee
 - b. Witnesses, if there were any, are interviewed.
7. The investigation is completed **within 10 school days** of the written “Initial Report.”
8. The results of the investigation are reported to Mrs. DeMarco, Superintendent, within two days of the investigation completion. Mrs. DeMarco then reviews the report, at which time she may decide to provide intervention services, establish training programs, impose discipline, or take other action.
9. Mrs. DeMarco reports the results of the investigation to the BoE at the **BoE meeting immediately following the completion of the investigation.**
10. **Within 5 days** of the investigation, parents/guardians of all alleged victims and offenders receive written notice about the CSA’s report.
 - i. *At any time a parent may request a hearing before the BoE. The hearing must take place within 10 days of the request.*
11. The BoE votes to **affirm, reject or modify** the CSA’s decision at the BoE meeting following the CSA’s report.

When you, as a caretaker, receive a phone call from the Principal...



Things To Assume:

- It is our goal to protect the safety and wellbeing of **all** students involved in the potential HIB act, whether a student is named as an alleged victim or an alleged offender.
- An investigation has started and **reliable** information has led the school to identify your child as someone that we must interview in order to determine the extent of their involvement.
- We cannot share details at this time because we most likely have not started the investigation and do not know the full extent to which your child may be a part of the HIB incident.
- A careful and **detailed** investigation will take place.
- We encourage you to speak with your child about the incident and phone the Principal with any remaining concerns you might have.
- In about a month, you will receive a letter from the CSA that will confirm whether the incident was determined to fall under the parameters of HIB.

Things To NOT Assume:

- Your child is considered guilty, based on past history and from other situations in which school personnel has encountered your child.
- The school has identified you as a “bad parent.”
- Your child will now be targeted as a “bad child” because they were named as a potential offender or victim.
- This incident will automatically be recorded in your child’s permanent record simply because they were named as a potential offender or victim.
- You will be a bother if you call the school or request a meeting to address your questions and frustrations.



We recognize that it is so hard to not panic upon receiving a call that your child was involved in a potential HIB incident. Rest easy knowing that the safety and wellbeing of all students involved is our first and immediate priority. No information received will be ignored. We are following the law by reaching out to you as soon as possible and yet, we have a lot of work to do before we are able to reach a final determination about if an act met all criteria for HIB.

After the initial phone call to you and after you have had the chance to discuss and review the incident with your child, please NEVER HESITATE to call the Principal back with any questions you might have. We want to make sure that you remain confident in the investigation process as it is outlined in the NJ ABR and in our procedures within Lyndhurst Public Schools that carry out these critical laws.

Attention Students!



If you are being bullied...

- ~If you are being bullied, you might be scared to talk about it or you might feel ashamed.
- ~Your initial reaction might be to hide what is going on. Don't do this!
- ~The most important thing you can do is to TALK about what's going on with someone that you trust.

What to do if you think someone is being bullied:

- ~Talk to that person.
- ~Let the person know that you care and that they did nothing wrong.
- ~Include this person in your group of friends.
- ~Stick up for this person (if you observe a situation in which it will not put you at a safety risk, make a statement and let the alleged bully know that what they are doing is wrong and to stop immediately!)
- ~Tell someone (an adult, like a counselor, teacher or parent!) and let them know what you think is going on.



*“Never be bullied into silence.
Never allow yourself to be made a victim.
Accept no one’s definition of your life, but define yourself.”
– Harvey Fierstein*

Speak up!

When you speak up, rest assured that your identity will remain confidential. If you would prefer to remain anonymous, you can call the ABS and share whatever information you have and an investigation will still begin immediately.

“Conflict” and “Bullying:” The Difference

In A Conflict:



- Students are **equally involved** in a disagreement
- It's **mutual** (everyone is evenly involved)

In a Bullying Situation:

- It involves students **intentionally committing a mean or violent act** against another person or group of people
- There is no mutual participation
- It is **one-sided**





We HEAR You! We RESPECT Your Concerns! We Will WORK TOGETHER in the Best Interest of Each and Every Student!

*There may be times that a caregiver or student expresses **deep concern** over the issues that are occurring and truly feels that the misconduct can only be described as harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Then the results of a thorough HIB investigation process reveal that, as outlined by NJ law, the behavior called into question did NOT fall into the parameters of HIB.*

***PLEASE** do not think that the NON-HIB report means that the school is disagreeing with, minimizing, or ignoring your feelings of concern over a reported incident. It simply means that the behaviors called into question are not being labeled as HIB. A NON-HIB finding does NOT mean that a school has taken no action or will not be taking action to resolve the issue. A behavior may not meet the criteria for HIB, yet most certainly meets the criteria for a student/group of students not adhering to code of conduct. In such instances, disciplinary action, guidance and appropriate behavior modifications/interventions will be put into place. Depending on the nature of the incident, police involvement may also be necessary. Additional remediation may include parent conferences and/or specific social education strategies, as these are often critical components to the remedial process.*

*While it is **NEVER acceptable for a student to feel bullied, harassed or intimidated**, we must remember that school is a place where students may experience issues, conflicts, and poor decision-making. Self-control and the ability to manage conflict and life's unpleasantness in a healthy and positive manner are keys to a happy life – and fundamental to college and career readiness. We will continue to make certain that each school in our district serves as a place **where students are supported and provided with instructional guidance in overcoming and resolving conflicts and growing from their mistakes.***



OUR COMMITMENT

It is the commitment of every professional educator in the Lyndhurst School District to respond to student issues in a timely and effective manner and follow the processes that are outlined by law, policy, and/or regulation while always keeping the best interests of students at the forefront of our work.

In support of this collective commitment, we urge any parent or student with continued concerns following a HIB investigation to reach out immediately so that we can take further action to address your concerns, regardless of whether or not a behavior has been labeled as HIB.

When parents and educators work together in support of the district's students, it is likely that our children will feel that school is a safe and welcoming place to live and learn, despite any challenges they may face. Thank you for joining us in our commitment to the students of the Lyndhurst Public Schools.



***Have questions about ANYTHING
related to HIB?***

Please contact your child's principal or the ABS of their school (contact information located on page 4 of this packet).



***Thank you for taking the time to
review this handbook and for
reaching out with your questions
and concerns!***

**“We are only as strong
as we are united, as
weak as we are
divided.”**

-J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire