

TITLE: COUNTERING BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE
IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PUBLISHED: 2007

IDENTIFIER: CBH200704

LEGISLATION: Human Rights Act 2004
Discrimination Act 1991
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
Sex Discrimination Act 1984

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Consistent with the *Providing Safe Schools P-12* policy every school must develop procedures to counter bullying, harassment and violence.

1.2 Schools will have in place practices and programs that are designed to ensure that all students are protected from bullying, harassment and violence.

1.3 Schools must report instances of bullying, harassment and violence that pose an immediate threat to the safety of students and staff as critical incidents. This report must be made to the School Network Leader immediately by telephone and in writing within 24 hours.

1.4 The school procedures must include specific strategies for:

- reporting (by students, parents, caregivers and school staff)
- intervening (by students, parents, caregivers, teachers and other school staff)
- accessing help and support (by students, parents and caregivers)
- professional learning (for teachers and other school staff).

1.5 A statistical record of incidents of bullying, harassment and violence should be kept by the school.

2. Rationale

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the responsibilities of all ACT public schools to counter bullying, harassment and violence.

3. Definitions

3.1 Definitions of bullying, harassment and violence are essential in establishing procedures and strategies in schools.

3.2 **Bullying:**

A product of social dynamics which can be defined as the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group, which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take different forms – verbal, physical, social, cyber or psychological. Actions can be observable or hidden.

3.3 **Harassment:**

Negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another individual, which may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic status. It may be a one-off incident between individuals or groups or may continue over time.

3.4 **Violence:**

Incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, physically assaulted or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is an extreme use of force often resulting in injury or destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

3.5 **Conflict:**

A disagreement where the needs of one or both parties are not being met. It does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, even if parties do not have perceived equal power. If handled well, conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth.

3.6 **Critical Incident:**

An incident, or series of incidents, which result in:

- significant disruption to the school's normal procedures
- a school being locked down, evacuated or requiring closure
- police notification and involvement in the school
- significant threat to the safety of students and/or staff.

4. **Procedures**

4.1 This policy must be read in conjunction *Providing Safe Schools P-12*

4.2 Schools need to differentiate between acts of bullying, harassment and violence and respond to each in different ways. For example:

- bullying typically requires non-punitive and restorative approaches.
- conflict typically requires mediation.
- violence requires consequences as set out in the school's behaviour management plan.
- harassment requires consequences as set out in the school's behaviour management plan.

4.3 In dealing with bullying, harassing and violent behaviour, schools need to recognise the repeated and recurring nature of bullying, harassment and violence and have mechanisms in place to identify patterns of repeated offending.

4.4 Students and their parents and caregivers must be encouraged to be proactive in dealing with bullying, harassment and violence, so that appropriate support can be provided to those students involved in any incident.

4.5 Schools will inform parents and caregivers about their procedures and programs and will provide them with information about issues related to the management of bullying, harassment and violence.

- 4.6 If harassment and bullying behaviours are specifically sexual or racist in nature, refer to the *Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools* or the *Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools* policies.
-

Policy Owner: Director, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education & Student Support

Related Documents: *Providing Safe Schools Policy P-12*
Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools
Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools
