

POLICY #5131.911

NORWICH FREE ACADEMY

BULLYING POLICY

Norwich Free Academy (“NFA”) promotes a secure and productive campus environment conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behavior, including cyberbullying. Therefore, Norwich Free Academy prohibits the bullying of a student by another student or students.

Norwich Free Academy prohibits bullying (a) on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by Norwich Free Academy, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by Norwich Free Academy, and (b) outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the target, or (ii) infringes on the rights of the target at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.

DEFINITIONS

“Bullying” means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district that:

- A. Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property,
- B. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
- C. creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- D. infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
- E. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

“Bullying” shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic

status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

“Cyberbullying” means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

“Teen dating violence” means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

“Mobile electronic device” means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

“Electronic communication” means 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, photo-electronic or photo-optical system.

“Hostile environment” means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

“Outside of the school setting” means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education.

“School employee” means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or (B) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education.

“School climate” means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Norwich Free Academy expects prompt and reasonable investigation and response to alleged acts of bullying. Reports of alleged acts of bullying will be addressed and responded to according to this policy and in accordance with Norwich Free Academy’s Safe School Climate Plan.

Discrimination and retaliation are prohibited against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.

Immunity will be granted against damage claims in accordance with state law to NFA and school employees acting within the scope of their duties, students, parents, and others who, in good faith, report, investigate, or respond to bullying or teen dating violence in accordance with this policy and with Norwich Free Academy's Safe School Climate Plan. This immunity does not extend to gross, wanton, reckless, or willful misconduct.

SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN

Norwich Free Academy (“NFA”) has adopted Policy 5131.911 which prohibits bullying of a student by another student or students. This document is Norwich Free Academy’s Safe School Climate Plan, and should be read in conjunction with Norwich Free Academy’s Bullying Policy. The Safe School Climate Plan describes the measures that NFA will take to prevent bullying and teen dating violence in its schools. The Plan includes the procedures to report, investigate, document, and maintain records of bullying investigations, as well as interventions for both targets and perpetrators of bullying behavior.

I. Definitions

This Plan adopts the definitions stated in Policy 5131.911.

II. Personnel

In general, it is the responsibility of all school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying to report the behavior both orally and in writing as described in this Plan. In addition, specific personnel have further responsibilities regarding prevention, investigation, and response to bullying, as described herein.

The “Safe School Climate Coordinator” is appointed by the Head of School each year from among existing Norwich Free Academy staff, and is responsible for:

- implementing Norwich Free Academy’s safe school climate plan;
- collaborating with the Safe School Climate Specialists, NFA, and the Head of School to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying in Norwich Free Academy;
- providing data and information, in collaboration with the Head of School, to the Department of Education regarding bullying; and
- meeting with the Safe School Climate Specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in Norwich Free Academy and to make recommendations concerning amendments to Norwich Free Academy’s Safe School Climate Plan.

A “Safe School Climate Specialist” is the Head of School or the Head of School’s designee, who shall:

- investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the school in accordance with this Plan;
- collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school; and
- act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying, and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

A “Safe School Climate Committee” is established by the Head of School either by establishing a committee or designating at least one existing committee in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school appointed by the Head of School. The committee shall:

- receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying;
- identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school;
- implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan, developed pursuant to section 10-222m, regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying;
- review and amend school policies relating to bullying;
- review and make recommendations to Norwich Free Academy’s Safe School Climate Coordinator regarding Norwich Free Academy’s Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying;
- collaborate with Norwich Free Academy’s Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d and subsection (a) of section 10-222h; and
- perform any other duties as determined by the Head of School that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying for the school.

Any parent or guardian serving as a member of any such committee shall not participate in the activities of receiving copies of completed bullying investigation reports, identifying and addressing patterns of bullying among students in the school, implementing the provisions of the school security and safety plan regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying, or any other activity that may compromise the confidentiality of a student.

III. Prevention

As stated in Policy 5131.911, bullying is prohibited on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by Norwich Free Academy, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by Norwich Free Academy, and outside of the school setting if such bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, or infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

The Student Code of Conduct includes language regarding the prohibition of bullying.

A prevention and intervention strategy will be developed for school employees to deal with bullying and teen dating violence. “Prevention and intervention strategies” may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying and teen dating violence identified by the Department of Education;
- (2) school rules prohibiting bullying, teen dating violence, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;
- (3) adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying or teen dating violence is likely to occur;
- (4) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying and teen dating violence education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school;
- (5) individual interventions with the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school employees;
- (6) school-wide training related to safe school climate;
- (7) student peer training, education and support;
- (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions; and
- (9) culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation. Funding for the school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy may originate from public, private, federal or philanthropic sources. For purposes of this section, “interventions with the bullied child” includes referrals to a school counselor, psychologist or other appropriate social or mental health service, and periodic follow-up by the safe school climate specialist with the bullied child.

Norwich Free Academy shall adopt the state-wide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program identified or developed by the State Department of Children and Families in collaboration with other entities, in accordance with the General Statutes at Section 17a-101q.

IV. Reporting and Responding to Bullying

Norwich Free Academy expects prompt and reasonable investigation and response to alleged acts of bullying. Reports of alleged acts of bullying will be addressed and responded to according to Policy 5131.911 and in accordance with this Safe School Climate Plan and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program.

A. Reporting

Students may anonymously report alleged acts of bullying to a Safe School Climate Specialist or any school employees orally or in writing. Students and the parents or guardians of students will be notified of the process by which students may make reports of alleged acts of bullying. Such notification is to be included in Student Handbooks and on Norwich Free Academy's website. In addition, parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually of such process by mail.

Parents or guardians of students may file written reports of suspected bullying. No anonymous parent reports will be accepted.

School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying must orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist, or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying. In addition, school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying must file a written report not later than two school days after making an oral report to the Safe School Climate Specialist or other school administrator.

School administrators receiving such oral or written reports are to share that information with the Safe School Climate Specialist as soon as possible without undue delay. In the event of an extended absence of the Safe School Climate Specialist from school for a period longer than one school week, the school administrator receiving the report should assume full responsibility for the investigation of the complaint, and for the school's response following all established guidelines and procedures for the investigation of bullying reports, being careful to keep a written record of the investigation, witness statements, copies of any parent invitations for a meeting, parent notifications, or any student safety plans generated. This documentation should be provided to the Safe School Climate Specialist upon his/her return to school. In the event of an emergency situation, the receiving school administrator assumes full responsibility immediately in the absence of the Safe School Climate Coordinator.

Discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is prohibited.

B. Investigation

After receipt of any written reports made under this Plan, the Safe School Climate Specialist will investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly. The parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed will receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced.

The Safe School Climate Specialist will review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Norwich Free Academy will establish a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in such school and to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school and make such list available for public inspection, and annually report such number to the Department of Education, and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

C. Notification

When it is determined that a student has committed a verified act of bullying, the student's school will notify the parents or guardians of the student who committed the verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation described in this Plan. The school will also contact the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation described in this Plan. The notifications shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying.

When it is determined that a verified act of bullying has occurred, each school will invite the parents or guardians of a student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. The invitation shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying.

When it is determined that a verified act of bullying has occurred, each school will invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying. This meeting is separate and distinct from the meeting with the parents or guardians of a student against whom a verified act of bullying was committed.

D. Intervention

Interventions to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and may include both counseling and discipline. In all instances, any responsive disciplinary action is to be taken in accordance with Norwich Free Academy's policies including the Student Code of Conduct.

Student safety support plans will be developed for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying.

The Head of School, or the Head of School's designee, will notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such Head of School, or the Head of School's designee, believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct.

V. Training

At the beginning of each school year, Norwich Free Academy will provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of Norwich Free Academy's Safe School Climate Plan.

Certified school employees will annually complete the training described in the General Statutes at Section 10-220a, which includes training on the identification of, prevention of, and response to bullying; the prevention of and response to youth suicide; and the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and the relationship of such behavior to teen dating violence.

Non-certified school employees will participate in annual training as described in the General Statutes at Section 10-222j to be provided by the State Department of Education, within available appropriations, which

includes training on the prevention, identification, and response to school bullying and teen dating violence and the prevention of and response to youth suicide.

VI. School Climate Assessments

On and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, Norwich Free Academy will complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education. Norwich Free Academy shall submit such school climate assessments to the Department.

VII. Approval of the Safe School Climate Plan

NFA will submit Norwich Free Academy's Safe School Climate Plan to the State Department of Education for review and approval as required by statute or otherwise by the Department.

VIII. Access to the Safe School Climate Plan

No later than thirty (30) days after the approval of Norwich Free Academy's Safe School Climate Plan by the State Department of Education, the Safe School Climate Plan will be made available on Norwich Free Academy's website. The Plan will be included in Norwich Free Academy's publications of the rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools and in all Student Handbooks.

Individuals with questions or concerns regarding Norwich Free Academy's Safe School Climate Plan should contact the Safe School Climate Specialist or the Safe School Climate Coordinator. Contact information for these individuals is provided in each Student Handbook and on Norwich Free Academy's website.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes PA 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools

See Also: Pilot, Norwich Free Academy Student Handbook

Policy Adopted: September 17, 2002

Policy Revised: May 22, 2007

May 17, 2011

January 17, 2012

September 15, 2015

NORWICH FREE ACADEMY

COMPLAINT FORM

FOR USE BY STUDENTS, PARENTS, SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

NOTE: Please print all information

Today's Date: ____/____/____

Case #: _____

Month Day Year

- TO BE COMPLETED IF REPORTING PERSON IS NOT PERSON EFFECTED BY BEHAVIOR BEING REPORTED -

PERSON REPORTING INCIDENT: Name: _____

Telephone Day: _____ Evening: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Place an X in the appropriate box: ☐ Student ☐ Parent/Guardian ☐ Close Adult Relative ☐ Employee

☐ Other (explain) _____

1. Name of person effected: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____

2. Names(s) of alleged offender(s) (if known): (Please print) Is he/she Grade/ School (if not NFA student)
NFA student? Age

_____ ☐ Y ☐ N _____

_____ ☐ Y ☐ N _____

_____ ☐ Y ☐ N _____

3. On what date(s) did the incident(s) happen?

____/____/____ ____/____/____ ____/____/____
Month Day Year Month Day Year Month Day Year

4. Where did the incident(s) happen (choose all that apply)?

☐ On school property ☐ At a school-sponsored activity or event off school property

☐ On a school bus ☐ On the way to/from school/school bus stop

☐ Off school grounds ☐ Via electronic communication

☐ Other (specify) _____

5. Describe the nature of the complaint (be as specific as possible) and state how you became aware of the incident:

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

6. What do you believe was the reason for the conduct by the offender(s)? Do you believe it was based upon disability, race, national origin, religion, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or marital status of the target? Explain.

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

7. Did a physical injury result from this incident(s)? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Nature of injury _____

8. Was the target absent from school as a result of the incident? ☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, how many days was the target absent from school as a result of the incident? _____

Dates of absenteeism: _____

9. Did an emotional injury result from this incident(s)?:

- ☐ No ☐ Yes, but psychological services have not been sought
☐ Yes, and psychological services have been sought

Dates/location where services were sought _____

10. Did any damage occur to the target's property? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Nature of damage _____

11. State name(s) of any witnesses to the incident(s):

Name/position/school (i.e. student, teacher,
parent, community member, etc.)

Contact information (if known)

12. Are you aware of any similar types of activities by the alleged offender(s) or by others against the target? If so, please describe the activity and when it occurred? Was a report made of these activities? If so, to whom and when?

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

13. Is there any additional information you would like to provide?

(Attach a separate sheet if necessary, and attach any relevant documentation (i.e. medical documents, photos, posts, video, emails, text messages, former reports, etc.)

Name: _____

(Printed)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Complainant)

Name/Title: _____

(Printed)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Staff member receiving/ reviewing Complaint)