

Collier Middle School

Policy

Prohibiting Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A: 37-15 (3)(b)(2)

1. Collier Services (Collier Middle School) prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Collier Middle School believes that all students are entitled to work and study in school-related environments that are free of harassment, intimidation and bullying. Our mission is based on a philosophy of deep respect for the inherent worth of each individual, of regard for the environment and belief in the capacity for personal change. We commit ourselves to forming relationships with people so that each person may experience a sense of belonging, dignity and hope. It is through relationships that students and staff grow in self-understanding and self-esteem. Each person has the right to self-determination. Therefore, a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for our students to fulfill this mission and to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and our ability to educate students in a safe environment and therefore will not be tolerated.

2. Definition of HIB:

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any gesture or written, verbal or physical act any electronic communication that takes place on school property, at a school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS (including cyber-space) that:

- a. is motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or,
- b. any other distinguishing characteristic; and
- c. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property; or
- d. has the effect of insulting, excluding, threatening, alarming, annoying, abusing or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school; or
- e. has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interference with an individual's work performance or creating an otherwise intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning/recreational environment; or,
- f. one student exercises power and control over another student, in either isolated incidents (e.g. intimidation / harassment) or patterns of harassing or intimidating behavior (e.g. bullying).

Must meet one of the following conditions in addition to causing substantial disruption or interference:

- Has effect of insulting or demeaning student or group or students OR
- Creates hostile educational environment for student by interfering with student's education OR severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to student

3. Student behavioral expectations:

In our "Summary of Behavioral Expectations" that is annually reviewed with the students and that they must sign we ask and expect them to treat each other with kindness and respect and avoid all instances of harassment, intimidation, and bullying. It is expected that they conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment.

Standards for student behavior are set cooperatively through interaction among the student, parents/guardians, district child study teams, and Collier staff. All students who are formally accepted into our program must strive to meet pre-agreed upon goals that were formulated when the student had his or her tour and screening that are designed to encourage student growth in self-discipline. We have established "Conditional Status Reporting Systems" that are designed to help at-risk Collier students remain in the program. The systems remind students of their own promises to themselves that they made when they first came to Collier. Students who are enrolled in any of these systems need to assume more responsibility for their behavior and demonstrate a greater commitment to positive change. These systems foster respect for self and others.

We believe that the best discipline is self-imposed, and that it is the responsibility of staff to use disciplinary situations as opportunities to help students learn to assume and accept responsibility for their behavior and the consequences of their behavior. Students are cautioned by staff or have "write-ups" submitted by staff for various infractions of our behavioral policy on a daily basis. These "write-ups" are submitted to an administrative review committee. This committee gathers every day to review behavior reports, "write-ups", submitted by staff. An administrator then meets with students and informs them of the decision "to caution" and review what behaviors must change to avoid being placed on a system or advancing on one. When students are put on a system they sign a contract outlining behaviors needing change in order to prevent further progression along the system.

General guidelines and procedures for student behavior have been developed for our program and they are reviewed annually with our students. These guidelines and procedures are suited to the age levels of our students and the mission and physical facilities of the school. All students are required to adhere to these rules and guidelines along with their individual goals and to submit to such disciplinary measures as are appropriately assigned for infractions of these rules.

These guidelines and behavioral system are distributed to all students, parents/guardians, & child study teams. Provisions are made for informing parents/guardians whose primary language is other than English.

4. Consequences & remedial actions:

In determining the appropriate response to students who commit one or more acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying, we will consider the following factors: the development and maturity levels of the parties involved, the levels of harm, the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behaviors, past or continuing patterns of behavior, the relationship between the parties involved, the context in which the alleged incidents occurred, placement within one of our behavioral systems and whether the behavior was active or passive. Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of our policy requires a determination based on all of the facts and surrounding circumstances. After meaningful consideration of these factors the administrative review committee will determine an appropriate consequence that is consistent with the case law, Federal and State statutes, regulations and policies, and Collier policies and procedures. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or removal from our program and notification of the appropriate legal authorities.

5. Reporting an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying:

School employees and members of the school community must direct complaints alleging violations of this policy to the principal or his designees (CARE Team – **Creating A Respectful Environment**) on the same day that the incident occurs. All allegations should be placed on the “write-up” forms that are available in each administrative office or file them electronically. Reports can be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Further, all Collier school personnel will be responsible for adhering to this policy.

6. Investigation of reports of violations & complaints:

The principal, his designees, and administrative review committee are responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. A prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of the alleged incident will take place according to the standard Collier policy for investigating and reporting behavioral incidents by the **CARE Team**. A detailed record of each investigation regarding allegations of harassment, intimidation and bullying will be maintained in the office of our Student Assistance Coordinator.

7. Consequences & response of incidents of harassment, intimidation & bullying:

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for students who commit an act of

harassment, intimidation or bullying range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted under *N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1*, Discipline of Pupils.

In considering whether a response beyond the individual level is appropriate, the administrator should consider the nature and circumstances of the act, the level of harm, the nature of the behavior, past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior, and the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred. Responses can range from school and community surveys, to mailings, to focus groups, to adoption of research based bullying prevention program models, to training certified and non-certified staff. Collier's responses may include participation of parent (s) or legal guardian (s) and other community members and organizations, to small or large group presentations for fully addressing the actions and our response to the actions, in the context of the acceptable student behavior and the consequences of such actions and to involvement of law enforcement officers, including school resource officers.

8. Reprisal or retaliation for reporting an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying:

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying will be strictly prohibited. The administrative review committee and the individual's placement within our behavioral management system shall determine the consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act.

9. Consequences for false accusations:

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying will be dealt with according to our behavioral management plan. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with agency policies, procedures and agreements and could include legal actions. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer, found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be determined by the principal or designee after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials and possible legal action.

10. Publicizing the policy:

The policy shall be disseminated annually to all school staff, students and parents, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying that occur on school property, at school-sponsored functions or on a

school bus. This policy will be included in the annual discussions of our “Summary of Behavioral Expectations”, policies, and rules that is led by the homeroom teacher at the start of the school year and at orientation programs throughout the year for new students. Each student will be required to sign a form which indicates that they have been fully informed of all school policies, rules and the student code of conduct and their intent to comply with such.