



**Public Schools
Bullying Prevention
&
Intervention Plan**

Natick Public Schools BULLYING POLICY

I. LEADERSHIP

The Natick Public Schools has and will continue to employ multiple layers of involvement in the development of our Plan as required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O. Under the direction of the Superintendent, Natick's Plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Natick has established a Bully Prevention Committee that meets on a monthly basis to review and evaluate our progress. In addition, at all eight of our schools Bullying Prevention and Intervention is an objective in the School Improvement Plans and thus, is discussed and reviewed by all School Councils. The Natick Public Schools have partnered with MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation (MWHCF) to survey our students for baseline data on bullying and harassment. In addition, MWHCF has funded a grant to support bullying prevention and intervention efforts at both of our middle schools.

GOALS

The Natick Public School Department is committed to providing our students equal educational opportunities, and a safe learning environment free from bullying. This will be possible when all members of the Natick school community treat each other with respect, appreciating the rich diversity in our schools. This policy is an integral part of the Natick Public Schools' comprehensive effort to promote optimal learning and eliminate all forms of violent, harmful and disruptive behavior. All students require this support to achieve their personal and academic potential.

The Natick Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, in our schools or during school-related activities including on school buses. All reports of bullying will be promptly investigated by Natick Public Schools' administrators. **Bullying is defined** as the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including but not limited to an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

A **perpetrator** is defined as a student or a member of a school staff including but not limited to an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

It is equally important for all members of the school community to understand that conflict is not automatically synonymous with bullying. Arguing, bantering back-and-forth, ignoring, roughhousing and fighting, while potentially serious forms of conflict, are not necessarily instances of bullying. Bullying is characterized by intention, repetition and power imbalance. Not every conflict meets these criteria.

“Cyber-bullying” - is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, cell phone text messaging, 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, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

The Natick Public Schools response to bullying actions will include, when appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. The Natick Public Schools will support this policy in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parental involvement. Lastly, retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying shall be prohibited.

II. RATIONALE

The Natick Public Schools prohibits all forms of harassment, discrimination and hate crimes based on: race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, homelessness, age, academic status, mental, physical development or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law. The protection of those rights is of utmost importance and

priority to our school district. The Natick Public Schools also prohibits bullying of school community members for reasons unrelated to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, homelessness, age, academic status, mental, physical development or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Further, the Natick Public Schools will also not tolerate retaliation against persons who take action consistent with this policy.

III. APPLICATION

This policy applies to all sites and activities under the supervision and control of the Natick Public Schools, or where it has jurisdiction under the law. The policy applies to all students, school committee members, school employees, independent contractors, town employees, school volunteers, visitors, parents and legal guardians of students, whose conduct occurs on school premises or in school-related activities, including school-related transportation. Nothing in this policy is designed or intended to limit the District's authority to discipline or take remedial action under General Laws Chapter 71, §37H, or in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this policy covers the conduct. It is the responsibility of every employee, student and parent to recognize acts of harassment and take every action necessary to ensure that the applicable policies and procedures of this school district are implemented.

IV. DISCIPLINARY AND CORRECTIVE ACTION

Violation of this policy is a serious offense. Violators may be subject to appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective action to stop the conduct and prevent its reoccurrence. The District is committed to protecting a complainant, and other similarly-situated individuals, from bullying in the future. Procedural manuals containing responsibilities of staff and students, reporting procedures, complaint process, resolution, and protection against retaliation shall be in place at each level. This policy shall be printed/listed in each school handbook/web page.

- It is a violation of this policy for any administrator, teacher or other employee, or any student to engage in or condone harassment in school or to fail to report or otherwise take reasonable corrective measures when they become aware of an incident of harassment.
- This policy is not designed or intended to limit the school's authority to take disciplinary action or take remedial action when such harassment occurs out of school but has a link to school, or is disruptive to an employee's or student's work or participation in school related activities.

- Reports of cyber-bullying by electronic or other means, occurring in or out of school will be reviewed and, when a link to work or school exists, will result in discipline. Parents of students alleged to have engaged in cyber harassment will be invited to attend a meeting at which the activity, words or images subject to the complaint will be reviewed. A student disciplined for cyber-bullying will not be re-admitted to the regular school program until his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) attend such meeting.
- The Building Principal/Designee shall be responsible for assisting employees and students seeking guidance or support in addressing matters relating to any form of harassment, bullying, or cyberbullying. As a means of support counseling services will be available upon request or referral for targets, aggressors and appropriate family members of the involved students.
- Strategies for protecting the target: Each school will employ clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a target and assessing that target’s need for protection including but not limited to strong disciplinary procedures, parental contact and availability of administration/counselors for support.
- Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Student Disciplinary Actions	Remediation Actions	Target Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admonishment, warning • Parental Contact/Letter • Student Apology/Think About it Form • Temporary removal from the classroom • Loss of privileges • Classroom or administrative detention • In-school suspension during the school week or the weekend for students • Out-of-school suspension • Student Re-entry Plan • Legal action • Expulsion or termination • Consequences for repeat offenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings between parents • Counseling • Education including strategies to repeating behavior • Revision of IEP, if applicable • <i>Individual Behavior Plan</i> (for repeat offenders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for avoiding further unnecessary contact with the target • Clarification about who will be notified • Notify staff about incident and danger of further contact • Strategies to avoid further bullying • Identifying trusted adults and “safe areas” • Education about rights to be free of retaliation and reasonable expectations about social consequences for being part of a bullying investigation • Periodic check-ins • Whole community meetings • Identification and empowerment of bystanders • Education about technology

V. REPORTING

Students, who believe that they are the target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying. To assist in this matter the Natick Public Schools has created an online bullying reporting form. The form is available for students, parents and community members. Internally, the Natick Public Schools has created reporting and documentation forms for staff members and administrators. Annual training on the use of these forms will be provided.

Upon investigation and determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal shall promptly notify the parents of the target and the aggressor of the determination and the school district or school's procedures for responding to the bullying or retaliation. The principal shall inform the target's parent of actions that school officials will take to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and the Principal or designee shall maintain a file. A report shall be provided to the Superintendent upon request.

Confidentiality:

The regulations also speak to confidentiality at 603 CMR 49.07 which states:

1. A principal may not disclose information from a student record of a target or aggressor to a parent or guardian unless the information is about the parent's or guardian's child.
2. A principal may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to a local law enforcement agency under 603CMR 49.06 without the consent of a student or his or her parent. The principal shall communicate with law enforcement officials in a manner that protects the privacy of targets, student witnesses, and aggressors to the extent practicable under the circumstances.
3. A principal may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties in addition to law enforcement in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals as provided in 603 CMR 23.07(4)(e) and 34 CFR 99.31(a)(10) and 99.36. 603 CMR 49.07(3) is limited to instances in which

the principal has determined there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or other individuals. It is limited to the period of emergency and does not allow for blanket disclosure of student record information. The principal must document the disclosures and the reasons that the principal determined that a health or safety emergency exists.

VI. RETALIATION

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, providing information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying shall be prohibited. This includes retaliation done anonymously.

Parents or guardians of bullying victims will be informed of the Department of Education's problem resolution system and the process for seeking assistance or filing a claim through the problem resolution system.

VII. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Annual training will be provided for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying. Importantly information will be provided on the complex interaction and power differential that can take place among an aggressor, a target and witnesses to bullying. Staff members will be trained on students who are at risk for bullying. Specific information will be centered on research documenting those students who could be targeted as potential victims. Staff members will be provided the latest information on cyberbullying and Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying. Natick is fortunate to have the authors of A Parents' Guide to facebook, who have consulted with us. Training will include staff duties, an overview of the of the steps that the building Principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school. Our goal is to build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying.

Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention has been incorporated into the curriculum for all K to 12 students.

Grade Level	Program	Intended Outcomes
K-4	Open Circle & Supplemental Lessons prepared by our Elementary Guidance Counselors	<p><u>Foundation skills for all students K-4 (Open Circle Curriculum)</u></p> <p>Listening and communication Cooperation Calming down Understanding feelings Expressing anger appropriately Friendship and including one another Identifying and reporting dangerous and destructive behavior Dealing with teasing Problem solving Developing feelings of empowerment Building leadership capacity</p> <p><u>K-2 More In-Depth Focus on the following skills (Supplemental Guidance Lessons)</u></p> <p>Safety Diversity awareness Accepting differences Friendship Peer relations and peer pressure Including others Developing empathy and understanding Acts of Kindness Tattling vs telling/reporting Introduction to defining bullying behavior</p> <p><u>3-4 More In-Depth Focus on the following skills (Supplemental Guidance Lessons)</u></p> <p>Defining Bullying Behavior Definition of target, bystander, ally, and student using bullying behavior Understanding the role of the bystander Effective strategies and resources for the target of bullying behavior, the bystander, and also the student who is displaying bullying behavior Conflict resolution Introduction to cyberbullying and internet safety</p>
5	Character/Core Values Education Classes	<p>definitions of respect, empathy, stereotypes, peer pressure identifying and combating bullying, exploration of identity, peer relationships, empathy and perspective taking, how to report bullying and keep school safe role of perpetrator, target, ally and bystander</p>

6	Second Step	Working in groups Defining and keeping friends and allies Perspective-taking Recognizing bullying The role of bystanders/importance of emotions/brain and the body connections Stress management strategies
7	Facing History/Beyond Bullying Seminar	Exploration of components of identity Common vocabulary for roots of hatred and oppression (bystander, victim, perpetrator, rescuers, obedience, conformity and obedience Exploration of roots of hatred and cycle of oppression Historical case studies of bullying that led to genocidal conditions Understanding group dynamics/middle school culture
8	Seminars on Bullying Prevention & Intervention	Exploration of cyber law and exposure to online safety practices, Exploration of activism and upstanding behavior through literature studies and project-based service/research experiences Leadership as critical component to combating bullying in the community Identifying how diversity and identity issues play in to bullying
9-12	Seminars on Bullying Prevention & Intervention	Each grade will participate in a seminar either first or second semester. Students will understand the significance of empathy in bullying prevention, as they learn how to appreciate and value diversity within the student population. Students will participate in discussions and activities around web- based programs such as “If you really knew me.” Recent Anti-Bullying legislation will be discussed, as students are encouraged to contribute their unique voice to prevention initiatives.

In addition, at both middle schools and at the high school, students who elect or are selected to be part of a student leadership team will receive intensive training around bystander intervention into bullying situations. It has been our experience that the most powerful solution to help prevent bullying is to empower peer leaders to use their influential voice to interrupt the cycle of bullying.

VIII. PUBLICATION AND NOTICE

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan will be provided to students and their parents or guardians,

in age-appropriate terms. All school handbooks will include relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan will be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school will be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan as well as reporting forms will be available for all community members as a link from our district web page.

IX. REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

For students identified with a disability the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Whenever the IEP Team evaluation indicates that a student's disability affects social skills development, or when the student's disability makes him or her vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing, the IEP must address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing. These provisions apply to IEP's convened from May 3, 2010 on.

X. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

A. Parent education and resources. The Natick Public Schools will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district. The programs will be offered in collaboration with PTOs, School Councils, SEPAC, Natick's Anti-Bullying Coalition, or similar organizations.

B. Notification Requirements. Each year the Natick Public Schools will inform parents of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The Natick Public Schools will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made be made available to parents or guardians will be in electronic formats and will be available in hard copy when requested. The Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan will be posted to the NPS website.

XI. REMINDERS TO ALL STAFF

Do not ignore bullying: Bullies count on adults to ignore bullying behaviors, and this allows them to continue bullying activities. (Steiner, A. 2002)

Intervene immediately; bullying is common, but not benign. Bullies are much more likely to grow up to have criminal or violent behaviors. Targets of bullies suffer disproportionately from mental health problems.

Separate alleged bully & target: Do not use mediation or attempt to force them to confront one another.

Bullying is different from conflict. Conflict is an equal-power quarrel or problem between two students. Bullying is abuse; it occurs when a socially powerful (popular or feared) student mentally or physically abuses a weaker (fearful) student, for the purposes of making them afraid and hurt.

Stay neutral and calm. The tone you take with students during investigations will affect your ability to defuse the bullying.

Don't make promises or deals until your investigation is complete.

Reassure reporters and targets that they have done the right thing by reporting. Make sure they know they will be protected from retaliation.

Empower aggressors to change. Remind aggressors that they have power to stop the bullying. Teach them strategies to stop (e.g., “for now, stay off of Facebook”).

Maintain confidentiality but ACT: It is important to protect reporters from retaliation, but information on bullying **MUST** be acted upon. There are no “off-the-record” conversations.

Be objective in your note-taking; your emails and the notes you take in meetings about students become part of their official record.

Be timely! The faster you talk to all students involved, the less likely the students will feel social pressure to change their stories.

Natick Public Schools

Administrator Investigation Process

This process applies only to situations where bullying is alleged. Disciplinary incidents will be reported using the school disciplinary action process.

Step One: Complete Incident Report Form

If an adult witnesses or reports incident:

- Staff member, Bus Driver, Chaperone, etc. completes incident report and gives to designated administrative staff member

If a student reports incident to staff member:

- Acknowledge student's feelings
- Determine if there are safety issues that must be addressed immediately
- Staff member completes incident report and gives to designated administrative staff member

Step Two: Conduct Investigation

A. Interview Target of bullying:

- Ask target to complete a narrative of the event
- Interview the target first in private
- Ask target to identify witnesses
- Target and alleged aggressor should be separated
- Do not ask to see target in the alleged aggressor's presence
- Mediation should not be used with bullying situations
- Encourage target to report any additional incidents with the alleged aggressor and/or any retaliation done directly or anonymously.

B. Interview witnesses

- Ask who was present
- Document the witness's statement
- Direct witness to report any forms of retaliation done directly or anonymously.

C. Interview the student Aggressor of bullying:

- Identify the problem
- Focus more on the alleged aggressor's behavior, protecting the target's confidentiality
- Make the alleged aggressor aware of consequences of retaliation against target and reporter

D. Contact parent of target, alleged aggressor and appropriate witnesses

Step Three: Assign Consequences if needed
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- Assign appropriate consequence
- If the alleged aggressor denies the incident and there is insufficient evidence, tell the alleged aggressor that you hope s/he is right and that nothing happened, but you will continue to monitor behavior
- Monitor safety of target and provide additional support as needed
- Notify the School Student Resource Officer when appropriate

Step Four: Document Incident and Consequences
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- Document outcome of investigation on Follow-up Form
- Target will be notified of action taken or not taken
- Provide update to staff member who reported incident
- Monitor students' behavior
- Notify teachers who have contact with target and aggressor

Natick Public Schools

Bullying Witness Statement Form

This report **MUST** be completed when there is a witness to an incident of alleged bullying (*for the purpose of this form, bullying encompasses bullying, harassment, and discrimination.*) One form must be completed for/by each witness. All witness statements that relate to one incident should be attached to the Incident Complaint Report Form.

WITNESS NAME (last, first)	WITNESS TITLE <small>(ex. Parent, Student, or Teacher)</small>	INTERVIEW DATE
TARGET NAME (last, first)		
AGGRESSOR NAME (last, first)		
SCHOOL SITE (where incident occurred)	SCHOOL TELEPHONE	
PRINCIPAL	INCIDENT DATE	

Describe the location where the incident took place:

Description of incident witnessed:

List any other witness names and grades:

List evidence of bullying (i.e. letters, photos, etc. – attach evidence if possible):

I agree that all of the information on this form is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of witness

Date:

For Office Use Only

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Date Received:		
Received by:		Title/School:

Natick Public Schools

Administrator Investigation Follow-up Form

Date(s)	Person interviewed	Role? (Target, Aggressor, Witness)	Narrative of interview

Follow-up conference	Date	Check for retaliation	Results of conference (if needed)

Parent notification of Target/ Name:	Date	Verbal ___ Written ___	Details:
Parent notification of Aggressor/Name:	Date	Verbal ___ Written ___	Details:
Notification of superintendent: yes ___ no ___	Date		Details:
Notification of police/SRO: yes: ___ no: ___	Date		Details:
Notification of Bus driver yes___no___N/A___			
Notification of ASAP staff yes___no___N/A___			

Determination	Not confirmed bullying	Keep for records	Confirmed bullying
Reasons	1st incident only: yes ___ no ___ "Power" differential: yes ___ no ___	Subsequent issue would be bullying yes ___ no ___	Repeat incident: yes ___ no ___ "Power" differential: yes ___ no ___
Action Taken:			
	Date of final report: _____	Date student advised: _____	

Name of Investigator: _____ Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Natick Public Schools

Parent Communication Form

(Optional)

Date:

Dear

Your student was involved in an incident in school today. We believe it is important to share this information with you.

What was reported:

Actions to prevent further bullying or retaliation:

The incident has been investigated and will be monitored. Due to reasons of confidentiality, students' names and disciplinary actions cannot be revealed.

Please sign and return this letter to school in an envelope addressed to me as soon as possible. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you

Principal/Designated Staff

Date

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date

Natick Public Schools

Bullying Reporting Form (On-Line Form) (Parent, Student, Community)

If you have information regarding bullying and would like to report this information, please fill out the following form to the best of your knowledge. Please note that this form can be anonymous.

For the purpose of this form, bullying is defined as a verbal, physical, written or electronic action or incident that is cruel and repetitive. Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of physical, psychological or emotional power.

Submitted by: (Optional) _____

TARGET NAME (last, first, middle)	SEX	GRADE	AGE
AGGRESSOR NAME (last, first, middle)	SEX	GRADE	AGE
SCHOOL	SCHOOL TELEPHONE ()		
PRINCIPAL	TODAY'S DATE		

Where did the incident occur?

When did the incident occur?

Date: _____ Time: _____

Please describe, in as much detail as possible, what happened.

Do you know any of the witnesses involved? If so, please provide as much detail as possible about these people.

List evidence of bullying if any (i.e. letters, photos, etc. – attach evidence if possible)

Thank you, this report will be followed up on within 2 school/work days. If you fear a student is in IMMEDIATE danger, contact their home school or the police.

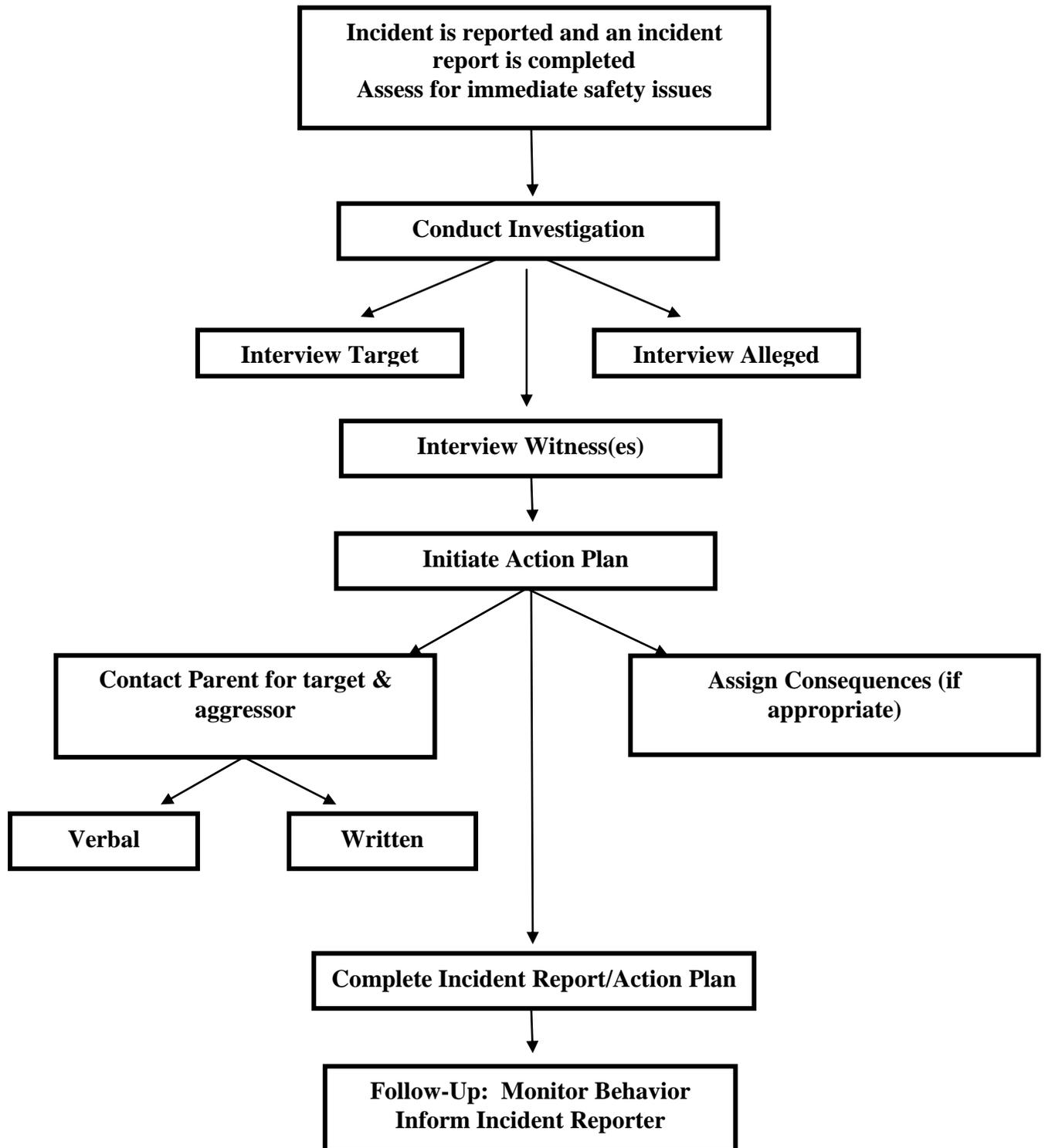
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Date Received:		
Received by:		Title/School:

Natick Public Schools

Process for Responding to a Report of Bullying Flow Chart



Approved by the Natick School Committee: December 13, 2010