

AP 418 - Bullying and Harassment

Background

The Abbotsford School District is committed to fostering an environment where all individuals are treated with respect. The district considers bullying and harassment in general and sexual harassment, in particular, to be violations of generally accepted standards of behaviour and the District's Code of Conduct.

In its efforts to eliminate bullying and harassment, the Abbotsford School District will provide a working and learning environment that will encourage respect for and fair treatment of all individuals within the community.

Procedures

1. Definition

- 1.1 Bullying and harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome comment or conduct that is known to be, or reasonably known to be considered offensive, threatening, degrading or coercive, thereby creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive work or study environment.
- 1.2 Sexual harassment is further defined as specifically including unwanted and unwelcome sexual attention toward another person, which has an adverse effect on the emotional wellbeing, work or academic performance of an individual.
- 1.3 Intent does not determine whether the behavior is bullying or harassment.
- 1.4 Bullying and harassment does not include conduct or comments made in good faith in the exercise of supervisory rights and responsibilities.

2. Examples of Harassment

- 2.1 Harassment may occur:
 - between students (e.g. bullying)
 - student to adult
 - adult to student
 - adult to adult
- 2.2 Harassment can include, but is not limited to:
 - persistent teasing or leering
 - repeated jokes or innuendoes
 - false accusations
 - verbal or physical abuse (which may also need reporting to the Ministry of Children and Families)

- stalking
 - spreading malicious gossip or rumors
 - offensive or inappropriate comments, gestures, materials
 - unwelcome sexual advances
 - use of sexually suggestive or demeaning language, especially when another person indicates that it is offensive
 - the promise of reward or threat of reprisal attached to sexual favour
- 2.4 Bullying is considered a significant issue at all age ranges. School district staff are encouraged to actively pursue specific anti-bullying strategies.
- 2.5 The Abbotsford School District adopts a zero tolerance with respect to bullying. Students who commit acts of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension from attendance at school.
3. Complaint Procedures – Students
- 3.1 Students deserve to feel safe at school. If a student is being bullied or harassed, he/she should take the following steps to try and stop the bullying and harassment or prevent it from happening again.
- 3.1.1 Report all incidents to a person of authority at your school, your parent, or a trusted adult. It is important for students to tell their parents of any incidents of bullying or harassment that may occur at school, at school functions or on your way to and from school.
- 3.1.2 If the bully or harasser is an adult from within the school, then it is important for students to report this immediately to their parents/guardian or a trusted adult outside of school. You and the adult you have told, should contact either the principal or one of the Assistant Superintendent of Schools.
- 3.1.3 While it is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment, false allegations are a serious matter and can damage a person’s reputation so are not acceptable in any way.
- 3.2 Staff shall ensure all students are aware of the complaint procedure. This should be put into the student handbook that schools provide to students. (Reference AP 418-1 “Guidelines to Managers and Principals - Student Complaints of Harassment and Bullying”)
4. Complaint Procedures – Adults (non-employee)
- 4.1 Adults who believe they are being harassed should take the following steps to stop the bullying and harassment and prevent re-occurrences.
- 4.1.1 Whenever possible make your disapproval or unease known to the alleged harasser immediately.
- 4.1.2 If there is more than one incident, keep a written record of dates, times, the nature of the behaviour, and witnesses, if any.

- 4.1.3 If you feel uneasy about approaching the alleged harasser OR, if the incidents do not stop after you have spoken to the alleged harasser, speak to the manager of the department, or principal of the school or the appropriate assistant superintendent at the School Board Office. Confirm your conversation in a confidential letter. Ensure that the alleged harasser is advised you have taken the above steps. Information for parents is available at: www.bccpac.bc.ca

5. Complaint Procedures – Staff

Note: All School District staff should refer to AP 418-2 Guidelines – Staff Complaints of Harassment and Bullying; Teaching staff should additionally refer to Article E.2 of their Collective Agreement for procedures.

- 5.1 Staff who believe they are being harassed and/or bullied should take the following steps to stop the bullying and harassment and prevent re-occurrences.
- 5.2 Whenever possible make your disapproval or unease known to the alleged harasser immediately.
- 5.3 If there is more than one incident, keep a written record of dates, times, the nature of the behaviour, and witnesses, if any.
- 5.4 If you feel uneasy about approaching the alleged harasser, or if the incidents do not stop after you have spoken to the alleged harasser, speak to your manager or supervisor. If your manager or supervisor is the alleged harasser, speak immediately to the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources. If you are comfortable, communicate the process taken to the alleged harasser.
- 5.5 The manager will take steps to bring the parties together to resolve the issue. If, after meeting with the manager and the alleged harasser, the issue has not been resolved, provide a written statement of the alleged bullying and harassment to either your manager or the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources.
- 5.6 Employees may seek the help of an authorized representative of the union when reporting the complaint to the above district representative.
- 5.7 While it is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment, false allegations are a serious matter and can damage a person's reputation so are not acceptable in any way.

Reference: [AP 418-1 Guidelines to Principals – Student Complaints of Harassment and Bullying](#)

[AP 418-2 Guidelines – Staff Complaints of Harassment and Bullying](#)

WorkSafeBC's [Toward A Respectful Workplace](#): A Handbook on Preventing and Addressing Workplace Bullying and Harassment

[Student Code of Conduct](#) for all Abbotsford District Schools

[Communicating with Your School](#): Parents and School – Partners in Learning

[Focus on Bullying: A Prevention Program for Elementary School Communities](#) (The Ministry of Education, Special Programs Branch, distributes this publication.)

AP 418-1 Guidelines to Managers and Principals – Student Complaints of Bullying and Harassment

Principals and managers should provide a safe haven and access to counseling for the victim of bullying and harassment. /Teachers/counselors should follow-up to ensure the harassment or bullying has discontinued.

Note: The following information is to be included in the student agendas/handbooks and should be brought to the attention of the students and staff each September.

1. Bullying and harassment is against the District Code of Conduct and will be dealt with appropriately and quickly.
2. Bullying and harassment includes inappropriate remarks, jokes, taunting, comments, gestures, sexually suggestive comments or actions that create an uncomfortable or hostile environment.
3. A bully is someone who:
 - uses power to hurt others or harm their possessions
 - purposely scares or intimidates others
 - often hurts the same person repeatedly
 - is sometimes supported by other people who just watch and laugh, instead of helping the person being bullied

Complaint Procedures – Students

Students deserve to feel safe at school. If a student is being bullied or harassed, you should take the following steps to try and stop the bullying and harassment or prevent it from happening again.

1. Report all incidents to a person of authority at school, a parent, or a trusted adult. It is important to tell your parents of any incidents of bullying or harassment that may occur at school, at school functions or on the way to and from school.
2. If the bully or harasser is an adult from within the school, then it is important to report this immediately to your parents/guardian or a trusted adult outside of school. The student and the adult the student told should contact either the principal or the Superintendent of Schools.

While it is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment, false allegations are a serious matter, can damage a person's reputation, and are not acceptable in any way.

AP 418-2 Guidelines – Staff Complaints of Harassment and Bullying

Definition

WorkSafe BC's definition of bullying and harassment states:

Bullying and harassment includes any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards a worker that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated, but excludes any reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers or the place of employment.

General Roles and Responsibilities

The School District, supervisors, and workers must all take reasonable steps to prevent where possible, workplace bullying and harassment.

Employer duties include:

- Developing a policy regarding bullying and harassment and implementing procedures for dealing with incidents or complaints
- Taking steps to prevent or minimize bullying and harassment
- Providing information and training to workers and supervisors
- Not engaging in bullying and harassment of workers or supervisors

Supervisor duties include:

- Not engaging in bullying and harassment of other workers, supervisors, or the employer
- Applying and complying with the employer's policies and procedures on bullying and harassment

Worker duties include:

- Not engaging in bullying and harassment of other workers, supervisors, or the employer
- Reporting bullying and harassment observed or experienced in the work place
- Applying and complying with the employer's policies and procedures on bullying and harassment

Complaint Procedures – Staff

Staff who believe they are being harassed and/or bullied should take the following steps to stop the bullying and harassment and prevent re-occurrences.

1. Whenever possible make your disapproval or unease known to the alleged harasser immediately.
2. If there is more than one incident, keep a written record of dates, times, the nature of the behaviour, and witnesses, if any.
3. If an employee feels uneasy about approaching the alleged harasser, OR if the incidents do not stop after you have spoken to the alleged harasser, speak to your manager or supervisor. If your manager or supervisor is the alleged harasser, speak immediately to the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources. If you are comfortable, communicate the process taken to the alleged harasser.

4. The manager will take steps to bring the parties together to resolve the issue. If, after meeting with the manager and the alleged harasser, the issue has not been resolved, provide a written statement of the alleged bullying and harassment to either your manager or the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources.
5. Employees may seek the help of an authorized representative of the union when reporting the complaint to the above district representative.

While it is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment, false allegations are a serious matter, can damage a person's reputation, and are not acceptable in any way.

How and When Investigations Will Be Conducted

Investigations at the School District may be conducted by an internal or external investigator.

Investigations will:

- be undertaken promptly and diligently, and be as thorough as necessary, given the circumstances
- be fair and impartial, providing both the complainant and respondent equal treatment in evaluating the allegations
- be sensitive to the interests of all parties involved, and maintain confidentiality
- be focused on finding facts and evidence, including interviews of the complainant, respondent, and any witnesses
- incorporate, where appropriate, any need or request from the complainant or respondent for assistance during the investigation process
- comply with processes outlined in the collective agreement (where applicable).

What Will Be Included

Investigations will include interviews with the individuals involved including any witnesses. The investigator will also review any evidence, such as emails, handwritten notes, photographs, or any other physical evidence.

Investigations: Roles and Responsibilities

The Associate Superintendent, Human Resources is responsible for ensuring workplace investigation procedures are followed.

Workers are expected to cooperate with investigators and provide any details of incidents they have experienced or witnessed.

The Human Resources Department will coordinate and/or conduct investigations and provide a written report with conclusions to the Secretary Treasurer or the Assistant Superintendent.

Follow-Up

The employee who has made a complaint of bullying and harassment will be advised of the investigation outcome by the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources or designate.

Following an investigation, the Senior Manager, Organizational Health and Safety may review and revise workplace procedures to prevent any future bullying and harassment incidents in the workplace. Appropriate corrective actions will be taken within a reasonable time frame.

In appropriate circumstances, workers may be referred to the employee assistance program or be encouraged to seek medical advice.

Record-Keeping Requirements

The School District expects that workers will keep written accounts of incidents to submit with any complaints. The School District will keep a written record of investigations, including the findings.

Annual Review

These procedures will be reviewed annually. New workers will be provided with this Administrative Procedure as part of orientation and this document will be available at <https://www.abbyschools.ca/>

Training and Education

The School District will ensure workers are informed of these procedures and of proactive steps to help prevent the occurrence of workplace harassment and bullying. Formal respectful workplace training will be provided to supervisors and workers to recognize, respond to, and report incidents or complaints of harassment and bullying.