



RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF BULLYING, BIAS, DISCRIMINATION, OR HATE CRIMES

The South Hunterdon Regional School District (SHRSD) is committed to providing equal educational opportunities and a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Our Policies and Regulations supporting [Equity \(5755\)](#) and against [Hate Crimes and Bias Related Acts \(8465\)](#) are clear and consistent with NJ regulations.

Any form of discrimination based on race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability or any other category protected by state or federal law is not tolerated. The South Hunterdon Regional School District will promptly report, investigate and respond to all allegations of discrimination, including harassment and bullying, to the fullest extent possible and take appropriate disciplinary, corrective, and remedial measures necessary to ensure a safe and equitable learning and workplace environment for all school community members. As required by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.3.(e), the Superintendent or designee shall immediately notify the local police department and the bias investigation officer for the county prosecutor's office where there is reason to believe a bias crime or bias-related act that involves an act of violence has been or is about to be physically committed against a student, or there is otherwise reason to believe a life has been or will be threatened.

Below please find common questions and answers related to reporting and responding to specific incidents.

WHAT IS AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING, BIAS, DISCRIMINATION, OR HATE CRIME?

When a member of our school community is treated unfairly or is disadvantaged because of an aspect of their identity and/or as a member of a protected class, it may be an incident of bullying, bias or discrimination. Discrimination might take the form of subtle biased comments, hateful speech in the form of insults or epithets, or ongoing harassment or retaliation for a past event or report.

A "hate crime" is any criminal offense whereby the person or persons committing the offense acted with a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, or ancestry.

A "bias-related act" is an act directed at a person, group of persons, private property, or public property that is motivated in whole or part by racial, gender, disability, religion or sexual orientation,

or ethnic prejudice. A bias-related act need not involve conduct that constitutes a criminal offense. All hate crimes are also bias-related acts, but not all bias-related acts will constitute a hate crime.

Bullying is defined by the [New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act](#). Some incidents of bullying, or repeated targeting of another person in an unwanted manner, may also be acts of discrimination. Criminal acts motivated by bias may be considered hate crimes and may involve additional legal consequences. When incidents of possible discrimination or bias do occur, we are committed to conducting a full investigation to determine what harm has been done, how it can be fully addressed, and ways in which it can be prevented from occurring again.

HOW ARE INCIDENTS INVESTIGATED?

Each of our schools have an Anti-Bullying Specialist trained to investigate and make a determination as to whether or not the incident(s) meet the criteria of the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

HOW CAN I REPORT AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION OR A PATTERN OF BIASED BEHAVIOR?

Students can report incidents of discrimination or any concerning pattern of biased behavior to any staff member or one of their trusted adults in the district. Parents/guardians can report specific concerns to their school principal or school [anti-bullying specialists](#). If anyone suspects that an incident of discrimination, harassment, biased behavior or bullying has occurred they will be asked to report it using the forms on our website. [HIB Incident Forms](#)

WHAT CRITERIA DO OUR ANTI-BULLYING SPECIALISTS USE TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT HARASSMENT OR BULLYING HAS OCCURRED?

Criteria of harassment, intimidation or bullying, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14 is any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that meets all of the following criteria:

1. Reasonably perceived as being motivated either 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
2. By any other distinguishing characteristic; and that
3. Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds, as provided for in *N.J.S.A.* 18A:37-15.3, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students; and

And meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property; or
2. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
3. Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.
4. Real or perceived power imbalance.

It is important to note that although an incident may not meet the above criteria to be determined as a HIB it can still be a violation of the student code of conduct and as such, may warrant disciplinary actions.

HOW LONG DOES AN INVESTIGATION TAKE?

Investigations need to be completed within 10 school days.

HOW WILL I FIND OUT ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION?

The anti-bullying specialist will follow up with the parents of the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) to review the results of the investigation. The building Principal will then follow up with the parents of the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) to discuss next steps as well as support for the victim. The Principal will also notify all parties if law enforcement has been notified about the case. Parents can request a copy of the redacted report from the [District Anti-Bullying Coordinator](#).

IS THE RESPONSE THE SAME EVERY TIME?

While all incidents are investigated and documented in accordance with the established NJ HIB law, the facts of each substantiated incident determine an individualized response. Click on this link to see examples of how the district responds to incidents of bullying, bias, and discrimination.

[District Response Examples](#)

WHY IS THE DISTRICT IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AS PART OF THE DISCIPLINE PROCESS?

Research has shown that schools that just use traditional/punitive types of discipline (detention, suspension, etc.) have not been effective in changing student behavior and in some cases has even increased misbehavior in school. For more information click on this link. [Restorative Practices in Education](#)

HOW IS DATA KEPT ON REPORTS OF BULLYING, BIAS, AND DISCRIMINATION?

Should a student be found to be an offender in an HIB incident, a copy of the results of the HIB investigation shall be included in the student's record pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-32-7*. Any such incident that is investigated and addressed by SHRSB is documented and tracked by the District Anti-Bullying Coordinator. This data is then analyzed and tracked for patterns of behavior and types of effective responses. The Superintendent reports out to the Board of Education each month a summary of each HIB case excluding any student identifiable information.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION?

If you disagree with the findings of the anti-bullying specialist or if you have additional questions about how the South Hunterdon Regional School District responds to incidents of discrimination, bullying or bias, please feel free to reach out to the [District Anti-Bullying Coordinator](#).