



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents of Schools, Principals and Headmasters, Charter School Leaders, Directors of Educational Collaboratives, and Directors of Non-public Schools

**From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Date: August 24, 2010

Subject: Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan under M.G.L. c. 71, § 370

In response to the requirements of the new bullying prevention and intervention law, M.G.L. c. 71, § 370 (as added by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("the Department") has created the attached Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. This Plan, created in consultation with representatives of the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, the Massachusetts District Attorneys' Association, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, the Massachusetts Advocates for Children, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, principals and other school personnel, and parent and advocacy organizations, is intended to be used by schools and districts as a blueprint for developing their own plans.

The new law requires all school districts, charter schools, non-public schools, approved private special education day or residential schools, and collaborative schools to develop and adopt bullying prevention and intervention plans. Plans must meet the requirements of the law and should follow local policies and procedures. Districts and schools must develop the Plan in consultation with teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, and parents or guardians. Required consultation must include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period. Non-public schools are required only to give notice and provide a comment period for families that have a child attending the school. This public process will strengthen the collaborative approach that is required to build successful prevention and intervention programs.

The Department and its partners recognize that bullying prevention initiatives should be part of districts' and schools' comprehensive efforts to ensure safe and supportive learning environments for students. This requires school leaders to be proactive in teaching students to be civil to one another and in promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. There is no single approach to developing and implementing an effective bullying prevention and intervention strategy within school climate initiatives for the diverse school districts and schools to which the law applies. Therefore, we recommend that districts and schools use this model plan as a blueprint for developing their own plans that align with their

individual school climate initiatives and needs. Building on existing resources that are focused on identified community needs and resources will help to ensure that bullying prevention initiatives are integrated into the school district or school programs.

I encourage districts and schools to refer to the December 2009 report of the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Task Force at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/1209behavioralhealth.doc>, when developing local bullying prevention and intervention plans. Research indicates that positive behavioral health is closely aligned to academic, social, and emotional success at school, which can be a strong deterrent to bullying and harassing actions. Successful initiatives will result from a whole-school approach to address bullying. The draft Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework, in Appendix C of the report and also available at <http://bhps321.org/viewframeworkall.asp>, provides useful guidance on how districts and schools can guide decision-making and tailor their local bullying prevention and intervention plans to address the needs of their communities. The six sections of the draft Framework are reflected within the elements of this Model Plan.

School districts, charter schools, approved private special education day and residential schools, and collaborative schools must submit a copy of their bullying prevention and intervention plans to the Department by December 31, 2010. Directions for filing the plan will be posted on the Department's website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/bullying/>. This page also includes links to additional information, including reports and resources on bullying prevention and intervention, which may be helpful to you as you create your plan and implement your initiatives. We will be updating these resources periodically.

Thank you for your efforts to keep all of the students in our schools safe.