

A young girl with a backpack is sitting in a classroom, looking thoughtful. The background shows other students in a classroom setting.

A Guide for Parents
OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE
BEEN VICTIMS OF

Bias Behavior
(sometimes referred to as prejudice or intolerance)

**ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



Dear Parents:

As a school system, we have made safety one of our top priorities. We have in place a Code of Student Conduct which clearly spells out the rules under which our schools operate and the consequences young people face when they break those rules. Students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behaviors and respect for others at all times. However, despite our best efforts, unfortunate incidents do occur. When they do, it is our responsibility to provide appropriate supports to meet the needs of every child. We have developed this brochure to address common questions you may have when your child is involved in an incident, and to provide assistance to you and your child.

The brochure defines bias-motivated behaviors as they are described in Board of Education policy and explains school system procedures and legal concerns. It also addresses common feelings and behaviors your child may experience, suggestions on ways to help your child overcome any changes in behavior, and information on how we can help.

We encourage you to share this brochure with your child and to contact members of the Student Services Team at your child's school for assistance. We care about the well-being of your child and stand ready to assist you and your family.

What is bias behavior?

Board of Education policy defines “bias behavior” as “a behavior offense committed against a person or property which is motivated by the offender’s bias, a negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based upon their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin.”

Types of Bias:

- a. **Disability** – A negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their physical or mental impairments/challenges, temporary or permanent, congenital or hereditarily acquired, accident, injury, advanced age, or illness.
- b. **Ethnicity** – A negative opinion or attitude toward a group of the same race or national origin who share common or similar traits, languages, customs, and traditions.
- c. **Racial** – A negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons who possess common physical characteristics, i.e., color of skin, eyes, hair, facial features, genetically transmitted by descent and heredity which distinguish them as a distinct division of humankind.
- d. **Religious** – A negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons who share the same religious beliefs regarding the origin and purpose of the universe and existence or nonexistence of a Supreme Being.
- e. **Sexual Orientation** – A negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their sexual attraction toward and responsiveness to members of the opposite or same sex.
- f. **Hate Crime** – Bias behavior that is a criminal offense.

When and where does the policy regarding bias behavior apply?

The bias behavior regulation applies on “Board of Education property, including in school buildings or on school grounds; on school buses and other school vehicles; or during any school, school-related, or Board-sponsored activity, whether held on school property or at locations off school property, including private clubs, businesses, or commercial establishments.” Board Regulation JCCA-RA.

One of the primary concerns of the school system is the health and safety of all students.

My child has been the victim of biased behavior on school property. What happens now?

One of the primary concerns of the school system is the health and safety of all students. The victim of biased behavior often feels insulted, threatened, and/or violated.

The school principal or designee will contact you first to inform you that your child has allegedly been the victim of a bias behavior. On-site staff members such as the school counselor and school psychologist are able to assist your child immediately.

When the principal or designee contacts me, what information can I be told?

The principal or designee can tell you the condition of your child and the known circumstances of the incident. For legal reasons and confidentiality, the principal or designee cannot give you the name or other personal information about the student who allegedly committed the offense.

What action does the school take with respect to the student who allegedly committed the offense?

There are specific procedures that the principal or designee must follow.

Please refer to Administrative Regulation JCCA-RA on page 8.

Why does it seem to take a long time for the situation to be resolved?

The reasons vary, but they are generally related to legal requirements and the logistics of the cases. The principal or designee needs to carefully investigate the situation to determine if the incident took place. The investigation may still be continuing, extenuating circumstances may come up, and witnesses may be unavailable or may change their story. Time is needed to ensure a complete and thorough investigation by both the school and, if required, the Superintendent's office.

There are specific procedures that the principal or designee must follow.

Is the Police Department notified of the alleged offense?

If a student is suspected of a bias-motivated behavior that is illegal in violation of Board policy, the student shall be referred to the principal. The principal or principal's designee shall investigate and determine whether a violation has occurred and notify local law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Once the alleged incident is reported to the police officer, it then becomes the police officer's duty to determine if the circumstances described do indeed indicate that a crime has been committed and if a juvenile citation or adult charge should be issued. The police officer's decision regarding criminality will also determine if the student will be arrested and detained.

You have the legal right to press charges.

Should I press charges against the student who allegedly directed a bias-motivated behavior toward my child?

You have the legal right to press charges and this must be coordinated through the Police Department. The school system cannot advise you what to do in this regard. Upon request, the principal or designee will provide you with the name of the officer handling the reported incident.

Can the school press charges for me?

No. The school cannot press charges for you. A school would only press charges if an incident occurred which caused physical damage to the school or school property.

If I press charges, what actions might the police take with respect to the student who allegedly committed the offense?

There are specific enforcement principles and options which the police department will follow using as their primary guide "the least coercive among reasonable alternatives."

Please refer to the Written Directive from "Juvenile Enforcement" on page 9.

My child has been behaving differently since this incident. What might he or she be thinking and feeling?

Although people respond differently to traumatic events, there are common feelings shared by people who have been the targets of similar behavior.

Your child may:

- recount negative experiences associated with the event.
- spend a significant amount of time recalling the event.
- feel agitated and irritable.
- see images of the event.
- feel vulnerable and fearful.
- avoid anything associated with the event.
- feel upset when he witnesses similar events on television, in movies, or in everyday life.

Could my child's behavior change because of the stress of the offense?

Yes. You might want to look for certain changes in your child's behavior:

- withdraws from normal activities
- has difficulty concentrating or seems to focus too much
- is unusually aggressive
- has little energy
- distrusts people
- has difficulty sleeping
- startles easily
- appears not to care or seems apathetic
- experiences a sudden decline in school work
- has outbursts of anger or is argumentative

People respond differently to traumatic events.

What can I do to help my child overcome these behaviors or feelings?

You can show your support by spending time together, showing an interest in activities, encouraging pursuit of interests, setting reasonable and attainable goals and expectations, and being available.

Good communication is non-judgmental and involves both listening and talking. Good communication involves discussing problems openly and encouraging honest expression. Try not to let your child think you feel he is weak or has let you down. This might make the child think they invited the negative behavior.

Remember, no matter how many times your child wants to talk about the incident — let him. If he does not wish to talk about it at first, that is fine, too. He may at some point want to speak with a member of the school's Student Services Team (see page 6).

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How can I help my child to handle future conflicts?

1. Teach your child to act confidently during peer interactions.
2. Remind your child to always tell the nearest teacher or staff member about an incident right away.
3. Encourage your child to report the incident or the possible incident to the principal or designee. The adults in the school are there to help your child feel safe.
4. Explain to your child that staying close to a friend or a group of friends is one way to stay safe.
5. Encourage your child to report incidents of bias-motivated behavior against other children to the principal or teacher.

There are programs that can help your child deal with aggressive children. Contact members of the Student Services Team at your child's school for more information.

Where can I get additional support for my child and for my family?

At the school, you may wish to contact members of the Student Services Team who are able to help you and your child. Members of this team include:

- a ***school counselor*** who is responsible for meeting with your child, consulting with the school psychologist if necessary, contacting your child's teachers, maintaining contact with you, and serving as a facilitator during parent/teacher conferences.
- a ***school psychologist*** who is responsible for assessing the emotional condition of your child and consulting with school staff to provide appropriate resources and supports.
- a ***school social worker*** who is available in some schools to work with families, children, and community groups.
- a ***pupil personnel worker*** who is responsible for processing a school transfer if necessary and making home visits if your child is not able to attend school conferences.

Additional staff members who can help include:

- a ***school administrator*** who is responsible for monitoring academic and behavioral issues.
- a ***school nurse*** who is responsible for assessing the physical condition of your child.
- a ***teacher*** who is responsible for monitoring your child's grades and behavior, reporting changes to counselors, and contacting you with observations.

If your child's behavior or feelings continue over several weeks and interfere with functioning at home and school, you may wish to seek outside professional help. The Student Services Team may suggest resources in the community.

Community Resources

- Adolescent and Family Services
410-222-6785
- Annapolis Youth Services
410-626-1800 *Main*
410-269-8060 *24 hour hotline*
- Anne Arundel Co. Sexual Assault & Crisis Center Hotline
410-222-7273
- Anne Arundel County Department of Mental Health
410-222-7868
- Anne Arundel County Health Department
410-222-7095
- Anne Arundel Conflict Resolution Center
410-266-9033
- Community Warmline
410-768-5522 *24 hours*
- Family and Children's Services
410-571-8341
- Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline
800-422-0009 *24 hours*
- Mental Health Clinic & Addiction
410-222-6785 *Glen Burnie*
- National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)
1-800-TRY-NOVA
- Office of Equity and Accelerated Student Achievement
410-222-5354/410-222-5318

Administrative Regulation JCCA-RA

Harassment and Intimidation/Hazing/Bullying/Bias Behavior

Harassment of a racial, sexual, religious nature, disability, national origin, familial status, or any other that limits a student's ability to participate in, or benefit from an educational program is strictly prohibited by Federal and State law and will not be tolerated in Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

The Board of Education is committed to providing all students with an orderly school environment that is free from bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and intimidation, hazing, and bias behavior. All complaints of unlawful harassment, hazing, bullying, and bias behavior shall be investigated in accordance with the procedures set forth in the administrative regulations created to implement policy. The school system shall discipline or take other action with regard to members of the school community who engage in unlawful harassment, hazing, bullying, and bias behavior in accordance with administrative regulations and the Code of Student Conduct.

Procedures

When it has been established to the satisfaction of the principal or the principal's designee that a student has violated Board of Education Regulation JCCA-RA: Bullying/Cyberbullying/Harassment and Intimidation/Hazing/Bias Behavior, the school will take the appropriate action in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct.

Written Directive

III. Enforcement Principles (CALEA 44.2.1 44.2.2)

A. Primary Guideline (CALEA 44.2.1)

Officers dealing with juvenile offenders will use the least coercive among reasonable alternatives, consistent with preserving public safety, order, and individual liberty.

B. Enforcement Options (CALEA 44.2.1)

Youthful offenders may be dealt with by officers of the Anne Arundel County Police Department in one of the following ways:

1. Outright release with no further action.
2. A relatively prolonged program of treatment, on a voluntary basis, necessitating the services of one or more social agencies.
3. Counseling by the department alone, consisting principally of supervision on a voluntary basis agreed to by the parents.
4. Diversion/referral to the Department of Juvenile Services by issuance of a citation.
5. Referral to juvenile court.
6. Formal arrest and arraignment in Circuit Court.

C. Factors to be Considered (CALEA 44.2.2)

Officers will consider the following factors when making diversion decisions relating to juvenile offenders.

1. The nature of the alleged offense.
2. The age and circumstances of the alleged offender.
3. The alleged offender's record, if any.
4. The availability of community-based rehabilitation programs.
5. Whether a recommendation for diversion is or was made by a complainant or victim.
6. The requirements of the law.



ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

George Arlotto, Ed.D., *Superintendent of Schools*

Anne Arundel County Public Schools prohibits discrimination in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, or disability.

For more information, contact:
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2644 Riva Road, Annapolis, MD 21401
410-222-5286 TDD 410-222-5000
www.aacps.org