



Creating A Safe Contact System

When students are impacted by harassment or bullying, they need to know who they can turn to for help and feel confident in the system your school has in place. That's why we suggest you create a Safe Contact System in your school. Individuals who have been bullied can discuss their concerns confidentially with a Safe Contact who is authentic, available, and approachable. The Safe Contact is a trusted adult who understands the reporting process that your school has developed and can make students feel safe and empowered throughout the process.

Students who feel safe in their school are more likely to report incidents of bullying, especially if there are adults they can turn to when they are ready to share their story. It is imperative that the reporting system is authentic, reinforced, and sustainable within the structure of the school policies and procedures. It's essential that staff members are equipped with the tools they need to empower students and affirm them as individuals with the potential to advance the greater good of all.

Key Elements in a Safe Contact System

1. Safe Contacts should be identified and receive hands-on, authentic training to build interpersonal skills and ensure they have a full understanding of the policies and reporting forms.
2. Safe Contact Policies effectively define bullying and creates procedures on how to report incidents and how to foster feedback.
 - Feedback is key to the target of bullying or harassment, as well as to the person who exhibited the bullying behavior. Make sure all parties who are involved in the event are included throughout the process and are informed about next steps.
 - Safe environments build respect and positive relationships.

Safe Contacts

The more trained Safe Contacts you have in your school, the more opportunities you will have to impact a student's life and build a reliable support system. Students who feel safe in their school are more likely to report incidents of bullying, especially if there are authentic and approachable adults to turn to when they are ready to make the report. It's essential that staff members are equipped with the tools they need to empower students and affirm them as individuals with the potential to advance the greater good of all.

Safe Contacts should post a Dignity Revolution window cling in their classroom or work area so they can be easily recognized by student population. Safe Contacts need specialized training each year so they can continue to grow in their understanding of bullying. This training includes knowledge, skills, and role-playing exercises to help equip them when using the policies in place. We have included a Response Protocol for Complaint of Harassment or Bullying for your use. This is a detailed guideline, demonstrating the steps a Safe Contact should follow to report and resolve a situation. It includes suggested questions, responses, and next steps.

- As a Safe Contact, it is your responsibility to listen and focus on the student who is sharing a report with you.
- Make sure the student knows that the bullying is not his or her fault.
- Invite the student to come with you when you make the report so she doesn't feel abandoned or put-off.
- Whenever possible, have the student involved in the complaint complete the top half of the report (see Sample Bullying/Harassment Form). By asking the student to complete the form, it empowers her to suggest and identify how she would like the incident resolved.
- Always ask the student how he would like the situation handled and which steps should be taken to move forward.
- If there is an issue brought to you that is too difficult, identify someone else you can go to for support and help with completing the reporting process.

Safe Contact Policies

Your school's Safe Contact System must include a Respect Policy that delineates effective procedures and protocols to help create a safe and harassment-free environment. It also must identify behavioral expectations and consequences (see Sample Respect Policy). Such a policy should be adopted and upheld by students and faculty alike. The policy should be available online and on school property so that all staff, students, and parents can access it.

We recognize that every school has different policies and procedures based on state and federal law. Therefore, we encourage you to research what requirements your school and state have in place while taking in consideration the tools included here to create a cultural change within your school.

Example: Wisconsin law requires every school district to have policies and procedures that prohibit bullying by students, yet leaves it up to the school to inform and determine what bullying is and actions they will take to stop it. Wisconsin law requires policies within school districts to prohibit discrimination against students': race, gender, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, parental status, or disability. Wisconsin also requires school districts to have a code for students' behavior in the classroom.

Every school should have a tool to report bullying. The reporting system must be authentic, reinforced by all staff, and sustainable within the structure of the school policies and procedures. See *Sample Bullying/Harassment Report*.

- Reports should include a specific statement of behavior including time, date, and location (if possible).
- Always complete the report with another adult present. This ensures that the student has an adult who is aware of the situation and who can be a support for him if one of the adults is not on campus or available. Whoever the student disclosed the situation to first should stay with him through the reporting process (even if that adult referred the student to a Safe Contact for help with the reporting process).
- A copy of the report should be provided to the students involved, parents of the students, reporting staff member, and the principal.
- When the school's point person (administrator or counselor) receives a bullying report, they should interview the person who has been accused of bullying to give student a chance to respond.
- Listen receptively to parents who report bullying and investigate reported circumstances so immediate and appropriate action can be taken.
- Consequences for confirmed harassment should be clearly stated and based on state and federal laws, the severity of the offense, and should increase with repeated offenses.

A key component to bullying prevention is the school's ability to create a culture where students and staff trust the Respect Policy. Students need to be part of the reporting process and need to be asked how they would like the situation handled. It is also essential that all parties involved in the reporting process get immediate feedback on actions that are taken to resolve the issue.

After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the student who bullied to understand that his or her actions affect other people. Work with those who bully to encourage them to stand up for themselves and others.

Show a commitment to ending bullying because bullying is a behavior that is often repeated, and it takes consistent effort to ensure that it stops.

Safe Environment

Providing a safe school environment is an essential component in ensuring academic growth and success. Our hope is that you can infuse life skills into your curriculum which will empower youth with the knowledge and skills they need to advocate for a safe and nurturing environment in which they can live, learn, and grow. We want to help students develop their capacity to engage in positive behaviors, nurture their own well-being, and the well-being of others. By using classroom practices that have been tested and proven, you can create a safe atmosphere that cultivates learning.

Classroom Expectations

- Schedule a meeting at the beginning of the school year and include students in the process of creating classroom rules and expectations which will create a safe and nurturing climate to live, grow, and learn.
- Students should sign the classroom rules and expectations and they should be displayed in the classroom. Students should know the expectations and the consequences if they break the classroom rules.

For Example: No Put-Downs Allowed. If you insult someone, you need to say three positive things to that person.

Classroom Community

- Encourage diversity within your classroom and reinforce positive and inclusive behavior.
- Train student leaders in the policies and procedures of handling bullying to help encourage their involvement. Inspire them to be part of the Dignity Revolution activities and lead the way with their peers. When you involve students in the process, they will be more apt to engage.
- Change the seating arrangement in your classroom on a regular basis. This will allow different students to work together as teams to create and build confidence.
- Engage in role-play activities to help prevent and identify bullying.
- Encourage parental participation by establishing on-campus centers that recruit, coordinate, and involve parents in the educational process. Train parents on your school's Respect Policy so they can be part of preventing and identifying bullying. This will create a sense of community within the classroom and synergy with the students' home life.

Classroom Climate

- Creating a positive classroom atmosphere in which students feel safe enough to talk about bullying and harassment takes time and openness.
- Model respect, responsibility, trust, and honesty so that students feel free to share and learn. For tips on how to create this culture and climate, see *Top Ten Bullying- Prevention Tips for Teachers*¹.
- Remember every student has a story; every student has baggage. Ask yourself what you can do to allow them to be themselves and also learn to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

For more information about Dignity Revolution, visit DignityPledge.com.

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