



Walter Lawson School Bullying Policy

Walter Lawson Children's Home (WLCH) School is a nonpublic special education facility for individuals with significant developmental disabilities and complex medical needs between the ages of 3-21. Students served at WLCH School require total assistance to access the learning environment, engage in social interactions and participate in activities of daily living due to the nature of their disabilities. Students are engaged in a pre-academic, functional curriculum that meets their multiple needs. Students at WLCH School may have limited understanding of the concept of bullying and are unable to recognize maladaptive behavior exhibited as a function of their disability as engaging in bullying.

This policy will be put into effect to meet state regulatory requirements for nonpublic schools and to establish a protocol for addressing incidents that could be construed as bullying at WLCH School.

- A. Bullying, including cyber-bullying, is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
 2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
 3. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
 4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyber-bullying is defined as bullying using technology or any electronic communication (including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature) transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo-optical system (including without limitation electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications). Cyber-bullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in the above section. Cyber bullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying.

- B. Bullying, including cyber-bullying, is contrary to State law and the policies of WLCH School and is consistent with subsection (a-5) of 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7.



- a. Note: Nothing in this Section is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United State Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Bullying is prohibited on WLCH School grounds or through any equipment owned by the facility. Bullying is prohibited via the transmission from a computer that is accessed at a non-school related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by WLCH School if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of the school. This applies only in cases in which a WLCH School Administrator or staff member receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred. WLCH School staff will not monitor any non-school related activity, function, or program.

- C. Any incidents of potential bullying at WLCH School that have been noted by staff or seen by any other person while on the premises should be reported promptly. Staff members should report any alleged bullying incidents to the Principal or the Executive Director. This can be done in person, through a signed incident report placed in the appropriate secure school mailbox, via email to the Principal (katie.johnson@wlch.org) or Executive Director (missy.thornbloom@wlch.org), or via phone at 815-633-6636. Alleged bullying incidents may also be reported anonymously by placing a note in the appropriate secure school mailbox.
- D. Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the following steps must be taken once an alleged bullying incident has been reported:
 1. Parents or guardians of students involved in the bullying incident will be notified by the Principal or Executive Director via phone within 24 hours after being made aware of the students' involvement in the incident.
 2. If appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions and restorative measures will be discussed with the student's parent or guardian within 24 hours after being made aware of the students' involvement in the incident.
- E. WLCH School Personnel will make every effort to make sure that any reports of bullying are investigated and addressed promptly by following these procedures:
 1. Notify the Principal or Executive Director of witnessing or being made aware of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.
 2. Make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation of the bullying report within ten school days after the report of the incident was received. However, additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation into the reported bullying incident may affect this timeline.
 3. Interview all persons allegedly involved in or witness to the reported bullying incident. This will be completed by the Principal, Executive Director or other appropriate WLCH personnel or staff person with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate during the investigation process. Use other means to aid in the investigation of the reported



bullying incident, including, but not limited to such things as video recordings, sound recordings, letters, emails, texts, etc.

4. Formalize the results and findings of the investigation, including the determination of whether an incident of bullying occurred.
 5. Consistent with federal and State laws governing student privacy rights, parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying will be informed within 24 hours after WLCH's administration is made aware of the students' involvement and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions and restorative measures. WLCH will make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information that the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period. Additionally, all individual instances of bullying, as well as all threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, will be reported to the parents or legal guardians of those involved within 24 hours after WLCH administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident.
 6. Parents or legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information will be provided the opportunity to meet with the Principal or the Executive Director in order to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported bullying incident. Names of students involved in the bullying incident will not be disclosed to parents or guardians due to confidentiality restrictions.
 - If it is found that bullying has occurred, the student or students responsible will be disciplined according to the current WLCH School Student Disciplinary Policy and procedures.
 - If it is found that the person making the report of the bullying incident has done so falsely to bully the other person as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying that person, he or she will be disciplined according to the WLCH School Student Disciplinary Policy.
 - Acts of reprisal or retaliation against anyone who reports an act of bullying are prohibited. Any person engaging in any such reprisal or retaliation will be disciplined according to the WLCH School Student Disciplinary Policy.
 - During the investigation, the Principal and Executive Director will determine whether the reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction. If it is found not to be within the school's jurisdiction, the victim should be provided with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.
 - Victims are not prevented from seeking redress under any available civil or criminal law.
- F. As previously stated, students who are served by WLCH school may have limited understanding of the concept of bullying and are unable to recognize maladaptive behavior exhibited as a function of their significant disabilities as engaging in bullying. Interventions that can help prevent bullying at WLCH School include but are not limited to: School social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services. Instructional tools such as teaching desirable behaviors through the use of developmentally appropriate social stories and providing students with positive behavior support may be beneficial to meet the needs



of our special student population. Restorative measures at WLCH contribute to maintaining school safety, protecting the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, serve to build and restore relationships among the students, families, schools/communities, reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of behavioral health needs in order to keep students in the school environment, and increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

G. Development, Notification, Posting, Reevaluation, and Submission to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) of the WLCH School Bullying Policy

1. Development and Reevaluation of the WLCH School Bullying Policy will involve a wide range of stakeholders, including feedback from those who receive the policy as described below, and through approval from the facility's Human Rights Committee.
2. The policy will be posted on the facility website.
3. Where applicable, the policy will be displayed where other policies, rules or standards of conduct are posted at WLCH school.
4. The policy will be included in the WLCH School Handbook.
5. The policy will be distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired. Recipients of the policy will be encouraged to provide feedback for consideration of potential revisions to the policy.
6. The policy will be initially submitted to ISBE and then subsequently reviewed and reevaluated every two years to make any necessary and appropriate revisions. The revised policy will be submitted to ISBE.

H. Data will be reviewed on a yearly basis to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the WLCH School Bullying Policy. This will include such factors as:

1. The frequency of victimization
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at WLCH School
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs
4. The types of bullying utilized
5. Bystander intervention or participation

WLCH may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes to aid in policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the website consistent with the policies of WLCH. Consistent with Public Act 103-0047, WLCH shall collect, maintain, and submit non-identifiable data regarding verified allegations of bullying to ISBE as required.