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# Safe Schools Coalition

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December 2, 2010

## Washington State releases its new and improved model anti-bullying policy and procedure

A law passed last spring by the Washington State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Gregoire directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in collaboration with the Washington State School Directors Association, to develop a new model policy and procedure. It also required that school districts adopt new anti-bullying policies and procedures at least as protective as the new models by August 1, 2011.

The Superintendent, Randy Dorn, yesterday sent the new model policy and procedure to the legislature. I am attaching (see below) this just released new model bullying policy and procedure along with the letter that accompanied it today from OSPI to the legislature.

You will see that it does nearly all the key things we asked for:

1. It holds staff people, not just students, to account for not bullying, harassing or intimidating students.
2. It holds staff people accountable for intervening.
3. It explicitly prohibits harassment of students on the basis of "race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity, mental or physical disability, or other distinguishing characteristics."
4. It allows the complainant to choose among anonymity, confidentiality or non-confidentiality (the latter can result in actual discipline whereas the former two can result "by law" only in things like increased staff presence in problem areas and school-wide training, but it does explain that).
5. It promises that the district's Web site will prominently post information on reporting harassment, intimidation, and bullying; the name and contact information for making a report to a school administrator; and the name and contact

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information for the district compliance officer and that the policy and procedure will be prominently posted in each school and available in a language that families can understand.

6. It generally requires that the families be contacted and at the same time it allows the principal, in consultation with the student and mental health professionals, discretion in whether to inform the family if doing so might result in a student's revictimization (and reiterates that the district staff are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse).
7. It promises that investigations will include interviews with witnesses (not just the complainant and the alleged aggressor).
8. It shortens the time for the investigation from 30 days to no more than 5 days from the time of the complaint with no more than 2 more school days for the district to respond in writing to the complainant (or their family).
9. It shortens the time after that during which corrective action or discipline will be completed (except when the findings are being appealed) from 30 *more* days to no more than 5 more school days.
10. It promises targets that support services will be made available to them and the impact remedied.
11. It lists where else exactly beyond the district a targeted student or their family could seek help (other government agencies contact information).
12. It promises comprehensive training of students, staff and volunteers and that the district will conduct such training in partnerships with families, law enforcement, and other community agencies.

Thank you, especially, to Washington State Superintendent Randy Dorn; Dr. Jeff Söder, Director of the OSPI School Safety Center; Marilee Scarbrough, Executive Director of WSSDA, the Washington State School Directors Association; and Adie Simmons, Director of the Governor's Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO).

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Superintendent Dorn also acknowledged, in his letter to the legislature, the major contributions of Steve Zuber, OEO; Beth Reis, Public Health -- Seattle & King County; Linda Mangel, ACLU-WA; Tom Hutton, Buchanan, Fobes, Leitch & Kalzer Law Firm; Mary Sue Linville, Washington Schools Risk Management Pool; and Jerry Bender and Bob McMullen, Association of Washington School Principals.

And, within the Safe Schools Coalition, we also need to especially acknowledge the invaluable input of Jill Mullins, QLaw Foundation; Gabi Clayton, PFLAG Olympia and Families United Against Hate and Youth Guardian Services; Stan Griffith, Greater Boston PFLAG and the entire Law & Policy Work Group.

~ Beth Reis, Safe Schools Coalition Co-Chair

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