

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Safe Schools Reporting Act

**Q. Once the *Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) Reporting form* is received, what happens next?**

A. Once a form is received from a staff member, student, parent or other close adult relative, the principal or assistant principal initiates an investigation and takes corrective action. These actions may include, but are not limited to, a student conference, student warning, letter of apology, counseling, parent phone call, parent conference, detention, in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension. Information from the *Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) Reporting form* is entered into a database and reported to the Maryland State Department of Education.

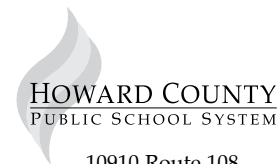
**Q. If my child is being bullied and my child or I chose not to complete the *Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) Reporting form*, will there still be corrective action taken?**

A. You do not have to complete the form for corrective action to be taken, but it is important that you or your child let someone at the school know that bullying is occurring. You or your child should report any instances of bullying or harassment to a school administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, nurse, teacher or other adult in the building.

**Q. Will the *Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) form* be a part of my child's record?**

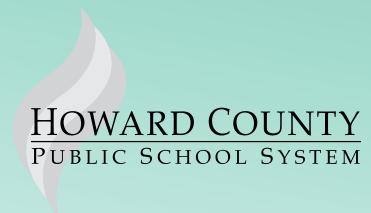
A. In accordance with House Bill 383, the *Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) Reporting form* is confidential and may not be made a part of a student's permanent educational record.

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# *A Parents' Guide to Reporting Acts of Harassment or Intimidation Against Students*



# Each school will provide a safe and nurturing environment that values our diversity and commonality.

It is a belief of the Howard County Public School System that all students have a right to learn in a safe and nurturing educational environment. To ensure this happens, the system has adopted a strategic goal that calls for each school to provide a safe and nurturing school environment that values diversity and commonality. Howard County's safe-school efforts are supported by legislation passed by the 2005 Maryland General Assembly.

The *Safe Schools Reporting Act*, effective July 1, 2005, requires all Maryland school systems to report incidents of harassment and intimidation against students attending public schools. This law will remain in effect for four years.

The data collected through this reporting system will provide educators with valuable information about the incidents of harassment and intimidation occurring in Howard County schools. The information will be extremely helpful to school officials and local School Improvement Teams as they work to identify and implement appropriate strategies to improve school climate.

The law provides for any staff member, student, parent or guardian, or close adult relative of a student to report an incident of harassment or intimidation (bullying) that occurs on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity or event off school property. School systems are then required to provide the Maryland State Department of Education with the following information:

- A description of the act constituting the harassment or intimidation
- The age of the victim and alleged perpetrator
- The allegation of the alleged perpetrator's motive
- A description of the investigation of the complaint and any corrective action taken by the appropriate school authorities
- The number of days a student is absent from school, if any, as a result of the incident
- The number of false allegations reported

The Maryland State Department of Education defines harassment and intimidation (bullying) as:

**“Conduct, including verbal conduct, that creates a hostile educational environment by substantially interfering with a student’s educational benefits, opportunities or performance, or with a student’s physical or psychological well-being, and is motivated by an actual or a perceived personal characteristic such as race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or disability, or is threatening or seriously intimidating.”**

This includes the following specific behaviors:

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm the student
- Teasing, name-calling, critical remarks, or threatening, in person or by email

- Bullying by demeaning and making the target of jokes
- Rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting the student
- Intimidation, extortion, or exploitation
- Spreading rumors or gossip that is harmful

## Reporting Harassment or Intimidation

Forms for reporting acts of harassment or intimidation are available in all Howard County public school guidance offices, front offices, and on the school system's website at [www.hcpss.org](http://www.hcpss.org).

## What Howard County Schools Are Doing about Bullying

- The Superintendent formed an anti-bullying task force in the spring of 2005 to:
  - Review available, related data.
  - Review promising approaches to addressing bullying in schools.
  - Recommend a systemic approach to reduce bullying and help students who encounter bullying.
  - Review related curriculum and policies.
  - Identify budgetary implications for recommendations.
- Anti-bullying training is available to school staffs.
- All local School Improvement Plans must include strategies and activities to address the school system's safe schools goal.
- Guidance counselors will present age-appropriate information to students about reporting incidents of harassment and bullying.