

**MODEL CATHOLIC SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM**  
**APPROVED BY THE MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**December 3, 2014**

**(ARCH) DIOCESE OF \_\_\_\_\_ BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM**

**Introduction:**

The Diocese (“Diocese”) and the Catholic Schools Office (“CSO”) believe that each Catholic school in the Diocese must be aware that its purpose is rooted in the mission of the Church to bring the love of Christ to all people. Each Catholic school, in fulfilling its role within the educational mission of the Church, is to impart and live out the teachings of Jesus Christ found in the Catholic doctrinal and moral tradition, as well as be committed to providing an integrated Catholic educational environment that permeates all aspects of its daily life and operations.

Each child should be challenged to reach his/her full potential, develop a love of learning and learn in an environment that fosters respect and understanding of one another. Pastors, principals, faculty, staff and volunteers are expected to insist that all students behave appropriately and treat others with civility and respect. Bullying and Retaliation are not to be tolerated.

The Diocese’s anti-bullying program 1) seeks to ensure that all children in Catholic schools are protected against bullying; 2) prescribes a specific set of action steps for each school; and 3) offers a model policy that provides minimum standards to which each student is entitled, while also allowing for adaptation based on a local school’s needs.

**Prevention and Intervention Plan:**

On or before [[INSERT DATE]], the Principal (or the individual who holds a comparable position) (herein, the “Principal”) of each school in the Diocese shall be responsible for overseeing the development of a prevention and intervention plan (a “Plan”), in consultation with representative stakeholders, which may include teachers, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators (herein, “Staff”); community representatives; students; parents and guardians consistent with the requirements of this Policy.

The Plan *shall* include, but not be limited to the adoption or adaptation of the Model Bullying Prevention Policy. At minimum, each Plan shall include:

- statements prohibiting Bullying and Retaliation;
- procedures for Staff, students, parents, guardians and others to report Bullying or Retaliation;
- procedures for responding to and investigating reports of Bullying or Retaliation;
- the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against an Aggressor for Bullying or Retaliation consistent with the school’s disciplinary policies
- strategies for protecting from Bullying or Retaliation a person who reports Bullying, provides information during an investigation of Bullying or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of Bullying;
- procedures for notifying the parents or guardians of a Target and an Aggressor;

The Plan shall afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

The Plan may include, but not be limited to:

- a provision for ongoing professional development to build the skills of all Staff members, including, but not limited to, the Principal, educators, faculty, Staff, custodians, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and volunteers to prevent, identify and respond to Bullying;
- provisions for informing parents and guardians about the Bullying prevention curriculum of the school and shall include, but not be limited to: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school or school plan; (ii) the dynamics of Bullying; and (iii) online safety and Cyber-Bullying;
- provisions related to the creation and maintenance of records of investigations, which is strongly encouraged by the Diocese.

The Plan shall be reviewed and updated periodically and as needed.

The Principal and/or his or her designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Bullying prevention and implementation plan within his or her school.

**Available Consultation:**

If any Staff member has questions concerning this Policy, he or she is encouraged to contact the Diocesan Schools Office.

## ***MODEL CATHOLIC SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY***

### **Preamble.**

Created in the image and likeness of God, each child shares a fundamental human dignity. A Catholic school provides an environment dedicated to protecting and fostering the development of that dignity. The school helps children learn how to exercise their God-given freedom responsibly, with the goal that good choices become good habits, that is, *virtues*. The highest virtue is charity, which God both requires and makes possible. "Here is my commandment," says Jesus, "that you love one another as I have loved you." As bearers of the divine image, members of the school community deserve care and respect from all. Bullying and Retaliation are not to be tolerated.

This policy serves as a guide for when expectations of respect are not met, and for when reconciliation and restitution are needed.

### **Definitions.**

For purposes of this Policy, the following definitions shall apply:

"Aggressor" means a student who engages in Bullying or Retaliation.

"Bullying" is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, that is objectively offensive, is directed at a Target, and that:

- causes physical harm or emotional harm that results in clearly identifiable physical symptoms to the Target or places the Target in reasonable fear of such harm;
- causes damage to the Target's property;
- places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a Hostile Environment at school for the Target;
- infringes on the rights of the Target at school, including defamation and invasion of privacy; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

*For the purpose of this Policy, whenever the term "Bullying" is used it is to denote either Bullying or Cyber-Bullying.*

"Cyber-Bullying" means Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature, including a post on a social network, Internet Web site or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device.

"Hostile Environment" means a situation in which Bullying causes the school environment to be

permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to materially and substantially alter the conditions of the student's education.

“Retaliation” means any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against any person who reports Bullying, provides information during an investigation of Bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about Bullying.

“School Grounds” mean property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

“Staff” includes, but is not limited to, educators, faculty, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletics coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

“Target” is a student against whom Bullying or Retaliation has been perpetrated.

### **Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation.**

The school expressly prohibits bullying in all forms, either by an individual or group of aggressors.

Bullying, including cyber-bullying is prohibited:

- On School Grounds owned, leased or used by a school;
- At any school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off School Grounds;
- At a school bus stop;
- On a school bus or any other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school;

Bullying is also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related. Similarly, the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school to commit an act or acts of bullying that materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school is also prohibited.

### **Reporting.**

Any Staff or volunteer who has witnessed or become aware of any instance of Bullying or Retaliation must report that act to the Principal or another school official designated by the Principal. In the selection of this person, care should be taken that both a male and female school official are designated to receive reports of bullying.

Any student or parent/guardian of a student are strongly encouraged to report all acts of bullying. Reports can be made to the student’s teacher, who must then report it to the Principal or Assistant Principal, or directly to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Anyone with general questions or concerns about bullying or the school’s policy should address those questions or concerns to the Principal.

Reports may be made confidentially when requested.

Reports may be made anonymously. The anonymous nature of the report may make it difficult to investigate or corroborate the alleged bullying. No disciplinary action may be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

False accusations of bullying are absolutely prohibited and may result in discipline in accordance with the school's discipline policy.

**Retaliation.**

Retaliation against a Target, witness of Bullying, a person who makes a good faith reporting of Bullying, or who provides information during an investigation of Bullying, is prohibited.

**Response and Investigation.**

The school takes seriously all reports of bullying.

Upon receipt of a report of bullying the Principal or his or her designee will conduct an investigation. When possible, the investigation will begin within three school days of the report of bullying.

The School reserves the sole discretion to determine the scope and adequacy of the investigation.

Anyone with questions about the investigation should direct those questions to the Principal

**Violations.**

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to discipline in accordance with the School's disciplinary policy.

The School retains the sole discretion to determine whether Bullying has occurred and what the response should be.

Depending on the circumstances, the School's response could include:

- taking appropriate disciplinary and remedial action;
- notifying the parents or guardians of the Aggressor of the determination;
- notifying the parents or guardians of the Target, the Aggressor, and any other affected persons about available community resources.

**Training.**

Training on this Policy shall be provided for Staff at least once every three years and, at the discretion of the Principal, for volunteers who have significant contact with students.

**Publication and Notice.**

The Principal or his or her designee shall provide written or electronic notice of this Policy to the Staff.

Written or electronic notice of the Plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms and in languages which are most prevalent among the students, parents or guardians.

This Policy shall be conspicuously posted in the administrative offices of the school.