

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Italian Home for Children expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The Italian Home for Children is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

We understand that members of certain student groups, such as students with disabilities, students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and homeless students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The Italian Home for Children will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. This protection will extend to all students, regardless of their legal status.

We will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement. This policy is not intended to prohibit expression of religious, philosophical, or political views, provided the expression does not substantially disrupt the education environment.

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and The Italian Home for Children is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The principal, Jane Zopatti-Lewis is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan.

### Definitions:

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, 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, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;

- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying, is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Reporting bullying or retaliation. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing in the standard serious incident form utilized by the Italian Home. A school staff member is required to report immediately to the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee any instance of bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. The reporting form is available on the website, [www.italianhome.org](http://www.italianhome.org), as well as at the Secretary's desk in the school, in the Wellness Room, in the office of the Director of Education, the Day School Coordinator's office, and with all Clinicians. Envelopes will also be provided. Anyone may anonymously fill out the report and mail it to the Director of Education, or place it in an envelope and leave it in the Director's school mailbox.

A staff member will report immediately to the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. The requirement to report to the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

The Italian Home for Children expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee.

When the school becomes aware of an alleged bullying incident, the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

In making this determination, the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school policies and procedures, and other individuals the Director of Education or designee deems appropriate.

Investigation. The Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will investigate promptly all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages and special needs of the students involved.

During the investigation the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. Student complainants and witnesses may have a parent or trusted adult with them, if requested, during any program initiated investigation. The Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Director of Education, Day School Coordinator, or Residential designee or other staff members as determined by the Director of Education, and in consultation with Clinicians, as appropriate. Complainants should not be promised confidentiality at the onset of an investigation. To the extent practical, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the investigator will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The investigator will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Determinations. The investigator will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the investigator will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The investigator will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Director of Education may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or Clinician, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians and/or Clinician, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development or other professional consultation/evaluation. The Italian Home for Children may contact the LEA to reconvene a TEAM meeting to conduct a manifestation determination-to determine the relationship between the disability and the behavior. The TEAM will ask questions including: Is the IEP appropriate? Is the classroom appropriate? If there was a behavior plan, was it implemented? Does the student understand the impact and consequences of his/her behavior? Can the student control his/her behavior? If the TEAM determines that the behavior is a manifestation of the disability, the LEA in coordination with the Italian Home for

Children and the parent/guardian will take steps to modify (if necessary) the IEP, the Individual Behavior Plan and/or the classroom placement.

The investigator will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Director of Education cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

If the Director of Education determines an incident of bullying has occurred, the following action can be taken:

*Students at the Italian Home for Children are typically not suspended for behaviors.*

Serious behaviors (such as but not limited to possession of a dangerous weapon or a controlled substance, serious aggression, bullying) are addressed by:

1. Removing child from the classroom/dorm.
2. The child will serve a 1-5 day ***in program*** suspension  
**\*The student will continue to receive assignments and instruction from the classroom teacher or assistant teacher supervised by the classroom teacher while serving the in school suspension.**
3. Case manager/clinician and Principal are to be notified.
4. Parent/guardian to be notified.
5. LEA, DCF and other involved parties will be notified.
6. Boston Police Juvenile Officer/Community Services will be notified to meet with child, school personnel and family when deemed necessary.
7. DCF Hotline or other emergency services such as the BEST Team or other psychiatric consultation will be called when deemed necessary.

**IF THE ITALIAN HOME WERE TO UTILIZE 3-5 DAY SUSPENSION (out-of-school), THE PROGRAM WOULD FOLLOW THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY**

1. Whenever a student is suspended, the Italian Home will immediately notify the parents and public school or human service agency responsible for the placement of

- the student. Within 24 hours, the Italian Home will send a written statement explaining the reasons for suspension to the parents and public school district.
2. No student may be suspended and sent home unless a responsible adult is available to receive the student.
  3. Once a student has been suspended for 3 consecutive school days or 5 non-consecutive school days in a school year, the Italian Home, parents and public school district, consistent with federal requirements, shall explore together all possible program modifications within the school in an attempt to prevent more lengthy suspension of the student from the program.
  4. The Italian Home will record and track the number and duration of suspensions, including suspensions from any part of the student's IEP program, including transportation. Tracking will be done on the Italian Home's Client Information System.

If the Director of Education determines that a false report of bullying has occurred, the following action can be taken:

*Students at the Italian Home for Children are typically not suspended for behaviors.*

1. Removing child from the classroom/dorm.
2. The child will serve a 1-5 day ***in program*** suspension  
**\*The student will continue to receive assignments and instruction from the classroom teacher or assistant teacher supervised by the classroom teacher while serving the in school suspension.**
3. Case manager/clinician and Principal are to be notified.
4. Parent/guardian to be notified.

### **Teaching appropriate behavior through Skill Building:**

The Italian Home for Children will incorporate empathy building and anti-bullying curriculum in the following ways:

Axis of Hope will conduct weekly activities designed to address empathy building, peer relationships, acceptance of differences, and conflict resolution. This program is currently being implemented and will continue throughout the 2010-2011 school year, to be assessed for effectiveness at the end of the year. At that point, a decision will be made whether to continue with the program or consider alternative programming.

Within the classroom, the teachers will incorporate Character Counts™ lessons that address character traits including: responsibility, respect, citizenship, caring, trustworthiness, and fairness. These traits will be reinforced throughout the school in whole school activities that address these traits.

Clinicians will work with students both individually and within Social Skills groups to address anger and stress management, tolerance, acceptance, sharing, and/or peer relationships.

Clinicians will work with parents individually and in Parent Groups to address the issues of bullying and cyberbullying both at home and in the community. The Italian Home will provide yearly information sessions for parents and guardians on topics including but not limited to: how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school Plan; the dynamics of bullying; online safety and cyberbullying.

The Italian Home for Children is still evaluating the appropriate programming that will meet the requirements of the Bullying Prevention Plan and will also support our students and their learning needs. The Italian Home will choose a program that is Research Based and shows positive impact, teaches Bullying and Cyberbullying prevention, includes a parent program, is age appropriate, includes hands-on activities, and can be modified to meet the learning needs of our students. At this time, The Italian Home is planning to utilize the MARC program throughout the agency.

The Italian Home will provide all staff with ongoing professional development that will include incorporating anti-bullying skill building in the classroom curriculum; developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents; developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a aggressor, target and witnesses to the bullying; research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment; information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

The Italian Home will provide yearly information sessions for parents and guardians on topics such as: how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the School Plan; the dynamics of bullying; online safety and cyberbullying.