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**Purpose:**

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Bullying behaviors are directly contrary to this and can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. It is the goal of Elim Christian Services to create a learning environment where all students feel safe and supported, are protected from bullying and are able to succeed academically as well as develop socially and emotionally into responsible, caring individuals.

**Scope**

Bullying behaviors are contrary to several laws and statues and the policy of Elim Christian Services. This policy aims to protect Elim Chirstian Services students against interpersonal harm from bullying behaviors. No person can be harassed, bullied, or intimidated due to any reason including their race, color, size, gender, gender-related identity or expression, nationality, religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution, sexual orientation, physical/mental disabilities, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, age, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristics.

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. Elim Chirstian Services will re-evaluate this policy every two (2) years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of a school where bullying or bias-based behaviors occur; the types of bullying or bias-based behaviors utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The information developed will be made available on Elim’s website.

This policy is posted on the school district's, charter school's, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school's existing internet website and is included in the student handbook, and, where applicable, posted where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school, and is distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

As part of the process of reviewing and re-evaluating the policy under subsection (d) of this Section, contains a policy evaluation process to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the policy that includes, but is not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The non-sectarian nonpublic school may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the Internet website of the school. If an Internet website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of the non-sectarian nonpublic school and is consistent with subsection (a-5) of this Section [free exercise of religion]. 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 States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

This policy includes the bullying definition provided in 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7:

"Bullying" includes "cyber-bullying" and means 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.
5. An observed or perceived imbalance of power exists between the person(s) engaging in the bullying behavior(s) and the targeted student(s).
6. The behaviors are severe or pervasive (repeated over time), or there is a high likelihood that behaviors will be repeated. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the severity and if other elements of bullying are present.
7. The intent of the person(s) engaging in the behavior is to cause physical or emotional harm to the targeted student(s).
8. The behavior has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects:
  - a. placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
  - b. causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
  - c. substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
  - d. 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" means bullying through the use of 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 this 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 in this Section.

Bullying behaviors are prohibited and are subject to disciplinary:

1. during any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program or activity;
2. in school, on school property, on school buses or other Elim-provided transportation, and at designated locations for students to wait for buses and other Elim-provided transportation ("bus stops");
3. through the transmission of information from an Elim assigned computer or computer network, or other electronic school equipment;

4. when communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other Elim-provided transportation, at bus stops, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
5. when it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity or on Elim-provided transportation;
6. when it is a violation that occurs off campus but most seriously disrupts any student's education.

### **Preventing Bullying**

Elim's Director of School and staff provide safe and supportive school environments that prevent bullying behaviors through:

- Developing supportive school climate strategies, including clear expectations and share agreements to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students.
- Teaching students, as appropriate, social, and emotional skills and establishing classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudice.
- Establishing predictable responses and effective disciplinary practices that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm. Students, staff, and stakeholders know how Elim Christian Services plans to respond to bullying and harassment.
- Committing to welcoming and inclusive practices that center on belonging, affirm cultural differences, and address and support the transformation of bias-based harm.

### **Addressing Allegations of Bullying Behaviors**

#### Intervening to Address Bullying

##### **A. Responsibilities of Elim Employees, Contractors, and Volunteers**

All Elim employees, contractors, volunteers, lunchroom staff and bus drivers, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

1. intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved;
2. report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Director of School/Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, on the Elim Bullying Complaint Form (Attachment A); and
3. cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Director of School/Designee.

##### **B. Responsibilities of Students, Parents and Guardians**

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but, if capable, must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Director of School/Designee as quickly as practicable. Reports can be made to any Elim employee, in person, by completing Attachment A and submitting it to the Director of School/Designee, by calling Elim directly at (708) 389-0555, or by emailing [Bullying@elimcs.org](mailto:Bullying@elimcs.org). Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Director of School/Designee. No disciplinary action will be taken based solely on an anonymous report.

##### **C. Steps for Investigating Bullying Reports**

1. Ensure safety.  
The Director of School or their designee will provide immediate support to any targeted student(s) to ensure safety. If there are overt or implied risks of safety, the crisis team leader will be notified and 911 will be called.
2. Notify parents/guardians of all involved students. Within one school day of receipt of a bullying report, the Director of School/Designee shall report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications in the student's cumulative file.

- A. Notifications should be made privately to students directly involved and their parents/legal guardians.
  - B. Additionally, when incidents have a larger impact on the school community, the Director of School/Designee shall provide clear communication to students, staff, and parents to reinforce school-wide expectations and a climate of respect and inclusion.
3. Document all allegations of bullying.  
Within two school days of receiving a report of bullying, the Director of School/Designee will document the allegation in the school's student information system as a general incident report and document all notifications made.
  4. Conduct an investigation.  
The Director of School/Designee, who is knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention, shall perform the investigation.

Investigation of reported bullying shall be initiated within 5 school days of receipt of a report, documented within the incident report in the school's student information system, and completed within 10 school days, unless the Director of School grants in writing an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Director of School/Designee shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved. All investigations shall involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process. All staff are responsible for notifying the principal or school administrator or his or her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.

The investigation shall include:

- a. Identifying all involved parties, including the student(s) alleged to have engaged in the bullying behaviors, alleged target(s), and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
  - b. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with all involved parties. The alleged target should never be interviewed in public or with the student(s) alleged to have engaged in bullying.
  - c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and review the school's student information system of the behaviors on the targeted student's education.
  - d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.
  - e. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal or school administrator or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.
5. Decide whether allegations of bullying are substantiated or not and document determination. The Director of School/Designee shall consider whether the four elements of the bullying definition are met, or if all four elements of bullying are not present, whether the behavior qualifies as another inappropriate behavior. When the investigation is complete, the Director of School/Designee shall ensure the investigation and findings (whether the report of bullying is substantiated or not substantiated) are documented in the school's student information system. If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors and/or other inappropriate behaviors, the Director of School/Designee shall prepare a Behavior Incident Report.
    - a. All documentation/communication shall include a statement prohibiting reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying and the consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation.

- b. All documentation/communication shall include consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying.
6. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights the Director of School/Designee will notify all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation. Within one day of deciding, the Director of School/Designee shall notify, in writing, the parents/legal guardians of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Director of School/Designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying.

When communicating incidents of bullying to the targeted student's parent/guardian, the Director of School/Designee should consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential. For example, if a student is bullied after coming out as gay, the Director of School/Designee shall not disclose the student's sexual orientation to the parent/guardian without the student's permission, unless there is a legitimate, school-related reason for doing so.

If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors, the Director of School/Designee shall provide the Behavior Incident Report to the parent/legal guardians of the student who engaged in the behaviors. The Director of School/Designee may advise the parent/legal guardian of other involved students that proper disciplinary action was taken. They may not advise them of specific consequences imposed, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law.

#### D. Determining an Appropriate Response

The goal of the response is to ensure the targeted student feels safe and welcome, and the student engaging in bullying behaviors understands the harm they caused and changes their behavior.

1. Identify school risk factors and ensure a universal strategy for school climate improvement and social and emotional development. Assess and address any issues in supervision, expectations, relationship-building, and emotional learning.
2. Support the targeted student. Assign school staff to create and implement a plan that will restore a sense of safety for the targeted student and other students who have been impacted. Determine any other interventions that may be appropriate.

If the targeted student has a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine whether additional or different special education or related services are needed to address the student's individual needs and revise the IEP accordingly. For example, if the student's disability affects social skill development or makes the student vulnerable to bullying, the Director of School/Designee shall ask the student's IEP Team to consider whether the IEP should include provisions to reduce vulnerability to bullying.

3. Determine interventions and/or consequences that address the root cause of the students' bullying behaviors. Consider the behavior's nature, the student's developmental age, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Implement appropriate disciplinary action and identify opportunities to teach, build empathy, and repair harm. While suspensions may be necessary in some cases to ensure the safety of the targeted student, suspending or expelling students who bully does not reduce bullying behavior.

If the student who engaged in bullying behavior is a student with a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine if additional supports and services are needed to address the inappropriate behavior and develop the student's social and emotional skills. The team may also

consider examining the environment in which the bullying occurred to determine if changes to the environment are warranted. For example, the IEP Team should consider a behavior intervention plan for the student or review a current behavior intervention plan and revise if necessary. The Director of School/Designee shall comply with the Procedural Safeguards for Discipline of Students with Disabilities/Impairments when considering interventions and consequences for students with disabilities.

Contact the Chair of the School Improvement Committee for school-wide climate and skill-building practices that prevent bullying, and the retained legal counsel for more information about the appropriate and legal consequences for student misconduct.

4. For incidents that impact the larger school community, provide opportunities in safe, structured environments for affected students, staff, and/or parents to speak about the incident, its impact, and what is needed to repair the harm.
5. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, includes procedures for promptly informing parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying and discussing, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.

“Restorative measures” means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that

- are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community,
- contribute to maintaining school safety,
- protect 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 students, families, schools, and communities, and
- reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.
- 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.

#### E. What Not to Do:

- Solicit an apology from the student who engaged in bullying to the targeted student or mandate a public apology, use peace circles, victim/offender conferences, or any form of mediation that puts the student who engaged in bullying in contact with the targeted student in an immediate attempt to resolve the bullying.
  - Restorative measures may be helpful to repair relationships between the student who engaged in bullying and targeted student, but only if used after other interventions have balanced the power differential between the perpetrator and target.
- Dismiss bullying as typical student behavior or assume it is not serious.

### **Appeals**

Any party not satisfied with the investigation's outcome may appeal to the Director of School (708) 389-0555, within 15 calendar days of the decision's notification. The Director of School shall render a final determination in accordance with the timeline and procedures set out in the anti-bullying appeal guidelines established by Elim Christian Services. The Director of School may return the incident to the Designee for further investigation or reconsideration of the consequence(s), direct the imposition of other consequence(s), or deny the appeal. The Director of School shall notify the party requesting the appeal and the Designee that its decision is final and shall document that notification in the Behavior Incident Report in the school's student information system.

### **Consequences for Elim Employees, Contractors, and Volunteers**

When it is determined that an employee, contractor, or volunteer was aware that bullying behavior was taking place but failed to report it, the employee, contractor, or volunteer will be considered to have violated this policy. The Director of School shall consider employee discipline for such violations. Remedies for offending contractors and volunteers should be imposed according to their Elim contracts.

### **Notice and Dissemination of Requirements**

Elim Christian Services shall follow the requirements for posting this policy on the school's website, in the school building as well as disseminating and presenting this policy to school staff as part of pre-school-year professional development.

### **Training and Professional Development**

#### **Staff**

Professional development will be offered to build the skills of all Elim employees, contractors, and volunteers to implement this Policy. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent incidents of bullying and bias-based and discriminatory behavior and to intervene immediately and effectively to stop them;
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target, and witness to the bullying and bias-based and discriminatory behavior;
3. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bias-based bullying; and
4. Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

### **Student Internet Safety Education**

In accordance with Elim's Internet Safety Policy the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Assessment, the Director of School/Designee, shall determine the scope and duration of the school curriculum component on Internet safety. This unit of instruction and topics covered must at a minimum address: (a) safety on the Internet; (b) appropriate behavior while online, on social media platforms and in chat rooms; and (c) cyberbullying awareness and response. The skill and/or age-appropriate unit of instruction may be incorporated into the current courses of study regularly taught. The school will satisfy the documentation requirements established by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Assessment or Designee to ensure compliance with this curricular requirement.

Complaint Managers:

#### **Primary Contact**

Name: Amanda Griffin

Title: Assistant Principal

Mailing Address: 13020 S. Central Ave. Crestwood, IL 60418

Email: [bullying@elimcs.org](mailto:bullying@elimcs.org)

Phone: 708-389-0555

#### **Secondary Contact**

Name: Dorothy Bowman

Title: Director of School

Mailing Address: 13020 S. Central Ave. Crestwood, IL 60418

Email: [bullying@elimcs.org](mailto:bullying@elimcs.org)

Phone: 708-389-0555

This policy is consistent with the policies of the school board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school.

**ATTACHMENT A**  
Elim Christian Services  
Form for Reporting Bullying and Retaliation

NOTE: The reporter may remain anonymous, but no discipline will be imposed based solely upon an anonymous report.

Please submit this report to the Director of School/Designee or any school staff member. You may also call the school at 708-389-0555 or email [bullying@elimcs.org](mailto:bullying@elimcs.org) to make a report.

**Victim or Target Information**

School: Elim Christian Services

Name(s) and grade(s) of Victim/Target: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reporting Information (\*Optional for students/parents/guardians)**

Name & Title of Person Reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Victim/Target: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Incident Information**

Name(s) of student(s) accused of engaging in bullying behaviors OR description (if name(s) unknown):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate dates, times, and frequency of prior incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what happened and who was present in *as much detail as possible* (\*Required Information):

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Date of submission: \_\_\_\_\_