



Advocates for Children of New York  
Protecting every child's right to learn

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## **Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination of Immigrant Students in NYC Schools**

Your child has the right to attend a school where he/she is safe and supported and there is no bullying, harassment, or discrimination. **The New York City Department of Education (DOE) does not allow bullying, harassment, and discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, or religion.**

The behavior is not allowed when it happens on school grounds, before or after school, in DOE cars, at DOE-sponsored events, and sometimes when the behavior takes place off of school property and is related to school.

**No one can be punished for reporting bullying, harassment, or discrimination of a student.**

### ***How does the DOE protect my child against bullying, harassment, and discrimination?***

The DOE does not allow students to behave in a way that could make other students feel unsafe or that could cause them physical injury or emotional harm. The DOE also does not allow behavior that could interfere with another student's education, mental or emotional well-being, or physical well-being.

### ***What does bullying, harassment, and discrimination look like?***

Bullying, harassment, and discrimination may take many forms. It can be physical, verbal, social, or written. Below are some examples:

- **PHYSICAL** — includes hitting, pushing, and breaking someone else's things.
- **VERBAL** — includes teasing, taunting, making threats, making offensive jokes, name-calling, and slurs.
- **SOCIAL** — includes leaving a student out of peer groups in order to humiliate or isolate him/her.
- **WRITTEN** — includes graffiti, photos, written material, drawings or videos, or using the internet, cellphone, email, gaming systems, and social media to harass, bully, or discriminate.

### ***What if the bullying, harassment, or discrimination takes place off of school grounds?***

The DOE does not allow bullying, harassment, or discrimination that takes place outside of school if it disrupts your child's learning or could harm the school community.

## ***What if the bullying, harassment, or discrimination is by school staff?***

School staff are not allowed to bully, harass, or discriminate against students. Parents and students may report this behavior by telling the principal, calling the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) at (718) 935-3800, or filing an online report with OSI at [https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/osi/CPR\\_Form/form.aspx](https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/osi/CPR_Form/form.aspx).

## ***How do I know if my child is being bullied?***

Not all children talk about being bullied, harassed, or discriminated against. Below are some warning signs that a child may be bullied:

- They have injuries, marks, or bruises that they cannot explain.
- Lost or destroyed possessions.
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, feeling sick, or pretending to be sick.
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares.
- Low grades or loss of interest in school.
- Not wanting to go to school.
- Low self-esteem.

**REMEMBER:** Not all children will show the same warning signs, and some may not show any!

## ***What can I do if my child has suffered bullying, harassment, or discrimination?***

- 1. Immediately report the incident to the school.** You or your child can report the incident to someone at school. It does not have to be the principal. The incident must be entered into the DOE's Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) within 24 hours. You can ask for a copy of the OORS report.
- 2. If you do not feel comfortable reporting the incident to school staff, or if you made a report to school staff but the behavior has continued, you can email the Office of School and Youth Development (OSYD) and make a report.**
  - The email address is: [RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov).
  - You can also make an anonymous report.
  - You can write the email in your own language.
  - You will receive a reference number so that you may keep track of the report.
- 3. The school principal must then investigate the report** within 5 days of getting the report and determine whether there was bullying, harassment, or discrimination against your child. The investigation must include:
  - An interview with the student who suffered the alleged bullying, harassment, or discrimination. The DOE should provide an interpreter if your child does not speak English.
  - An interview with the student accused of bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
  - Interviews and written statements from any witnesses.
- 4. The principal will determine whether the behavior is bullying, harassment, or discrimination.** The principal will consider many factors, such as the students' ages, what happened, how serious the behavior is, how often the behavior happened and how long it lasted each time it happened, the context in which the behavior happened, where the behavior happened, the number of students involved, and whether the behavior harmed the student's education.

- 5. The parents of the students involved will be notified with the results of the investigation.** The DOE should communicate with parents in a language they understand. If the behavior violated the Discipline Code, the school will take appropriate disciplinary action. If the behavior is a criminal act, the school will contact the police. If appropriate, the school may recommend counseling, support, or other interventions.
- 6. The principal must make sure that the behavior stops.**

If you have taken these steps and your child is still being bullied, harassed, or discriminated against, you can contact Advocates for Children for help. Call our Education Helpline at 1-866-427-6033 from 10am to 4pm, Monday through Thursday. We speak your language.

### ***Can my child transfer to another school for safety reasons?***

Your child has a right to stay at the school even if your child has been bullied, harassed, or discriminated against. The principal must make this behavior stop so that your child feels safe at school. However, you may decide to ask that your child get transferred to another school if you fear for your child's safety.

You can ask for a safety transfer by going to a Family Welcome Center and dropping off a copy of documents to support your request, such as the OORS report, medical records, or a letter from the child's provider. Or, you can ask the principal, dean, or assistant principal of safety at your child's school for a safety transfer. The school staff will send the documents to the Family Welcome Center along with safety transfer investigation and intake forms. The Office of Student Enrollment must make a decision within 5 business days.

### ***What if I as the parent experience discrimination by school staff?***

If you believe that someone at your child's school discriminated against you on account of your race, color, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, or religion, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management's Complaint Unit at (718) 935-3320.

**Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.**  
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