

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can a single incident be considered bullying?

Senate Bill 179, otherwise known as David's Law, broadened the definition of bullying in Texas Education Code. A single significant act can now be constituted as bullying if another criterion is met.

Is teasing the same as bullying?

Teasing usually occurs between friends in a joking manner, not meant to cause harm. If one person becomes offended and asks the other person to stop, the teasing would cease. In incidents of bullying, teasing is one-sided, and the aggressor intends to cause harm to the target with the use of verbal bullying.

Teasing becomes bullying when:

- a power imbalance exists between the students;
- the teasing is repeated;
- the intent is to humiliate, intimidate, or cause fear;
- the teasing continues despite obvious distress or requests to stop.

Why are some situations considered bullying and others are not, even if the behaviors are the same?

Brazos ISD must follow discipline guidelines outlined in the Texas Education Code. In order for an incident to be coded bullying in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), Texas Education Agency's data collection system, the behavior must meet all of the State's criteria for bullying.

What is the difference between conflict and bullying?

Conflict is a normal part of life and relationships. Conflict occurs when two or more people have a different point of view about something, resulting in mutual disagreement. Emotions may be involved because of the relationship between those experiencing conflict, which could lead to mean words or actions. The main difference between conflict and bullying is that in conflict, a power imbalance does not exist; everyone involved is considered equal in the relationship. Conflict can be resolved in most situations.

What happens after a report has been made?

Once a report of bullying has been made:

1. Campus administration will begin an investigation by interviewing the target, aggressor(s), and any witnesses, obtain written statements and gather any evidence (pictures, online messages, visible marks, video footage, etc.). A safety plan will be put in place for the alleged target, if necessary at this point.
2. Campus administration will notify parents of the target, aggressor(s), and witnesses of the investigation.
3. Campus administration will review all of the information and determine if the behavior meets the definition of bullying, according to the Texas Education Code.
 - a. The concern could be bullying, conflict, mean behavior but not bullying, or a misunderstanding.
4. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the target, aggressor(s), and their parents will be notified of the decision and any follow-up actions such as disciplinary consequences, safety plan, stay away agreement, or individualized interventions.

Why cannot the school share information about the consequences assigned to the student(s) who bullied my child?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that requires confidentiality of student information. Student discipline records are considered protected information. Therefore, the school cannot legally share information about another student. Campus administration will follow the Brazos ISD Discipline Management Plan when issuing consequences for the aggressor(s).

RESOURCES

Immediate Crisis Hotlines:

Crisis Intervention of Houston

Helps people in crisis through intervention and referral for issues around mental health and suicidal thoughts. Phone TeenTalk: 832-416-1199 | Text 281-201-4430 | <https://www.crisishotline.org/>

Teen Line

Helps adolescents address their problems through a confidential peer hotline and community outreach program. Open from 6 pm to 10 pm Pacific Time, every night. Phone: 310-855-HOPE (4673) or 800-852-8336 | <https://teenlineonline.org/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

24 hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis (confidential) Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) | <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

REPORTING INCIDENTS OF BULLYING

Students, parents, and staff members can report suspected bullying in various ways. Timely reporting of an incident will allow campus administrators to intervene and take effective action. Brazos ISD takes all reports of bullying seriously and investigates all allegations promptly to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all students.

STOPit

STOPit, an anonymous reporting system, empowers Brazos ISD students, parents, and community members to anonymously submit tips about safety and well-being concerns to help prevent school-related incidents that could cause harm to others. Tips may include bullying, weapons, suicide or self-harm, illicit drug use, inappropriate relationships, violence, and other concerns for safety and well-being.

School Personnel

Students are the number one priority of all staff members in Brazos ISD. It is always best to report safety issues or incidents of bullying directly to a teacher, counselor, or campus administrator. A student or parent can report an incident of bullying either orally or in writing. If, for some reason, a student or parent does not feel comfortable making a report in person, a report can be made using the STOPit app, which can be found on the Brazos ISD website.