

Cyberbullying Investigation and Intervention

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Set the Stage

- Have a team in place - principal, counselor/psychologist, technology coordinator, and school resource officer.
- Make sure students know they can report anonymously or confidentially - and that you need the URL. Consider an online report feature on the school home page.
- Make sure every member of team can achieve an immediate override of the filter to investigate a report.

Investigate

Gather Evidence

- Preserve **all** evidence. Your technology coordinator can assist with this.
- Determine the identity of cyberbully(ies).
- Search for additional harmful material or interactions.
 - It might be appropriate to conduct analysis of all involved students through District Internet system.
 - Ask about related on-campus actions.

Review the Situation

- Review the material looking for insight into the harmful relationships. Determine:
 - Who is causing harm to whom at school and online?
 - Determine what roles different students are playing?
 - Determine whether this is continuation or retaliation.
- Ask: Does evidence gathered raise concerns that any student(s) may pose a risk of harm to others or self?
 - Recognize that the threat of harm may come from student(s) who posted material or from student(s) who were victimized.

Intervene

Imminent Threat

- If the speech appears to present an imminent threat, contact law enforcement and initiate a protective response.
 - Continue with evidence gathering and look for possible alternatives.

Take-Down

- Get the harmful materials taken down as rapidly as possible. Look on home page or page material is on for "complaint," "abuse," or "contact."

Formal Discipline Considerations

- Impose a formal disciplinary response only if speech has or could cause:
 - Hostile environment for student - subjective and objective perspective.
 - Violent physical or verbal altercations.
 - Substantial interference with instruction/operations. (If speech has targeted staff, formal discipline is only justified if there is a negative impact on students - interference with instruction/operations.)
- Avoid suspensions unless there are school safety concerns.
 - Focus on a Restorative Justice response. Consider community service.
- Fully document the evidence, decision-making process, and rationale for formal discipline response. Retain documentation.

Discussions with Target(s)/Parents

- Discuss relationship issues at school to develop a plan of action to resolve. Make sure you ask about on-campus negative interactions.
 - The plan may include the need to address issues caused by the target.
- If "hostile environment" for which you are going to impose discipline make sure the environment ~ and responses ~ are documented.
 - Written reports by a counselor or psychologist, target and parents, school records. Retain all materials so they can be reviewed for a professional opinion. Document your ongoing protection responses.
- Make sure plan to proceed is something the target agrees with.
- Consider possibility of providing "invisible" assistance.
- Help target plan an approach to address emotional trauma.
- Assist parents to assist and support their child.
 - Explain Restorative Justice approach you will take with aggressor.

Discussions with Aggressor(s)/Parents

- The primary objective is to get students to the point of feeling remorse and shame - not anger.
 - Ask about, listen to, and develop a plan to address challenges the aggressor is facing can increase potential of successful resolution.
- Ask questions that can lead to remorse focusing on harmful consequences and damage to reputation.
- Ask the student what actions should be taken to remedy the harm.
- Enlist support of parents.
 - Ask about underlying problems in their child's life.
 - Discuss intervention to ensure their child's success.
 - Ask their opinion on consequences and way to remedy harm.
 - If suspension, seek to ensure it is "profitable."

Evaluate

- After the incident obtain feedback from all parties. Aggregate evaluations at district level to assess patterns and effectiveness of interventions.