

AP 418

Harassment

Background

The Abbotsford School District is committed to fostering an environment within which all individuals are treated with respect. The district considers harassment in general and sexual harassment, in particular, to be violations of generally accepted standards of behaviour and the District's Code of Conduct.

In its efforts to eliminate harassment, the Abbotsford School District will provide a working and learning environment that will encourage respect for and fair treatment of all individuals within the community.

Procedures

1. Definition

- 1.1 Harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome comment or conduct that is known to be, or reasonably known to be considered offensive, threatening, degrading or coercive, thereby creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive work or study environment.
- 1.2 Sexual harassment is further defined as specifically including unwanted and unwelcome sexual attention toward another person, which has an adverse effect on the emotional well-being, work or academic performance of an individual.
- 1.3 Harassment does not include conduct or comments made in good faith in the exercise of supervisory rights and responsibilities.

2. Examples of Harassment

- 2.1 Harassment may occur:
 - between students (e.g. bullying)
 - student to adult
 - adult to student
 - adult to adult (this includes harassing behaviour between teachers, support staff, parents, volunteers, visitors and community members, etc.)
- 2.3 Harassment can include, but is not limited to:
 - persistent teasing or leering
 - repeated jokes or innuendoes
 - false accusations

- verbal or physical abuse (which may also need reporting to the Ministry of Children and Families)
- stalking
- offensive or inappropriate comments, gestures, materials
- unwelcome sexual advances
- use of sexually suggestive or demeaning language, especially when another person indicates that it is offensive
- the promise of reward or threat of reprisal attached to sexual favour

2.4 Bullying is considered to be a significant issue at all age ranges. The Board encourages schools to actively pursue specific anti-bullying strategies within their schools.

2.5 The Abbotsford School District adopts a zero tolerance with respect to bullying. Students who commit acts of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension from attendance at school.

3. Complaint Procedures – Students

3.1 Students deserve to feel safe at school. If a student is being bullied or harassed he/she should take the following steps to try and stop the harassment or prevent it from happening again.

3.1.1 Report all incidents to a person of authority at your school, your parent, or an adult you trust. It is important to tell your parents of any incidents of bullying or harassment that may occur at school, at school functions or on your way to and from school.

3.1.2 If the bully or harasser is an adult from within your school, then it is important to report this immediately to your parents/guardian or an adult you trust outside of school. You and the adult you have told should contact either the principal or the Superintendent of Schools.

3.1.3 It is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment, however, false allegations are a serious matter and can damage a person's reputation so are not acceptable in any way.

3.2 Staff shall ensure that all students are aware of the complaint procedure. This should be put into the student handbook that schools provide to students. (Reference AP 418-1 "Guidelines to Managers and Principals - Student Complaints of Harassment and Bullying")

4. Complaint Procedures - Adults (Note: All school district staff should refer to AP 418-2 Guidelines – Staff Complaints of Harassment and Bullying; Teaching staff should additionally refer to Article E.2 of their Collective Agreement for procedures)

4.1 Adults who believe they are being harassed should take the following steps to stop the harassment and prevent re-occurrences.

- 4.1.1 Whenever possible make your disapproval or unease known to the alleged harasser immediately.
- 4.1.2 If there is more than one incident, keep a written record of dates, times, the nature of the behaviour, and witnesses, if any.
- 4.1.3 If a non-school district employee feels uneasy about approaching the alleged harasser OR, if the incidents do not stop after you have spoken to the alleged harasser, speak to the Principal of the school or the appropriate Deputy/Assistant Superintendent at the School Board Office. Confirm your conversation in a confidential letter. Ensure that the alleged harasser is advised you have taken the above steps. Help with this process is available to parents by calling the Parent Advisors Line at 857-7145.
- 4.1.4 If an employee feels uneasy about approaching the alleged harasser, OR if the incidents do not stop after you have spoken to the alleged harasser, speak to your supervisor and then confirm your conversation in a confidential letter. If your supervisor is the alleged harasser, speak immediately to the Director of Human Resources. Ensure that the alleged harasser is advised you have taken the above steps.
- 4.1.5 If the employee feels it is appropriate, the complaint procedure outlined above can be bypassed and the employee can speak directly with any of the following: Director of Human Resources, Secretary-Treasurer or Superintendent of Schools.
- 4.1.6 Employees should seek the help of an authorized representative of the union when reporting the complaint to the above district representative.

Reference: AP 418-1 Guidelines to Principals – Student Complaints of Harassment and Bullying
AP 418-2 Guidelines – Staff Complaints of Harassment and Bullying
WorkSafeBC's [Toward a respectful workplace: A handbook on preventing and addressing workplace bullying and harassment](#)
[Code of Conduct](#) for all Abbotsford District Schools
[Communicating with Your School](#): Parents and School – Partners in Learning
Focus on Bullying: A Prevention Program for Elementary School Communities (The Ministry of Education, Special Programs Branch, distributes this publication.)

AP 418-1 Guidelines to Managers and Principals – Student Complaints of Harassment and Bullying

Principals should provide a safe haven and access to counseling for the victim of harassment or bullying. Principals/Teachers/Counselors should follow-up to ensure the harassment or bullying has discontinued.

Note: The following information is to be included in the student agendas/handbooks and should be brought to the attention of the students and staff each September.

1. Bullying is against the District Code of Conduct and will be dealt with severely and quickly.
2. Bullying includes inappropriate remarks, jokes, taunting, comments, gestures, sexually suggestive comments or actions that create an uncomfortable or hostile environment.
3. A Bully is someone who:
 - uses power to hurt others or harm their possessions.
 - purposely scares or intimidates others.
 - often hurts the same person repeatedly
 - is sometimes supported by other people who just watch and laugh, instead of helping the person being bullied.

Complaint Procedures – Students

Students deserve to feel safe at school. If a student is being bullied or harassed you should take the following steps to try and stop the harassment or prevent it from happening again.

1. Report all incidents to a person of authority at school, a parent, or a trusted adult. It is important to tell your parents of any incidents of bullying or harassment that may occur at school, at school functions or on the way to and from school.
2. If the bully or harasser is an adult from within the school, then it is important to report this immediately to your parents/guardian or a trusted adult outside of school. The student and the adult the student told should contact either the principal or the Superintendent of Schools.

It is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment, however, false allegations are a serious matter and can damage a person's reputation so are not acceptable in any way.

AP 418-2 Guidelines – Staff Complaints of Harassment and Bullying

Complaint Procedures – Staff

Staff who believe they are being harassed and/or bullied should take the following steps to stop the harassment and prevent re-occurrences.

1. Whenever possible make your disapproval or unease known to the alleged harasser immediately.
2. If there is more than one incident, keep a written record of dates, times, the nature of the behaviour, and witnesses, if any.
3. If an employee feels uneasy about approaching the alleged harasser, OR if the incidents do not stop after you have spoken to the alleged harasser, speak to your manager or supervisor. If your supervisor is the alleged harasser, speak immediately to the Director of Human Resources. If you are comfortable, communicate the process taken to the alleged harasser.
4. The manager will take steps to bring the parties together to resolve the issue. If, after meeting with the manager and the alleged harasser, the issue has not been resolved, provide a written statement of the alleged harassment to either your manager or the Director of Human Resources.
5. Employees should seek the help of an authorized representative of the union when reporting the complaint to the above district representative.

It is important to report all incidents of bullying or harassment; however, false allegations are a serious matter and can damage a person's reputation so are not acceptable in any way.

How and When Investigations Will Be Conducted

Investigations at the school district will be conducted internally. In complex or sensitive situations, an external investigator might be hired.

Investigations will:

- be undertaken promptly and diligently, and be as thorough as necessary, given the circumstances
- be fair and impartial, providing both the complainant and respondent equal treatment in evaluating the allegations
- be sensitive to the interests of all parties involved, and maintain confidentiality
- be focused on finding facts and evidence, including interviews of the complainant, respondent, and any witnesses
- incorporate, where appropriate, any need or request from the complainant or respondent for assistance during the investigation process
- comply with processes outlined in the collective agreement (where applicable).

What Will Be Included

Investigations will include interviews with the individuals involved including any witnesses. The investigator will also review any evidence, such as emails, handwritten notes, photographs, or any other physical evidence.

Roles And Responsibilities

The Director, Human Resources is responsible for ensuring workplace investigation procedures are followed.

Workers are expected to cooperate with investigators and provide any details of incidents they have experienced or witnessed.

The Human Resources Department will conduct investigations and provide a written report with conclusions to the Secretary Treasurer or the Assistant Superintendent.

If external investigators are hired, they will conduct investigations and provide a written report with conclusions to the Director, Human Resources.

Follow-Up

The employee who has made a complaint of Bullying and Harassment will be advised of the investigation findings by the Director, Human Resources.

Following an investigation, the Manager, Organizational Health and Safety may review and revise workplace procedures to prevent any future bullying and harassment incidents in the workplace. Appropriate corrective actions will be taken within a reasonable time frame.

In appropriate circumstances, workers may be referred to the employee assistance program or be encouraged to seek medical advice.

Record-Keeping Requirements

The school district expects that workers will keep written accounts of incidents to submit with any complaints. The school district will keep a written record of investigations, including the findings.

Annual Review

These procedures will be reviewed annually. New workers will be provided with a copy as part of new worker orientation and copies will be available at <http://hr.the.school.district.bc.ca/>

Training And Education

The school district will ensure workers are informed of these procedures and as well as of proactive steps to help prevent the occurrence of workplace harassment and bullying. Formal respectful workplace training will continue to be offered and supervisors will receive training to recognize, respond to and report incidents/complaints of harassment and bullying.