Combatting Hate in Our Schools:
A Guide for Families and Students

Hate has no place in our schools.

Discriminatory harassment and bullying are prohibited in Massachusetts schools.
We must all work together to stand up against all forms of hate, bias, and prejudice.

Bullying and **harassment** may include verbal statements, social media posts, graffiti, violence, or threatening physical conduct, **and can happen at school, at school – related events** (such as on school buses, in school sports), **or on social media/online.**

Bullying is repeated, targeted behavior that harms a student or disrupts a school environment.

Harrasment includes any behavior that creates or helps to create an intimidating or hostile environment for a student because of their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Schools Must Act Under the Law

- Schools must implement bullying prevention curriculum and policies to combat both bullying and harassment. Schools must also work to create a school climate where all students feel safe, supported, and included.
- School principals must promptly investigate as soon as they learn of a hate incident.
- Schools must take steps to stop bullying or harassment, prevent it from happening again, and ensure the safety of impacted students.

If My Child Has Bullied or Harrased Others?

Talk with them and explore reasons for their behavior. Encourage them to understand how their actions hurt someone. Explain your expectations that they respect others. Reach out to the school for support for you and for your child.

If My Child Is Being Bullied or Harrased?

- **Be There:** Tell your child, "this is not your fault" and "you are not alone." Work together to make a plan.
- **Document:** Keep track of the details about what happened.
- **Know Your Child's Rights:** Look to your school district's website and student handbook to find your district's specific bullying prevention and intervention plan and antidiscrimination policy.
- **Report Incidents to the School:** You may ask the school to investigate. If the school found bullying or harassment did occur, ask what steps the school is taking to restore safety and prevent future incidents.
- **Ask for a Safety Plan:** If your child is not feeling safe, talk with the school about creating a safety plan.
- File a Civil Rights Complaint with the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office.

Think about how **YOU** can help make your child's school a safe and supportive place for everyone. Learn about any programming or training offered by your school or district on this topic – or help start these discussions.

What Can I Do As A Parent or Guardian...

For more information, legal guidance for schools, and resource list, see the AG's Guidance to Schools on Hate and Bias Incidents.

Combatting Hate in Our Schools:
What Students Should Know

As a student, you have a right to a safe and supportive school environment where you are not bullied, harassed or made to feel less about yourself for who you are, including because of your race, gender, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Whether you experience hate at school or outside of school, your school may be able to help, and in some cases, schools are legally required to take action to make sure you are supported.

If Someone Is Hateful Toward You

- **Talk to a Family Member or Trusted Adult at School:** You are not alone, and you have the right to ask for help. Tell someone you trust about your experience. If you do not want to tell your family, you can still talk to a trusted adult at school who can help you figure out what to do next. Ask them to help you make a plan to handle the situation.
- **Report** your experience to your school and ask about the bullying and harassment policies. You may also choose to File a Civil Rights Complaint with the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office.

If You See Hate

- **Stand Up:** If you see someone teasing, humiliating, or putting down someone else – whether it be online, at school, or outside of school – call it out if you feel safe to do so.
- **Be There:** Be supportive and kind to your classmate who is being harassed or bullied. Ask them if you can help them talk to a trusted adult about their experience.
- **Report** the situation to the principal or a trusted adult at your school. You may also File a Civil Rights Complaint with the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office.

You Have A Role To Play In Preventing Hate

- **Be a Positive Example:** You are a key part of your school community. Think about how you can help make your school a safe, supportive environment where people who are different from each other are affirmed and included. Every student has a role to play in preventing bullying and harassment and in supporting their classmates.
- **Learn About Hate:** Educate yourself about hate, bias, and prejudice; how hate can be harmful; and how you can make a difference. Learn about any programming or training offered by your school or district about these issues – or look into how you can help make conversations or trainings on this topic happen in your district.