Updated 8/30/2024
Reviewed 6/13/2025

COUNCIL OAK MONTESSORI SCHOOL

COMS BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION / ANTI-DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT POLICY

The Council Oak Montessori School (COMS) Bullying Prevention and Intervention / Anti-Discrimination & Harassment Policy is modeled on the Illinois Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and the Racism-Free Schools Law, Illinois Department of Education, .

COMS finds that all students learn best in a safe, civil, and healthy school environment. The physical, psychological and emotional harm caused by acts of bullying interferes with a safe, civil and healthy learning environment. Bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. (105 ILCS 5/27 - 23.7) (105 ILCS 5/2-3.196)

Bullying, discrimination and/or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in all school districts, charter schools, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools, including Council Oak Montessori School.

Bullying, discrimination and/or harassment is contrary to State Law and the policies of Council Oak Montessori School. No student shall be subject to bullying:
(1) during any school-sponsored education program or activity;
(2) while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
(3) through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment;
(4) through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a nonschool-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school.
Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

A. Definitions:

Bullying including “cyber-bullying”, means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s or students’ person or property.
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s or students’ physical mental health.
3. Substantially interfering with the student’s or students’ academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student’s or students’ ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyber-bullying Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Discrimination and harassment As defined by the Illinois State Board of Education, discrimination and harassment based on race, color or national origin is conduct that prevents students from participating in school activities in an inclusive environment. This definition is based on the requirements and expectations of the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

Discrimination and harassment is contrary to State Law and the policies of Council Oak Montessori School. No student shall be subject to:

(1) Racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes
(2) Discrimination based on a student's skin color, physical features, or style of dress
(3) Discrimination based on a student's accent, name, or limited English proficiency
(4) Unwelcome conduct that creates a hostile environment
(5) Conduct that limits or denies a student's ability to participate in school

Discrimination and harassment may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of discrimination or harassment. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Restorative Measures A continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school, and (vii) increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

School Personnel means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school, including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

B. Reporting Process:

Students, parents, and school personnel are encouraged to immediately report an act of bullying, discrimination or harassment to any administrator, and the school shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period. Additionally, the school will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying, discrimination or harassment was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying, discrimination or harassment.

Alternatively, reports may be made orally or in writing to the report manager:
Name: Lila Jokanovic
Title: Executive Director / Head of School
Phone Number: 708-926-9720
E-mail Address: Lila.Jokanovic@counciloakmontessori.org
Address:2521 Grove Street, Blue Island, IL 60406

Anonymous reports are accepted by calling the contact listed above and specifically indicating that you would like to remain anonymous. However, formal disciplinary action cannot be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

C. Response to Reports of Bullying, Discrimination or Harassment:

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, discrimination or harassment, Council Oak Montessori School will investigate whether such reported act of bullying, discrimination or harassment is within the permissible scope of its jurisdiction.

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying, discrimination or harassment will be notified of such, along with threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of the bullying, within 24 hours after the school's administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident. As appropriate, the school will discuss social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services. The school shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period.

Further, the administrator or report manager will promptly investigate and address the report of bullying, discrimination or harassment by doing the following: 1. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within ten school days after the date of the report of the incident of bullying was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying, discrimination or harassment.

2. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying, discrimination or harassment prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

3. Notifying the principal or school administrator or his or her designee of the report of the incident as soon as possible after the report is received.

4. Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing the parents and guardians of the students who are parties of the investigation information about the investigation and provide an

opportunity to meet with the Head of School, school administrator, or their designee to discuss the investigation, its findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, discrimination or harassment.

The Head of School, school administrator or their designee may implement interventions to address reports of bullying, discrimination or harassment. This includes, but is not limited to, district social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, district psychological services, and community-based services. Additionally, COMS shall provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Legal recourse is available through the Department of Human Rights and through federal agencies if a school district, charter school, or nonpublic, nonsectarian elementary or secondary school fails to take corrective action by contacting the Department of Human Rights.

Address: 555 W Monroe St Ste 700, Chicago, IL 60661
Phone: (312) 814-6200
https://dhr.illinois.gov/about-us/contact-idhr-form.html

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying, discrimination or harassment is prohibited. Such reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying, discrimination and harassment for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences. No individual will be subject to consequences for making a good-faith report of bullying, discrimination or harassment. However, falsely accusing another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences.

Policy Evaluation:

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians. Furthermore, this policy is consistent with the other policies of Council Oak Montessori School.

This policy is posted on the school's website, included in the Parent / Guardian and Employee handbooks. The policy is provided periodically through the school year to students and faculty, and is distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when they are hired. It is posted where other policies, rules and standards of conduct are posted in the school.

COMS shall conduct a review and re-evaluation of this policy every two years to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy and shall make any necessary and appropriate revisions. As a part of this process, COMS shall review various factors including, but not limited to:

1) The frequency of victimization;
2) Student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school;
3) Identification of areas of a school where incidents as described in this policy occur;
4) The types of bullying, discrimination or harassment utilized;
5) Bystander intervention or participation.

COMS may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in its policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the school's website - www.counciloakmontessori.org. After updating, the policy must be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education no later than September 30th of each year.

Reporting of Data:

This Section shall not be interpreted to prevent a victim from seeking redress under any other available civil or criminal law. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, COMS shall collect, maintain, and submit to the State Board of Education non-identifiable data regarding verified allegations of bullying within the school. This data will be submitted in an annual report due to the State Board of Education no later than August 15 of each year starting with the 2024-2025 school year through the 2030-2031 school year. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules for the submission of data that includes, but is not limited to: (i) a record of each verified allegation of bullying and action taken; and (ii) whether the instance of bullying was based on \actual or perceived characteristics identified in subsection (a) and, if so, lists the relevant characteristics. The rules for the submission of data shall be consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, including, but not limited to, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and the Illinois School Student Records Act, which shall include, without limitation, a record of each complaint and action taken. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules regarding the notification of school districts, charter schools, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools that fail to comply with the requirements of this subsection. (g) Upon the request of a parent or legal guardian of a child enrolled in a school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school within this State, the State Board of Education must provide non-identifiable data on the number of bullying allegations and incidents in a given year in the school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school to the requesting parent or legal guardian. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules regarding (i) the handling of such data, (ii) maintaining the privacy of the students and families involved, and (iii) best practices for sharing numerical data with parents and legal guardians.

The policy does not impair or otherwise diminish the rights of unionized employees under federal law, State law, or a collective bargaining agreement to request an exclusive bargaining representative to be present during investigator interviews, nor does the policy diminish any rights available under the applicable negotiated collective bargaining agreement, including, but not limited to, the grievance procedure.

(See Appendix for More Information on the Bullying Prevention Policy and the Anti-Racism in Schools Law)

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