

# DCYOP BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

## Objectives and Purpose

A key responsibility of DC Youth Orchestra Program (DCYOP) is to provide services in a respectful and positive environment. Acts of bullying, harassment and intimidation are an attack on core DCYOP values. Thus, to facilitate our mission, DCYOP, in consultation with youth, families and staff, has established this comprehensive bullying prevention policy. This policy protects the dignity and safety of the DCYOP community and describes DCYOP's prevention strategies to identify and prevent incidents by connecting youth to necessary services. DCYOP will promptly report and investigate all incidents of bullying, harassment and intimidation and provide appropriate remedies for victims of an incident.

This policy serves as DCYOP's bullying prevention plan.

## Definitions

DCYOP defines bullying as any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

1. May be based on a youth's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, place of residence or business, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a youth's association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and
2. Can reasonably be predicted to:
  - a. Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to their person or property;
  - b. Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth's physical or mental health;
  - c. Substantially interfere with the youth's academic performance or attendance; or
  - d. Substantially interfere with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by an agency, educational institution, or grantee.

## **Prohibition against Bullying**

Acts of bullying, including cyberbullying, whether by youth, volunteers or staff, are prohibited:

- A. At Discover Music program physical and virtual sites and
- B. At any school sponsored activity or event related to Discover Music

Retaliation against a youth, volunteer or staff member who reports bullying, provides information about an act of bullying, or witnesses an act of bullying is also prohibited.

## Policy Development and Resource Mapping

### Engaging the Community

#### Policy Writing

DCYOP will create and update its policy with feedback from the community, as follows:

Prior to adopting, or making any changes to the policy, DCYOP will make a draft copy of the proposed changes available to the public at least two weeks before the policy is adopted or changes to the policy are finalized and shall, in that time period, provide the public with the ability to submit feedback on the changes in the form of questions, comments and recommendations which DCYOP must be taken into consideration.

#### Publication and Contact Information

This policy will be made available on DCYOP's website. Additionally, this policy will be included in all publications of agency rules, regulations, and solicitations and agreements for contracts and grants.

All questions, comments and concerns about the bullying policy and DCYOP prevention efforts should be able to be directed to [evan@dcyop.org](mailto:evan@dcyop.org).

#### Prevention Leadership

Responsibility for the implementation and execution of this policy is vested with Program and Artistic Director Evan Ross Solomon, who shall have responsibility for:

1. Receiving and recording incidents of bullying;
2. Responding to incidents of bullying and addressing the needs of victims and bullies;
3. Managing the data collaboration and collection process in cooperation with the District citywide prevention coordinator;
4. Coordinating community engagement efforts and;
5. Regularly reviewing and updating the policy and any procedures developed as part of it.

If the Program and Artistic Director chooses to delegate responsibility for any of these areas, all such decisions will be recorded to ensure that there are clear lines of responsibility for each prevention activity.

### Primary Prevention Strategies

#### Create Positive Agency Atmosphere

DCYOP will establish a culture of respect and safety. As part of this commitment, DCYOP will incorporate bullying prevention messages and efforts into all aspects of its operations that serve youth or that support youth serving operations.

Staff must be committed to creating a positive and respectful environment.

#### Community Education

Safe, positive environments are best supported by an active partnership between DCYOP and the community. Where possible DCYOP will coordinate education efforts with other District agencies to effect citywide community education and awareness.

### Code of Conduct

DCYOP expects youth to behave in a way that supports DCYOP's objective to provide a safe and welcoming environment for other youth, DCYOP staff, and community members. Youth who are part of the DCYOP community are expected to:

1. Treat all members of the DCYOP community with respect;
2. Respect the property of DCYOP, its staff, and other youth connected to DCYOP;
3. Respond appropriately to instructions from DCYOP staff.

See also, DCYOP's written code of conduct for students.

### Training and Professional Development

#### Training

DCYOP will provide to all personnel whose duties consistently bring them into contact with youth by design or incident training, as well as the procedures for responding to and reporting an incident of bullying. Staff will also learn to engage with each other and youth reflectively to build an agency-wide atmosphere of respect. These training efforts will be assisted, at DCYOP request, by the citywide coordinator.

Staff will receive training on how to provide immediate support for victims and witnesses during or after an incident and may obtain District citywide coordinator support to provide this training. This additional training will be provided to DCYOP staff by the opening of the District academic school year following the publication of this policy.

Staff tasked with carrying out investigations into an incident of bullying as described in "Investigating Incidents of Bullying" will receive additional training on how to carry out these investigations.

The Program and Artistic Director will have the appropriate background checks needed to ensure they are allowed to work with children.

#### Ongoing Professional Development

DCYOP recognizes that in addition to training, staff members require ongoing professional development to build the tools and knowledge needed to prevent, identify, and respond to incidents of bullying. Therefore, DCYOP will ensure that staff has ongoing access to professional development opportunities that include information on:

1. The specific locations and dynamics of youth and bullying interactions at DCYOP;
2. Age and developmentally appropriate strategies for identifying, preventing, and responding constructively to incidents of bullying;
3. Specific populations that may be particularly at-risk in the DCYOP environment;
4. Internet safety and cyberbullying issues;
5. The components and delivery of the agency's prevention curriculum.

## Curriculum

DCYOP will implement a comprehensive bullying prevention curriculum, the components of which will be integrated into all youth related DCYOP activities. This curriculum will teach youth<sup>1</sup>:

1. Self-regulation (controlling impulses; focusing, sustaining and shifting attention; listening to and remembering information; empathy training);
2. Perspective-taking (appreciating similarities and differences; recognizing and identifying feelings of others; understanding that feelings can change and are complex);
3. Emotion management (recognizing and identifying one's own feelings; learning strategies for calming down strong emotions; managing stress/anxiety);
4. Problem-solving (learning a process for solving problems; goal setting);
5. Communication skills (being assertive; being respectful; negotiating and compromising);
6. Friendship skills (cooperation, including others, joining in with others).

The District citywide coordinator may be utilized to support the development of this curriculum. This curriculum will align with the OSSE Health Education Standards.

Development and integration of this curriculum into DCYOP's youth serving activities will be completed by the opening of the District academic school year after the adoption of this policy.

## Data Collection

### Data Collaboration

Prior to each academic year, DCYOP, in collaboration with citywide coordinator will determine what data will most productively assist DCYOP in supporting an effective DCYOP-wide bullying prevention policy. Based on this feedback, DCYOP and the citywide coordinator will determine a set of service and incident metrics to be collected by DCYOP. Efforts will be made to ensure consistent metrics and research products across years and to the extent possible, across agencies.

### Incident Database

DCYOP will submit to the citywide coordinator a dataset of all incident and service measures designated in this policy. This data will not include any identifying information about the bully, victim, or witnesses. The Program and Artistic Director will be responsible for ensuring the citywide coordinator has accurate information on incident and service measures. Given the sensitive nature of information contained in this database, only the Program and Artistic Director will have access to individualizing information in the database.

### Incident Measures

DCYOP will collect the following pieces of information about reported incidents of bullying:

1. Name(s) of the victim, bully, and any witnesses
  - a. Reliable contact information for the victim, bully and any witnesses
2. Relevant attributes about the victim, bully and any witnesses including:

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<sup>1</sup> From "Jones, Lisa, Mia Doces, Susan Swearer, and Anne Collier. *Implementing Bullying Prevention Programs in Schools: A How-To Guide*. Born This Way Foundation & the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2012."

- a. Any prior incidents involving either the victim or bully
  - b. Connection of the victim, bully, and any witnesses to the incident (i.e. are they students, staff, volunteers, etc.)
- 3. The nature of the bullying incident
  - a. Where the incident took place
  - b. What time the incident took place
  - c. What type(s) of bullying it was (physical, verbal, cyber, relational, etc.?)
  - d. What factors drove the incident of bullying (social status, personal appearance, race, sexual orientation, etc.)
  - e. What adult supervision was in place
  - f. Context of the incident

DCYOP will only attempt to collect this information insofar as it does not jeopardize the safety of the victim and witness(es) and allows non-staff reports of bullying to be made anonymously.

### Reporting to the Citywide Coordinator

DCYOP will provide a report of bullying prevention and incident metrics to the citywide coordinator. The DCYOP report will include all service and incident measures included in this policy.

DCYOP will make a copy of the report prepared for the Mayor by the citywide coordinator available online at the agency's website. Copies of the report will also be made available to the community at DCYOP's headquarters.

DCYOP will take every possible measure to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all parties in an incident. To ensure confidentiality, reports provided to outside agencies will not include identifying information about the parties involved in an incident, and will report data only in the aggregate.

## Secondary Prevention Strategies

### Identifying At-Risk Groups

All staff at DCYOP will actively seek out youth who are at risk of being victims or bullies to proactively remedy incidents of bullying before they occur. In determining whether a youth is at risk of being a victim of aggression, staff will consider the following risk factors:

- 1. Individual factors
  - a. Cautious, sensitive, insecure personality
  - b. Difficulty asserting themselves among peers
  - c. Physical weakness, particularly in boys
- 2. Parental factors
  - a. Possible over-protective parents
- 3. Peer risk factors
  - a. Lack of close friends.

Risk factors for being a bully in an incident include:

- 1. Individual factors
  - a. Impulsive, hot-headed, dominant personality lacking empathy
  - b. Difficulty conforming to rules and low frustration tolerance
  - c. Positive attitudes toward violence

- d. Gradually decreasing interest in school or academic achievement
- 2. Parental factors
  - a. Lack of parental warmth and involvement
  - b. Overly-permissive or excessively harsh discipline/physical punishment by parents
  - c. Lack of parental supervision
- 3. Peer risk factors
  - a. Friends/peers with positive attitudes towards violence
  - b. Exposure to models of bullying

#### **Referral to Secondary Service for At-Risk Youth**

DCYOP staff who believe that a youth is at risk of being a victim or bully will send the youth to the prevention specialist who will refer them to the appropriate services. Resources will be given directly to the youth. If outside agencies are contacted, the youth's and/or parent or guardian's written consent must first be obtained.

Referral to service as part of a secondary prevention measure is not a disciplinary action and will never be noted on a youth's record as such. At the time of a referral prevention specialist with assent from the youth will inform the youth's parents or guardian about referring youth to services, reasons they are referring youth, the type of service they are referring the youth.

#### **Secondary Services for At-Risk Youth**

Secondary services provided to at-risk youth are not designed to punish and will not be reported on DCYOP records as such. Rather, the objective of secondary services is to support at-risk youth and address risk behaviors before they become serious safety or disciplinary issues. To this end, remedial measures will be tailored to the youth receiving them to build on youth strengths while addressing skills and behavior deficits.

When considering what remedial services should be offered to a youth, the prevention specialist will take into account: life skill competencies and deficiencies, extracurricular and academic strengths and weaknesses, available peer and home support networks, and personal traits. Based on these attributes and information from resource mapping, the prevention specialist will determine the appropriate remedial services. If DCYOP does not have access to services appropriate to a youth's needs, they will refer the youth to an outside agency who can address these needs rather than substituting other services that DCYOP can provide.

Resources will be given directly to youth. If outside agencies are contacted, the youth's and/or parent or guardian's written consent will first be obtained. In all cases of remedial action, DCYOP will take all possible steps to actively involve the youth's parents or guardians in the skill-building process, as long as the youth's written assent is obtained.

Examples of remedial services DCYOP will provide directly or refer a youth to include but are not limited to: peer support groups, alternative educational or institutional placement, youth treatment, therapy or

counseling, closely monitored behavioral management plans, parent conferences or service learning experiences. Services will be provided to an at-risk youth no more than one month after such a determination is made by the prevention specialist.

## Tertiary Prevention Strategies

### Reporting Incidents of Bullying or Retaliation

DCYOP expects all staff members and volunteers to report incidents of bullying or retaliation they witness or are made aware of. Staff members should immediately report all such incidents to the Program and Artistic Director who will create a written report of a bullying incident and include the incident in DCYOP reports of bullying incidents to the citywide coordinator.

Youth, parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged by DCYOP to report any incidents of bullying that they witness or become aware of. Reports of bullying may be made to [evan@DCYOP.org](mailto:evan@DCYOP.org); PO Box 56417, Washington, DC 20040; or through an anonymous dropbox at 7010 Piney Branch Road NW, Washington, DC 20012.

Reports of bullying by youth, parents, guardians and community members may be made anonymously, but disciplinary action cannot be taken by DCYOP solely on the basis of an anonymous report, though such a report may trigger an investigation that will provide actionable information. All oral reports received as part of this process will be transcribed into writing and included in DCYOP's bullying database.

### Investigating Incidents of Bullying

Prior to the investigation of an incident, the Lead Teacher will take steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim referenced in a reported bullying incident. These steps will be designed to restore a sense of safety to the victim and to protect them from further incidents if necessary. Examples of such steps taken include designating a staff member to serve as that alleged victim's "safe" person, altering the alleged bully/bullies' seating or schedule to reduce access to the alleged victim, or creating a safety plan in consultation with the alleged victim. Once an investigation is concluded, further steps will be taken as needed to assure the continued safety of the victim from additional incidents of bullying or retaliation.

Once a report of bullying has been received by an agency, the following groups will be notified as needed by the prevention specialist, so long as, in the absence of legal imperative, the parent or guardian's written consent is obtained prior to notification.

Parents and guardians: DCYOP will notify the parents or guardians of victims, bullies, and if appropriate, witnesses to an incident of bullying behavior about the nature of the incident and the procedures and steps in place for responding to it. The prevention specialist will determine if parents or guardians should be informed prior to or after the investigation of an incident.

Schools: DCYOP will notify the schools of all victims and bullies in an incident of bullying to ensure that youth are not victimized across agencies and that comprehensive service and protection can be provided to bullies and victims.

Law enforcement agencies: If DCYOP determines that the reported incident may involve criminal activity or the basis for criminal charges, information about the incident must be

conveyed to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. As part of making this determination the prevention specialist may wish to consult with either a law enforcement officer or legal counsel. Law enforcement shall only be contacted if all other available remedies have been exhausted.

DCYOP will notify these groups of incidents of bullying only to the extent allowed by law. Notification will be undertaken solely to ensure that services are provided to victims and bullies and to protect victims from further or sustained victimization. DCYOP will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of those who report bullying incidents.

The Program and Artistic Director is responsible for investigating reports of bullying and can be reached at [evan@DCYOP.org](mailto:evan@DCYOP.org). An investigation of an incident will be initiated no more than one day after the prevention specialist receives a report of bullying and will conclude no later than 30 days after the receipt of such a report. As part of the investigation the prevention specialist will interview any involved or relevant parties including alleged victims, bullies, witnesses, staff, parents or guardians.

The prevention specialist will provide confidentiality as far as possible to relevant parties as part of the investigation and inform all relevant parties that retaliation for reporting acts of bullying is prohibited. Written records of the investigation process should be maintained and may be included in the prevention database to generate a more accurate picture of bullying behaviors at DCYOP. Where necessary, provisions will be made to include the advice of legal counsel.

In investigating an incident of bullying, the prevention specialist will seek to ensure that the reported incident is one of victimization, a sign of bullying, rather than of conflict. Thus, when investigating a reported incident the prevention specialist will attempt to determine, through interviewing the victim, what mechanisms the victim had and has access to for halting the incident that occurred, and preventing future such instances. If the victim reports a few or no mechanisms for ending the incident or constructively dealing with future instances, that information will serve as compelling, though not conclusive evidence that the reported incident was an incident of bullying.

The prevention specialist is charged with making determinations as to whether a reported incident constitutes a case of bullying. These determinations will be made in consideration of the totality of the facts and the circumstances surrounding the incident. If the prevention specialist determines that an incident of bullying has occurred, they should take the response steps enumerated in DCYOP's tertiary prevention plan to prevent the recurrence of an incident and restore the safety of a victim.

If the prevention specialist determines that additional support is needed to conduct a thorough and equitable investigation, they will contact the citywide prevention coordinator.

## Sanctions and Remedies for Bullying

### Sanctions

DCYOP recognizes that for sanctions to be an effective component of a bullying prevention plan, they must be applied consistently, fairly, and equitably. To this end, DCYOP shall ensure that staff follow these guidelines as closely as possible, while allowing for flexibility to adapt sanctions to individual contexts. Furthermore, to ensure equitability in applying sanctions, measures will be applied on a graduated basis determined by the nature of the offense, the disciplinary history of the youth involved, and the age and developmental status of the youth involved. Responses to incidents of bullying may include, but are not limited to:

- Reprimand
- Deprivation of DCYOP privileges
- Bans on participating in optional DCYOP activities
- Deprivation of DCYOP services
- Ban or suspension from DCYOP facilities

Sanctions will be applied within one day of the determination that an incident of bullying has occurred, unless an appeal of the incident by the bully has been received in that time as described in the Appeals section of this policy. To ensure that single incidents of bullying do not become recurring problems, DCYOP will always refer victims and bullies involved in an incident to services in addition to imposing sanctions on bullies.

DCYOP does not endorse the use of punitive strategies associated with “zero-tolerance” policies when applying sanctions to an incident of bullying.

DCYOP shall communicate to youth in contact with DCYOP, the consequences that youth can expect for participating in bullying behavior.

### Referral to Services

DCYOP response to an active incident of bullying will always include the referral of both victim(s) and bully/bullies to remedial services. If an investigation determines that a youth was involved in an incident of bullying as a bully, victim, or witness the prevention specialist will refer them to the appropriate services.

At the time of a referral the prevention specialist will inform the youth’s parents or guardian about referring the youth to services with the youth’s assent if they have not already been informed as part of the investigation and determination process. The prevention specialist will also explain the reasons they are referring a youth, the type of service they are referring the youth to and the reason they think that particular service(s) will meet the youth’s needs. Resources will be given directly to the youth. If outside agencies are contacted, the youth’s and/or parent or guardian’s written consent must first be obtained. If parents or guardians do not consent to contact outside services than such services will only be applied to bullies in conjunction with any sanctions applied.

## Services for Bullies, Victims and Witnesses

Remedial services to which youth are referred are not designed to be punitive and will never be noted on a youth's DCYOP records as such.

Remedial services provided to the bully are designed to correct the thinking patterns, behaviors, and skill deficiencies that led to the incident, turning a bullying incident into a teachable moment.

Remedial services provided to the victim and witnesses are designed to restore youths' sense of safety and to empower them to address bullying incidents in a constructive and non-violent manner.

Remedial services are designed to help youth build the skills to participate safely and constructively in DCYOP and will be tailored to youth based on: life skill competencies and deficiencies, extracurricular and academic strengths and weaknesses, available peer and home support networks, mental and behavioral health concerns, and personal traits. Based on these attributes and information from resource mapping indicating what DCYOP resources are best suited to address remedy these deficiencies, the prevention specialist will determine the appropriate remedial services. Services will be provided to youth no later than one month after an incident of bullying is confirmed by the prevention specialist.

## Rewards for Third Party Prevention

DCYOP encourages third party reporting of bullying and constructive intervention in incidents and recognizes that it may take considerable courage for a youth to intervene in an act of bullying in a way that does not exacerbate the situation. Therefore, DCYOP will recognize and reward youth who make a positive contribution to DCYOP climate by intervening in an act of bullying. Examples of such rewards include, but are not limited to praise, granting of special or additional privileges at DCYOP, or rewards. Provided public recognition will not create harms for the youth, rewards may be provided in a public forum to serve as a positive example and encourage to other youth who might be encouraged to intervene in a bullying incident and to further promote a positive agency atmosphere.

## Appeals

Parties dissatisfied by the outcome of a bullying investigation may appeal the determination of the prevention specialist to the DCYOP Program and Artistic Director. This appeal should be submitted no later than 30 days after the initial determination. Upon receipt of an appeal, the DCYOP director must conduct a secondary investigation within 30 days of the receipt of an appeal. This 30-day period may be extended by up to an additional 15 days if the DCYOP director sets forth in writing the reasons why more time is needed to conduct an investigation. Additionally, upon the receipt of an appeal, the DCYOP director must inform the party making the submission of their ability to seek additional redress under the DC Human Rights Act.