

# THRESHOLDS

## Policy and Procedure

### Thresholds School Anti-Bullying

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<b>Policy Oversight</b>	<b>Vice President, Clinical Operations &amp; Youth Services</b>

## Policy Content

This Policy contains:

- Bullying Report Process
- Response to Reports of Bullying
- Policy Evaluation Process

## Policy Statement

The Thresholds School is committed to a safe and civil educational environment free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, and cyber-bullying for all students, employees, volunteers, and patrons. This Bullying Prevention Policy is created pursuant to and is in compliance with Section 27-23.7 of the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7). Thresholds School serves a unique population of students with disabilities and, therefore, the policy set forth herein is tailored to address the needs of Thresholds School's student population. Bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students which interferes with a safe, civil, and healthy learning environment. Additionally, bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping, or dropping out of school, fighting, use of drugs/alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Bullying 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 at Thresholds School. No student shall be subjected 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, 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; or
- 4) Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the School if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the education process or orderly operation of the School. This item (4) applies only in cases in which the School administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does **not** require the School to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

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 under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

## Definitions

**“Bullying”**, includes cyber-bullying, and is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed towards a student or students that have or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a 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”** under this Policy is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation of 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 the posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Policy. “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 per this Policy.

This Policy aligns with the other policies of the Board and is not intended to prohibit expression of religion, philosophical, or political views, provided that the expression does not substantially disrupt the education environment. Many behaviors that do not rise to the level of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may still be prohibited by other school policies or building, classroom, or program rules. It is a requirement that a school’s anti-bullying policy or implementing procedures shall include a process to investigate whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the School’s jurisdiction and shall require that the School provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the School and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

**“Restorative Measures”** means 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 the School, including without limitation school administrators, teachers, school service providers (e.g., school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and/or security guards.

## **Procedure**

### **Bullying Report Process**

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and the policies of Thresholds School.

Anyone, including staff members and parents/guardians, having knowledge of any incident(s) considered to be acts of bullying as defined in this Policy are asked to

promptly report the bullying to Principal Tom Moore. A report may be made by phone, in person, by email, or in writing to the individual named below who is responsible for receiving such reports. Anonymous reports may also be made in writing and provided to the address below, however, this shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Tom Moore, Principal  
Thresholds School  
4219 N Lincoln Ave Chicago, IL 60618  
[Tom.Moore@thresholds.org](mailto:Tom.Moore@thresholds.org)  
773-537-3280

### **Response to Reports of Bullying**

Anyone may report complaints of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Such complaints must be appropriately investigated and handled consistent with due process requirements. All stakeholders are encouraged to promptly report any incidents of intimidation, harassment, or bullying. Complaints may be submitted anonymously using the School complaint box, that is checked weekly by the Principal.

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, Thresholds School will investigate whether such reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of its jurisdiction pursuant to this Policy.

Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, as applicable to Thresholds School, and the policies of Thresholds School, the parents/guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying will be notified of such, along with threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, within 24 hours after the School's administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident. As appropriate, the above-named Administrator/Staff shall also discuss the need for interventions and availability of services, which may include social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, including community-based services, and restorative measures. Thresholds School shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent/guardian, utilizing all contact information the School has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the School within a 24-hour period.

Thresholds School services a unique population of students aged 16 to 21 with severe mental illness, and significant trauma history. Due to the nature of this population served by Thresholds School and the possibility that certain acts may be manifestations of a student's mental illness or trauma history rather than an intentional act of bullying, as part of determining whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the School's jurisdiction, each reported instance of bullying will be reviewed and assessed for the need to investigate on a case-by-case basis and as determined to be appropriate by Thresholds School's Principal.

Thresholds School will fully implement the anti-bullying provisions of this Policy to protect complainant(s) and witness(es). If determined to be appropriate for investigation

and within the School's jurisdiction, Thresholds School will comply with the following procedure for promptly investigating and addressing the report(s) of bullying:

- Thresholds School will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within ten (10) school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.
- Any reports of bullying will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the need to investigate the reported claim.
- The Principal will involve appropriate school support personnel and other employees with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
- As soon as possible after a report is received, the Principal, or their designee, will be notified of the report of the incident(s) of bullying.
- This Policy is consistent with federal and state laws, as applicable to Thresholds School, and the policies governing student privacy rights and confidentiality, parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may be provided relevant information regarding the investigation, as deemed appropriate by the Principal, or their designee, and an opportunity to meet with the Principal, or their designee, to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, as deemed appropriate. Efforts will be made to increase the confidence and trust of the person making the complaint. Student complainants and witnesses may have a parent/guardian or trusted adult with them, if requested, during any district-initiated investigatory activities.

Thresholds School may implement interventions to address reports of bullying. Interventions that can be taken to address the incident of bullying may include but are not limited to school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services. Any student who is determined, after an investigation, to have engaged in an intentional act of bullying will be subject to disciplinary consequences as deemed appropriate and consistent with the School's disciplinary policies, and/or the disciplinary policies of the student's referring school district, as applicable and deemed appropriate. Thresholds School is a nonpublic, therapeutic school and an agent of Illinois placing school districts, as such, Thresholds School may share information regarding incidents of bullying with the referring school district(s) of those students involved in a bullying incident, and an individualized education program ("IEP") meeting may be convened to discuss the impact, if any, on the student's current educational program, placement, supports and services. Additional services that are available within the referring school district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs, should be discussed directly with the student's referring school district by the parent/guardian.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying per this Policy is in violation of this Policy and strictly prohibited. Such reprisal or retaliation will be treated

as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences and anyone engaging in retaliation or reprisal against any person who reports an act of bullying may face consequences and appropriate remedial action as deemed necessary by Thresholds School and consistent with the School's disciplinary policies. No person will be subject to consequences for making a good-faith report of bullying. For any person found to have intimidated, harassed, bullied, or falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying, any combination of the following consequences and restorative actions may apply:

- 72-Hour Consequence and no extra privileges for a 72-hour period.
- Allowance is withheld for the week the consequence was issued.
- No non-essential shopping outings.
- No recreational activities at residences.
- Repayment of stolen/destroyed item(s).
- Possible cafeteria restriction/bagged lunch for duration of consequence.
- Student engagement in a Life Space Interview (LSI); a process by which the employee supports the student to identify triggers to their behavior, identify associated feelings and behaviors, and explore alternative behaviors.
- The student must write a full page, one side, single space apology letter explaining how their bullying behavior affected the other person(s).
- The student will be separated from the general population for a minimum of one day, up to as many days as it takes for the student to complete the assignment adequately.
- Employees will offer the opportunity for the students to participate in mediation.
- The student will not be allowed access to a computer during the consequence other than to type their apology letter.
- The student must remain awake and work on their apology letter during the consequence time. If the student is struggling to engage in and complete the assignment, employees will continue to work with them.
- If the alleged bullying or harassment occurred via text, phone message, or social media, all involved parties must allow Thresholds employees access to their phone or electronic device to investigate the allegation.

### **Policy Evaluation Process**

Please also note the following related to the development, notification and publication, and evaluation of this Policy:

- This Policy is based on engagement with a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians.
- This Policy is consistent with other policies of Thresholds School.
- This Policy can be found on the School's existing publicly accessible website (when applicable), is included in the student handbook, and, where the School's other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are

currently posted. A copy of this Policy may also be requested from Tom Moore, the School's Principal.

This Policy will also be provided periodically throughout the School year to students and faculty and distributed annually to parents/guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired. Thresholds School will engage in the process of reviewing and re-evaluating this Policy every two years to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this Policy and shall make any necessary and appropriate revisions. This review process includes, but may not be limited to, collecting, and assessing the following information:

- 1) The frequency of victimization;
- 2) Student, staff, and family observations of safety at school;
- 3) Identification of areas of the School where bullying occurs;
- 4) The types of bullying utilized, and
- 5) Bystander intervention or participation.

Thresholds School may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed or collected as a result of the policy evaluation will be made available on the School's website (when applicable) or otherwise will be provided to Thresholds School's board, if applicable, administrators, school personnel, parents/guardians, and students.

- No later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the subject year, this Policy must be filed with the State Board of Education after being updated.

## **Related Policies**

[Member Grievance and Appeal](#)