

# OpenWise Learning's Anti-Bullying Policy

## **Objective and Purpose**

A key responsibility of OpenWise Foundation (DBA: OpenWise Learning (OWL)) is to provide services in a respectful and positive environment. Acts of bullying, harassment and intimidation are an attack on core OWL values. Thus, to facilitate our mission, OWL has established this comprehensive bullying prevention policy. This policy protects the dignity and safety of the OpenWise community and describes its prevention strategies to identify and prevent incidents by connecting youth to necessary services. OpenWise Learning 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 OpenWise Learning's bullying prevention plan.

## **Definitions**

OpenWise Learning 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 or 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.

## **Bullying Prohibitions**

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

1. On OpenWise Learning grounds (including any sites upon which we operate our programs) and immediately adjacent property, at OWL-sponsored or related events on and off OWL grounds, on any vehicle used for OWL business, at any transit stop at which youth wait to be

transported to OWL business, or through the use of any electronic devices owned, leased or used by OWL for OWL business; and

2. At a location or function unrelated to OWL through the use of any electronic devices, including those not owned or leased by OWL, if the acts of bullying or cyberbullying create a hostile environment at OWL for the victim or witnesses, infringe on their rights while participating in OWL activities, or materially and substantially disrupt the orderly operation of OWL. 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**

OpenWise will create and update its policy as follows:

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

### **Youth Panel**

As part of the process of soliciting feedback, OpenWise Learning will convene a Youth Advisory Panel composed of youth in the program. This panel will advise the drafting and implementation of this policy and assist in its implementation through peer outreach and education. This panel will be consulted prior to the approval of the policy or any changes to the policy. The Youth Advisory Panel will be consulted annually as part of OWL's policy evaluation and updating process.

### **Contact and Publication**

This policy will be made available on OpenWise Learning's website. The policy, and age appropriate versions thereof, will be distributed to youth and parents of youth in contact with OWL annually, and OWL will emphasize that the policy applies to participation in functions sponsored by OWL. Additionally, this policy will be included in all publications of agency rules, regulations, and solicitations and agreements for contracts and grants. The designated OpenWise Learning director is responsible for coordinating OWL's bullying prevention efforts. All questions, comments and concerns about the bullying policy and OWL prevention efforts should be able to be directed to the OWL designee at [info@openwisefound.org](mailto:info@openwisefound.org).

### **Leadership**

Responsibility for the implementation and execution of this policy is vested with the designated OpenWise Learning director who shall have responsibility for:

1. Planning and organizing the prevention plan's professional development activities and coordinating these activities with the Department of Human Resources;
2. Designing/choosing and implementing the programming/ curricula used to address bullying;
3. Receiving and recording incidents of bullying;

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

If the OWL director chooses to delegate responsibility for any area, it must be done in consultation with OpenWise Learning. All decisions will be recorded to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility for each prevention activity.

### **Resources Mapping**

In order to obtain an accurate picture of the resources available as part of the prevention plan, OpenWise Learning will conduct an annual resource mapping process. The process will identify:

1. What resources OWL has in place to support their prevention strategies,
2. What gaps exist in OWL's bullying prevention services,
3. What steps must be taken, or services developed, to remedy these gaps,
4. What types of bullying risk factors each of OWL's resources addresses,
5. What types of bully or victim behavior each resource will be most effective in addressing.

### **Policy Evaluation**

OpenWise Learning will annually review and update this policy with new prevention strategies developed after consultation with families, continuing research on best practices in bullying prevention, and the agency's data collaboration with the citywide coordinator. Policy changes will be made to rectify gaps identified in the current prevention effort and to build on successful strategies. They will be further informed by whether or not OWL successfully met or is on track to meet performance goals described in its "prevention goals" section.

### **Primary Prevention Strategy**

OpenWise Learning will establish a culture of respect and safety. As part of this commitment, OWL 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. Accordingly, OWL will include, in all employment application interviews, questions about how prospective employees would support bullying prevention and the creation of a positive OWL environment at their job.

Safe, positive environments are best supported by an active partnership between OpenWise Learning and the community. This begins with parents and guardians. Accordingly, OWL will provide the parents and guardians with the Anti-Bullying Policy and conduct check ins regularly

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

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

### **Training**

OpenWise Learning will provide to all personnel whose duties consistently bring them into contact with youth by design or incident, training on OWL's prevention curriculum, 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 atmosphere of respect. These training efforts will be assisted, at OWL's request if necessary, by the citywide coordinator.

Staff will receive additional 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. 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 OWL prevention designee will have the appropriate background checks needed to ensure they are allowed to work with children.

### **Ongoing Professional Development**

OpenWise Learning 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, OWL 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 OWL;
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 OWL environment;
4. Internet safety and cyberbullying issues;
5. The components and delivery of the agency's prevention curriculum

### **Curriculum**

OpenWise Learning will implement a comprehensive bullying prevention curriculum, the components of which will be integrated into all youth related OWL activities. This curriculum will teach youth :

1. Self-regulation (controlling impulses; focusing, sustaining and shifting attention; listening to and remembering information; empathy);
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).

## **Data**

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

## **Incident Database**

OpenWise Learning 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 OWL designee 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 OWL designees will have access to individualizing information in the database.

## **Incident Measures**

OpenWise Learning 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:
  - 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 was it (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

OWL 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.

## **Service and Climate Measures**

The OpenWise designee will collect the following measures of prevention service provision:

1. Staff knowledge about bullying prevention dynamics and strategies.
2. Number of at-risk youth referred to treatment and services
3. OWL Climate- surveys administered to youth and staff desired to measure perceptions of:
  - a. OWL climate

- b. Safety at OWL
- c. Youth self-reports of bullying

### **Reporting to the City Coordinator**

OpenWise Learning will provide a report of bullying prevention and incident metrics to the citywide coordinator every six months. The OWL report will include all service and incident measures included in this policy. OWL will make a copy of the report prepared for the Mayor by the citywide coordinator available online at the agency's website and will include copies of the report in mailings to families of youth served by the agency as appropriate. OWL 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**

All staff at OpenWise Learning 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**

OpenWise staff who believe that a youth is at risk of being a victim or bully will send the youth to the OWL prevention designee who will refer them to the appropriate services based on the agency's resource mapping effort. 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 the OWL designee with assent from the youth will inform the youth's parents or guardian about referring youth to services, reasons they are referring the youth, the type of service to which 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 OpenWise Learning 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 OWL designee 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 OWL designee will determine the appropriate remedial services. If OWL 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 OWL 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, OWL 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 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.

### **Tertiary Prevention Strategies**

OpenWise Learning 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 designated member of OWL team, who will create a written report of a bullying incident and include the incident in OWL reports of bullying incidents to the citywide coordinator. Youth, parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged by OWL to report any incidents of bullying they witness or become aware of. Reports of bullying may be made to [info@openwisefound.org](mailto:info@openwisefound.org).

Reports of bullying by youth, parents, guardians and community members may be made anonymously, but disciplinary action cannot be taken by OWL 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 OWL's bullying database.

OWL will ensure that there are reporting materials available and that information about reporting is communicated to youth participants. Information on how to report incidents of bullying will

also be included as appropriate in OWL families. A designated OWL staff member is available to assist in reporting incidents of bullying and can be reached at [info@openwisefound.org](mailto:info@openwisefound.org). Reports of bullying not received by the OWL designee charged with responding to acts of bullying will be transmitted to them and the OWL designee responsible for maintaining the prevention database within one day of their receipt or creation by the staff member who reported the initial incident.

### **Investigating Incidents**

Prior to the investigation of an incident, the OWL designee charged with responding 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, so long as, in the absence of legal imperative, the parent or guardian's written consent is obtained prior to notification.

1. Parents and guardians: OWL 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 OWL designee will determine if parents or guardians should be informed prior to or after the investigation of an incident.
2. Schools: OWL 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.
3. Law enforcement agencies: If OWL 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 OWL designee 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.

OWL 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. OWL will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of those who report bullying incidents. The OWL designee charged with responding to incidents is responsible for investigating reports of bullying and can be reached at [info@openwisefound.org](mailto:info@openwisefound.org). An investigation of an incident will be initiated no more than one day after receipt of 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 OWL designee will interview any involved or relevant parties including alleged victims, bullies, witnesses, staff, parents or guardians.

The OWL designee charged with responding to incidents 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 OWL.

Where necessary, provisions will be made to include the advice of legal counsel. In investigating an incident of bullying, The OWL designee 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 OWL designee 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.

OWL designee 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 OWL designee determines that an incident of bullying has occurred, they should take the response steps enumerated in OWL's tertiary prevention plan to prevent the recurrence of an incident and restore the safety of a victim. If The OWL designee 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**

OpenWise Learning 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, OWL 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:

- 1.Reprimand
- 2.Deprivation of OWL privileges
- 3.Bans on participating in optional OWL activities
- 4.Deprivation of OWL services
- 5.Ban or suspension from OWL facilities or locations where OWL programs are held (at the time OWL is on site and active)

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 this policy's Appeals section. To ensure that single incidents of bullying do not become recurring problems, OWL will always refer victims and bullies involved in an incident to services in addition to imposing sanctions on bullies. **OWL does not endorse the use of punitive strategies associated with "zero-tolerance" policies when applying sanctions to an incident.** OWL shall communicate to youth the consequences that youth can expect for participating in bullying behavior.

### **Referral To Services**

OpenWise Learning's 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 as a bully, victim, or witness the OWL prevention designee will refer them to the appropriate services based on OWL's resource mapping effort.

At the time of a referral the OWL designee 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 OWL prevention designee 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 Victims, Bullies and Witnesses**

Remedial services to which youth are referred are not designed to be punitive and will never be noted on a youth's 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 OpenWise Learning 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 OWL resources are best suited to address or remedy these deficiencies, the OWL designee will determine the appropriate remedial services. Services will be provided to youth no later than one month after an incident of bullying is confirmed

### **Rewards for Third Party Prevention**

OpenWise Learning 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, OWL will recognize and reward youth who make a positive contribution to 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 OWL 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 to encourage 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 to senior staff. This appeal should be submitted no later than 30 days after the initial determination. Upon receipt of an appeal, the senior staff member must conduct a secondary investigation within 30 days of the receipt of an appeal. This 30 days may be extended up to an additional 15 days if the senior member sets forth in writing the reasons why more time is needed to conduct an investigation. Additionally, upon the receipt of an appeal, the senior staff member must inform the party making the submission of their ability to seek additional redress under the DC Human Rights Act.

## Incident Form

### Personal Information

1. **[Optional]** Name of person filing the report: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please note that a report of bullying may be made anonymously. However, no disciplinary action will be taken solely in response to an anonymous report. The report may be the basis for an investigation that supplies additional information needed to undertake disciplinary action.**

2. You are the:

a. Victim of this behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Witness to an incident: \_\_\_\_\_

3. You are a:

a. Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Staff member (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

d. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4. **[Optional]** Your contact Information:

a. Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Incident Information

Name(s) of victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of bully: \_\_\_\_\_

### Date and Time of Incident

Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Time: \_\_:\_\_ AM/PM

### Type of Aggression

Please check all that apply

Verbal \_\_\_\_ Physical \_\_\_\_ Written \_\_\_\_ Cyberbullying \_\_\_\_ Relational \_\_\_\_

### Location of Incident

Please check all that apply

Classroom \_\_\_\_ Hallways \_\_\_\_ Playground \_\_\_\_ Bathrooms \_\_\_\_ Locker Room \_\_\_\_

On the Way to Programming \_\_\_\_ Library: \_\_\_\_\_ Cyber Bullying \_\_\_\_

Witnesses (Please list people who have information about the incident)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_ Staff: \_\_\_\_ Other (specify): \_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_ Staff: \_\_\_\_ Other (specify): \_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_ Staff: \_\_\_\_ Other (specify): \_\_\_\_

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.