match EDUCATION | Match Charter Public School

Bullying Prevention Plan for

MATCH CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL

I. LEADERSHIP

School leadership at all levels of Match Charter Public School ("Match") plays a critical role in developing and implementing the Bullying Prevention Plan (the "Plan") in the context of other whole school and community efforts to promote positive school climate. Leaders have a primary role in teaching students and School Staff to be civil to one another and promoting understanding of and respect for diversity and difference. Leaders are responsible for setting priorities and for staying up to date with current research on ways to prevent and effectively respond to Bullying (as defined in Section VIII, below). Leaders work to involve representatives from the greater school and local community in developing and implementing the Plan.

A. Public involvement in developing the Plan. As required by M.G.L. C. 71, § 37O, the Plan will be developed in consultation with teachers, School Staff (as defined in Section VIII below), professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents, and guardians. Consultation will include, at a minimum, notice and a public comment period before the Plan is adopted.

   a. **Teachers, School Staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers and administrators** will be emailed the draft plan each summer and will be given a deadline to provide feedback to leadership.
   b. **Community representatives and local law enforcement agencies** will be given notice and a deadline for providing comments to leadership.
   c. **Students, parents and guardians** will be notified of the draft plan and will be given an opportunity to provide feedback to leadership at Family Advisory Council meetings (for families) and school meetings (for students).

B. Assessing needs and resources. This Plan is our blueprint for enhancing our capacity to prevent and respond to issues of Bullying within the context of other healthy school climate initiatives. As part of the planning process, school leaders, with input from families and School Staff, assess the adequacy of current programs; review current policies and procedures; review available data on Bullying and behavioral incidents; and assess available resources including curricula, training programs, and behavioral health services. This "mapping" process will assist leadership in identifying resource gaps and the most significant areas of need. Based on these findings, we will revise or develop policies and procedures; establish partnerships with community agencies, including law enforcement; and set priorities.

   At least once every four years Match will administer a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-developed student survey to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature, and severity of bullying in our schools. Additionally, Match will annually report bullying incident data to the Department and will update the Plan at least biennially.

   Leadership will conduct a needs assessment using the following techniques: 1) surveying students, School Staff, parents, and guardians on school climate and school safety issues; and 2) collecting and analyzing building-specific data on the prevalence and characteristics of Bullying (e.g., focusing on identifying vulnerable populations, including those with legally protected characteristics under civil rights laws, and "hot spots" in school buildings, on school grounds, or on school buses). This information will help to identify patterns of behaviors and areas of concern, and will inform decision-making for prevention strategies including, but not limited to, adult supervision, professional development, age-appropriate curricula, and in-school support services. Needs assessments will be conducted through in-person individual and group meetings in the spring and early summer, allowing leadership adequate time in the summer to implement

new strategies. The Responsible Administrator (as defined below) of each Match school will together take ownership over conducting and responding to this needs assessment.

C. Planning and oversight. For purposes of the Plan, "Responsible Administrators" shall mean, for each campus, the principal or the principal's designee. Responsibility for the following aspects of the plan will be taken by **each school's Responsible Administrator**:

   a. Receiving reports on Bullying
   b. Collecting and analyzing building- and/or school-wide data on Bullying to assess the present problem and to measure improved outcomes
   c. Creating a process for recording and tracking incident reports, and for accessing information related to Targets (as defined in Section VIII, below) and Aggressors (as defined in Section VIII, below)
   d. Planning for the ongoing professional development that is required by the law
   e. Planning supports that respond to the needs of Targets and Aggressors
   f. Choosing and implementing the curricula that the school or district will use
   g. Developing new or revising current policies and protocols under the Plan, including an Acceptable Use Policy, and designating key staff to be in charge of implementation
   h. Amending student and staff handbooks and codes of conduct
   i. Leading the parent or family engagement efforts and drafting parent or family information materials
   j. Reviewing and updating the Plan each year, or more frequently

D. Priority statement: The mission of Match is to prepare its students to succeed in college and beyond, in particular, those who would be the first in their families to earn a college degree. We intend this school to serve a large number of English language learners. To that end, we are committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from Bullying, including Cyberbullying (as defined in Section VIII, below). This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of Bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

II. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O we are required to provide ongoing professional development for all School Staff.

A. Annual School Staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all School Staff on the Plan will take place each summer. Training will include School Staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the Responsible Administrator will follow upon receipt of a report of Bullying or Retaliation (as defined in Section VIII, below), and an overview of the Bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school. School Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

B. Ongoing professional development. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for School Staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of School Staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to Bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:
   a. Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent Bullying;
   b. Developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop Bullying incidents;

c. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an Aggressor, Target, and witnesses to the Bullying;
d. Research findings on Bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for Bullying in the school environment;
e. Information on the incidence and nature of Cyberbullying;
f. Internet safety issues as they relate to Cyberbullying; and
g. Strategies for preventing and responding to bullying and harassment based on legally protected characteristics, consistent with federal and state civil rights obligations.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to Bullying or Retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

C. Written notice to staff. Leaders at Match will provide all School Staff and volunteers with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to School Staff duties and Bullying of students by School Staff, in the Employee Handbook.

III. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A key aspect of promoting a positive school climate is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of Targets, Aggressors, families, and others are addressed. The following strategies will be used to provide support and services necessary to meet those needs.

A. Identifying resources. All staff at Match will work to support the creation of positive school environments. Early interventions will be implemented, as will intensive services when necessary. In spring and early summer of each year, leadership will use the needs assessment to identify existing and needed resources. If it is determined that our resources are insufficient to meet needs, we will determine the best strategies and implement changes, including adopting new curricula, reorganizing staff, establishing safety planning teams and identifying other agencies that can provide services.

B. Counseling and other services. Counseling will be provided by contracted licensed professionals. When necessary, leadership will create partnerships with community based organizations to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate resources. The Responsible Administrators, along with social workers and other School Staff members, will develop safety plans for students who have been Targets of Bullying or Retaliation. Certain tools, including behavioral intervention plans and individualized groupings, already exist as resources and guidelines to provide social skills to prevent Bullying and intervention services for students exhibiting Bullying behaviors.

C. Students with disabilities. As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to Bullying, harassment, or teasing because of the student's disability, the IEP Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to Bullying, harassment, or teasing.

D. Other students who may be at risk. Match recognizes that students may be more vulnerable to Bullying based upon actual or perceived differences related to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socio-economic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting/family status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by associations with other people who may have one or more of these characteristics. School Staff shall provide additional support to vulnerable students, as necessary, to provide them with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to Bullying or harassment. Further, this policy affords all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law. Match shall also take

prompt and appropriate steps to respond to harassment that may violate students' civil rights under state or federal law.

E. Referral to outside services. When Match leaders, with the guidance of licensed professionals, determine that school resources are insufficient to address a Bullying situation, student and families will be referred to outside services. Families will be notified of referrals in writing and licensed professionals and a social worker will be available to provide guidance throughout the process.

Below is a list of external agencies Match has referred students and their families to:

1. Department of Children and Families. The Responsible Administrator may report to this agency suspected abuse or neglect or substantial attendance concerns.
2. Outside Counseling. Match employs a social worker who is meant to provide some school-based services, but given that many students could benefit from regular counseling beyond what the school has the capacity to provide, the social worker will help families secure counseling from outside providers when appropriate. The easiest way for families to do this is to obtain a referral from their primary care physician.
3. Outside Mentoring. Finding good mentors for Target and Aggressor students can be a helpful intervention, but it can be a lengthy process. Parents must be involved in order to complete paperwork and be interviewed. Initial referrals can be accessed at: http://www.bbbsmb.org/GetInvolved/ReferAChild/Default.aspx or http://www.bigsister.org/index.cfm?pid=10569.
4. Family Stabilization Team ("FST"). This option is appropriate when the student and family would benefit from intensive support or family therapy. FST services are one of many behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse) services that BMC HealthNet Plan MassHealth Plan members are offered.

IV. ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Age-appropriate instruction on Bullying prevention in each grade will be incorporated into our curricula. Curricula will be evidence-based. Effective instruction will include classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for Bullying prevention and social skills development.

A. Specific Bullying Prevention approaches. Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:
   - Using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
   - Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students or School Staff engaged in acts of Bullying or Retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
   - Helping students understand the dynamics of Bullying and Cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
   - Emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
   - Enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
   - Engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.
   - Students will also review the student-related sections of the Plan with staff in September.

B. General teaching approaches that support Bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our Bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:
   - Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;

- Creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- Using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- Using positive behavioral supports;
- Encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- Modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- Using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- Using the Internet safely; and
- Supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND RETALIATION

The following policies and procedures for reporting and responding to Bullying and Retaliation will ensure that members of the school community – students, parents, families, volunteers and School Staff – know what will happen when incidents of Bullying occur.

A. Reporting Bullying or Retaliation. Reports of Bullying or Retaliation may be made by School Staff, volunteers, students, parents, families, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a School Staff member or volunteer shall be recorded in writing. A School Staff member or volunteer is required to report immediately to the Responsible Administrator or to the Board of Trustees or its designee when the Responsible Administrator is the alleged Aggressor, any instance of Bullying or Retaliation the School Staff member or volunteer becomes aware of or witnesses. Reports made by students, parents, families, or other individuals who are not Match School Staff members or volunteers, may be made anonymously. An individual may report an incident using the Incident Reporting Form or by calling, mailing or emailing the Responsible Administrator or members of the Board of Trustees or its designee when the Responsible Administrator is the alleged Aggressor.

   Use of an Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. Match will: 1) include a copy of the Incident Reporting Form in the Student and Family Handbook and the Employee Handbook; 2) make it available in the school's main office, and other locations determined by the Responsible Administrator; and 3) post it on Match's website. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents/guardians.

   At the beginning of each school year, Match will provide the school community, including School Staff, students, and parents/families, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of Bullying and Retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources will be incorporated in the Student and Family Handbook, the Employee Handbook, on the Match website, and in information about the Plan that is made available to parents/families.

   - **Reporting by School Staff or Volunteers**: A School Staff member or volunteer will report immediately to the Responsible Administrator when the individual witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be Bullying or Retaliation. The requirement to report to the Responsible Administrator does not limit the authority of the School Staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with the Code of Conduct, the Student Discipline Policy, and other applicable policies and procedures.
   - **Reporting by Students, Families, Parents, and Others**: Match expects students, families, parents, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of Bullying or Retaliation involving a student to report it to the Responsible Administrator or to the Board of Trustees or its designee

when the Responsible Administrator is the alleged Aggressor. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged Aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students, families, parents and others may request assistance from a School Staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of Bullying with a School Staff member, or with the Responsible Administrator.

B. Responding to a report of Bullying or Retaliation.

- **Safety**: Before fully investigating the allegations of Bullying or Retaliation, the Responsible Administrator will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged Target and/or to protect the alleged Target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the Target and/or the Aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a School Staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the Target; and altering the Aggressor's schedule and access to the Target. The Responsible Administrator will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

  The Responsible Administrator will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from Bullying or Retaliation a student who has reported Bullying or Retaliation, a student who has witnessed Bullying or Retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of Bullying or Retaliation.

- **Obligations to Notify Others**

  1. Notice to parents**.** Upon determining that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, the Responsible Administrator will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the Target and the Aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the Responsible Administrator contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.
  2. Notice to Another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Responsible Administrator first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the appropriate administrator of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.
  3. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of Bullying or Retaliation, including after an investigation, if the Responsible Administrator has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the Aggressor, the Responsible Administrator will immediately notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and locally established agreements with the local law enforcement agency. Also, if an incident occurs on Match grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Responsible Administrator shall contact the local law enforcement agency if the Responsible Administrator has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the Aggressor.

     In making this determination, the Responsible Administrator will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable Match policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the Responsible Administrator deems appropriate.

C. Investigation. The Responsible Administrator will promptly investigate all reports of Bullying or Retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved, and/or information related to the School Staff member or volunteer involved.

During the investigation, the Responsible Administrator will, among other things, interview students, School Staff, volunteers, witnesses, parents, and others as necessary. The Responsible Administrator (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged Aggressor, Target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that Retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the Responsible Administrator, other School Staff members as determined by the Responsible Administrator, and in consultation with the school social worker, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given the Responsible Administrator's obligation to investigate and address the matter, the Responsible Administrator will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The Responsible Administrator will maintain a written record of the investigation.

The Responsible Administrator may then assemble a panel consisting of teachers, staff and administrators. The panel will conduct separate hearings with the Target and the alleged Aggressor.

Procedures for investigating reports of Bullying and Retaliation will be consistent with any applicable Match policies and procedures. If necessary, the Responsible Administrator will consult with legal counsel about the investigation.

D. Determinations. The Responsible Administrator, in consultation with the panel, will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, Bullying or Retaliation is substantiated, the Responsible Administrator will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the Target is not restricted in participating in Match or in benefiting from Match activities. The Responsible Administrator will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Responsible Administrator may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or social worker, and the Target's or Aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the Bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The Responsible Administrator will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the Target and the Aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if Bullying or Retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of Bullying or Retaliation. All notice to parents or guardians must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Responsible Administrator cannot report specific information to the Target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the Target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The Responsible Administrator shall inform the parent or guardian of the Target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system or seeking assistance, regardless of the outcome of the Bullying determination. The information will be made available in both hard copy and electronic formats.

E. Responses to Bullying.

1. *Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building*

Upon the Responsible Administrator determining that Bullying or Retaliation has occurred, the law requires that Match use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O(d)(v). Skill-building approaches that the Responsible Administrator may consider include:

- Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-Bullying curricula;
- Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with social workers and other appropriate school personnel;
- Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals;
- Meeting with parents or guardians to engage familial support and to reinforce the anti-Bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home;
- Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and
- Making a referral for evaluation.

In cases where bullying involves conduct based on a student's membership in a protected class, the Responsible Administrator will also evaluate whether additional civil rights protections and remedial actions are required under federal or state law.

2. *Taking Disciplinary Action*

If the Responsible Administrator decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the Responsible Administrator, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan, the Code of the Conduct, the Student Discipline Policy, the Discipline for Students with Disabilities Policy and all applicable state and federal laws.

Disciplinary actions for employees who are found to have committed an act of Bullying or Retaliation shall be in accordance with state law and Match policies and procedures.

If the Responsible Administrator determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of Bullying or Retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

3. *Promoting Safety for the Target and Others*

The Responsible Administrator will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the Target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the Responsible Administrator may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where Bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Responsible Administrator will contact the Target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the Responsible Administrator will work with appropriate School Staff to implement them immediately.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

Each year Match will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about how families can reinforce the curriculum at home and the dynamics of Bullying, including Cyberbullying and online safety. Match will send students and parents written notice each year,

in age-appropriate terms, about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention Plan and Match's Acceptable Use Policy. Notice of the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention Plan will be made available in the language(s) most prevalent among students, parents or guardians. Match will post the Plan and related information on its website.

VII. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Acts of Bullying, which include Cyberbullying, are prohibited:

1. On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by Match or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by Match, and
2. At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by Match, if the acts create a Hostile Environment (as defined in Section VIII, below) at Match for the Target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at Match, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of Match.

Retaliation against a person who reports Bullying, provides information during an investigation of Bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about Bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in this Plan requires Match to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

"Aggressor" is a student or a member of the School Staff who engages in Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation towards a student.

"Bullying," as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the School Staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a Target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the Target or damage to the Target's property;
- Places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to Target's property;
- Creates a Hostile Environment at school for the Target;
- Infringes on the rights of the Target at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

"Cyberbullying" is Bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of Cyberbullying.

"Hostile Environment," as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which Bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

"Retaliation" is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports Bullying, provides information during an investigation of Bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about Bullying.

"School Staff" means individuals employed by Match, including, but not limited to, educators, administrators, social workers, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

"Target" is a student against whom Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation has been perpetrated.

IX. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of Match, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, religion, national origin, ancestry, socioeconomic status, academic status, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. This Plan shall be interpreted in coordination with Match's obligations under federal and state civil rights laws, including but not limited to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and M.G.L. c. 76, § 5. Bullying incidents involving harassment based on legally protected characteristics must be addressed both under this Plan, the Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy for Students, and under applicable anti-discrimination law. Nothing in the Plan prevents Match from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or Match policies.

In addition, nothing in the Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of Match to take disciplinary or other action under the Code of the Conduct, the Student Discipline Policy, the Discipline for Students with Disabilities Policy, other relevant policies, and any applicable laws, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Plan covers the behavior.

X. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Any parent wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of Match may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Problem Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa, emails can be sent to DESECompliance@mass.gov or individuals can call 781-338-3700.

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