



CHIEF DIRECTORATE: LEARNER DEVELOPMENT & SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

TO: DISTRICT DIRECTORS
CIRCUIT MANAGERS
CMC HEADS
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

CC: CLUSTER CHIEF DIRECTORS

FROM: ACTING SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

SUBJECT: LEARNER SAFETY – ANTI-BULLYING

DATE: 15 APRIL 2021

1. PURPOSE

- a. To advise on the dangers of learner bullying at schools and to seek and implement immediate interventions to ensure that bullying is prevented.
- b. To request that all schools must have functional School Safety Committees.
- c. To remind all addresses of the importance of the implementation of the National School Safety Framework.

2. DISCUSSION

- a. Incidences of bullying at schools are on the increase, these involve both girls and boys and are of a violent nature.
- b. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that all learners are safe and protected. In addition, communities also have a critical role to play in ensuring that learners are safe and protected.
- c. School Governing Bodies, School Principals, School Management Teams, Educators, non-teaching staff, learners and all officials at Circuits, Districts and Head Office are reminded of the following (as obtained from the Department of Basic Education) regarding bullying inside and outside schools:



- School bullying is a type of bullying that occurs either inside or outside of school. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or emotional and is usually repeated over a period of time.
- In schools, bullying occurs in all areas. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it more often occurs during school breaks, in hallways, bathrooms, on school buses and waiting for buses, classes that require group work and/or after school activities.
- Bullying in school sometimes consists of a group of learners taking advantage of or isolating one learner in particular and gaining the loyalty of bystanders who want to avoid becoming the next victim.
- The following tips can help parents understand the problems their children may face when harassed at school. Parents and educators must stay vigilant, look for these warning signs, and attempt to address problems quickly. Learners must feel safe at school; parents and other adults can help learners who suffer at the hands of bullies.

2.1 WARNING SIGNS OF BEING BULLIED

These are some of the warning signs victims of bullying might display.

- Sudden decreased interest in school (wants to stay at home);
- Sudden loss of interest in favourite school activities;
- Sudden decrease in quality of school work;
- Wants the parent to take her to school instead of riding the bus;
- Seems happy on weekends, but unhappy, preoccupied, or tense on Sundays;
- Suddenly prefers the company of adults;
- Frequent illnesses such as headaches and stomach aches;
- Sleep issues such as nightmares and sleeplessness;
- Comes home with unexplained scratches, bruises, and torn clothing;
- Talks about avoiding certain areas of the school or neighbourhood;
- Suddenly becomes moody, irritable, or angry and starts bullying others (e.g., siblings, children in neighbourhood)
- Seeks the wrong friends in the wrong places (e.g., drug users, gangs, etc)
- Talks about being sad, anxious, depressed, or having panic attacks;
- Wants to stay home on weekends;
- Talks about suicide.

2.2 WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

- Establish functional School Safety Committees;
- Make sure an adult knows what is happening to their children;
- Enforce anti bully laws as part of the Code of Conduct for learners;
- Make it clear and communicate to learners and parents that bullying is never acceptable;
- Recognize that bullying can occur at all levels within the school;
- Hold a school conference day or forum devoted to bullying/victim problems;
- Increase adult supervision in the schoolyard, halls and toilets;
- Emphasize caring, respect and safety.
- Emphasize consequences of hurting others;
- Enforce consistent and immediate consequences for aggressive behaviours;
- Improve communication among school administrators, teachers, parents and learners;
- Have a school problem box where learners can report problems, concerns and offer suggestions;



- Help bullies with anger control and the development of empathy;
- Encourage positive peer relations;
- Offer a variety of extra-curricular activities which appeal to a range of interests;
- Keep in mind the range of possible causes: e.g., medical, psychological, developmental, family problems, etc.

2.3 WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Remember: For behaviour to be labelled as bullying, it has to be persistent (repeated over time) and intentionally designed to hurt or frighten your child. Remember the bully has power and control over your child.

- Assure children that you will immediately investigate and report the situation with the school principal or senior teacher;
- Check if your child needs to avoid certain areas on school property at certain times;
- Suggest that your school increases supervision in the high-risk areas where the child has to go or more closely monitor the child's interactions with other learners;
- Encourage your child to talk to an adult, such as a supportive teacher, every day to provide an update on the mistreatment;
- Stay calm;
- Be sensitive to the fact that your child may feel embarrassed and ashamed;
- Find out what happened, who was involved, and when and where it happened, and keep a record of this information;
- Express confidence that you, the adults at school, and your child will be able to find a solution.
- Ask your child to express his/ her thoughts and feelings about what happened;
- Explain that bullies seek to hurt and control. So your child must not let them know he is hurt by their behaviour.
- Let your child know that it is normal to feel hurt, fear, and anger;
- Avoid being a "fix-it" dad or mom by calling the bully's parents. Most of the time, this action is not effective. However, not all parents of bullies respond in a protective manner.
- Don't tell your child to retaliate. It's against the rules, and retaliation frequently makes the bullying worse and more persistent.
- Don't tell your child to ignore the bully. Most of the time, ignoring doesn't work;
- Teach your child to be assertive, but not aggressive;
- Don't promise that you will not tell anyone;
- Ask for a copy of the school's policy.
- Involve your child in activities inside and outside school. Involvement in activities he or she enjoys increases the chances of high-quality friendships;
- Monitor your child's whereabouts and his friendships;
- Watch for signs of depression and anxiety in your child, and do not hesitate to seek professional counselling;
- Don't give up.



2.4 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

It is important that victims of all forms of bullying are provided with psychosocial support either at the school or through a referral by the school.

Currently, the department has appointed Social Worker Interns placed in all forty nine CMCS and Districts to provide psychosocial support services to learners in schools. Amongst the Key performance Areas of the Social Workers is provision of restorative services which specifically deal with bullying from both the victim and the perpetrator perspective. So, schools can refer any cases of bullying to these Social Workers for early intervention and or referral and follow-up.

Some of the schools have been provided with Learner Support Agents who attend to any deviant behaviour amongst learners and make referrals to the SBST so that cases can be escalated to the District for professional support. The LSAs also render Peer Education Programmes whereby learners discuss all issues affecting them inclusive of bullying, domestic violence, harassment amongst others.

The Department is in the process of developing a policy on bullying and educators will be trained on the policy.

There is also the Department's "Sikuncede Njani" Application which is downloaded from the App store in the four languages used in the province. This does not use any data and can be used to report any case of bullying or upload pictures of incidents happening in schools. There is an official appointed to service the App and ensures that matters are referred to relevant persons for immediate intervention.

3. COMMUNICATION

Schools are requested to implement anti-bullying interventions and to ensure that all learners are informed that bullying is prohibited, will not be tolerated and learners caught in bullying will face disciplinary processes and criminal charges of assault.

In addition, schools are urged to ensure that there is a dedicated educator to whom learners can report bullying and/or threats of bullying. It is recommended that schools also place a box in an accessible place where learners can submit anonymous reports on bullying and/or threats of bullying. Early reports of bullying are aimed at preventing incidences of bullying.

4. CONCLUSION

School principals are requested to share this communication with all relevant stakeholders including learners. School principals are requested to ensure that each school has a functional School Safety Committee that will investigate and prevent all bullying at schools. School principals are requested to ensure that learners and parents have a contact at a school where bullying can be reported, anonymously should the complainant wish to do so.

Circuit Managers, CMC Heads, District Directors are hereby requested to ensure that the above is in place at all schools.



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While this communication is directed at bullying taking place inside and outside schools, the violence is often a reflection of the ills of society and the community. It is therefore important for the community to be involved in safety programmes.

Schools are reminded of the importance of functional School Safety Committee and the implementation of the NSSF, to be monitored by Circuits, District and Head Office. The link to the NSSF is:

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/School%20Safety%20Framework%202016.pdf?ver=2016-02-19-133421-363>

There should be zero tolerance to bullying, disciplinary processes must be enforced where bullying is identified. In addition, victims must be encouraged to lay criminal charges.

“For many children, the biggest threat to their right to education is not discrimination or lack of access to schools, but violence within or near their schools that undermines their ability to learn, puts their physical and psychological well-being at risk, and often causes them to drop out of school entirely. Children’s right to education entails not only the presence of schools and teachers, but also an environment that allows them to learn in safety.” – Human Rights Watch

Mr RAY TYWAKADI
ACTING SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

15 April 2021
DATE