



Anti-Bullying Policy

The Hoffman Estates Park District (HEParks) recognizes that an agency that is physically and emotionally safe and secure for all participants promotes good citizenship, increases attendance and supports achievement. To protect the rights of all participants and groups for a safe and secure environment, HEParks prohibits acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence.

Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors, interferes with a participant's ability to learn and limits involvement. All administrators, staff, parents, volunteers, and participants are expected to refuse to tolerate bullying and harassment and to demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil. It is especially important for adults to model these behaviors (even when disciplining) in order to provide positive examples for participant behavior.

"Bullying" or "harassment" is any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts – i.e., cyber bullying, through the use of internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant (pda), computer, or wireless handheld device, currently in use or later developed and used) that is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress and may be motivated either by bias or prejudice based upon any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based upon association with another person who has or is perceived to have any distinguishing characteristic. Bullying and harassment also include forms of retaliation against individuals who report or cooperate in an investigation under this policy. Such behaviors are considered to be bullying or harassment whether they take place on or off HEParks property, at any HEParks sponsored function, or in a HEParks vehicle or at any time or place where a staff or participant's imminent safety or overall well-being may be an issue.

Bullying or harassment is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- is directed at one or more individuals;
- is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more individual;
- adversely affects the ability of an individual to participate in or benefit from HEParks activities by placing the individual in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress; and,
- is based on an individual's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

The scope of this policy includes the prohibition of every form of bullying, harassment, and cyber bullying/harassment, whether in a park district program room, on school premises where park district programs are held, immediately adjacent to HEParks premises, or at a park district-sponsored event, whether or not held on HEParks premises. Bullying or harassment, including cyber bullying/harassment, that is not initiated at a location defined above is covered by this policy if the incident results in a potentially material or substantial disruption of HEParks's programs for one or more individuals and/or the orderly day-to-day operations of any HEParks program.

The Hoffman Estates Park District expects all individuals to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other individuals, staff, volunteers, and other district officials.

The Hoffman Estates Park District recognizes that in order to have the maximum impact, it is critical to provide a minimum of annual training for employees and volunteers who have significant contact with participants on district policies and procedures regarding bullying and harassment. Training will provide employees with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the necessary skills to fulfill them.

The Hoffman Estates Park District believes that standards for individual's behavior must be set through interaction among the participants, parents and guardians, staff, and community members of HEPD, producing an atmosphere that encourages participants to grow in self-discipline and their ability to respect the rights of others. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of individuals, staff, parents, and community members.

The Hoffman Estates Park District believes that the best discipline for inappropriate aggressive behavior is designed to (1) support participants in taking responsibility for their actions, (2) develop empathy, and (3) teach alternative ways to achieve the goals and solve problems that motivated the inappropriate aggressive behavior. Staff members who interact with individuals shall apply best practices designed to prevent discipline problems and encourage abilities to develop self-discipline and make better choices in the future.

Since bystander support of bullying and harassment can encourage these behaviors, the district prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage participants not to be part of the problem; not to pass on the rumor or derogatory message; to walk away from these acts when they see them; to constructively attempt to stop them; to report them to the designated authority; and to reach out in friendship to the target.

Periodic meetings should be conducted to teach bystanders how and when to respond to bullying and harassment incidents. Informal discussions and activities designed to provide awareness and increase connectedness promote a positive shift in peer norms that will support empowered bystanders. When bystanders do report

or cooperate in an investigation, they must be protected from retaliation with the same type of procedures used to respond to bullying and harassment.

Factors for Determining Consequences

- Age, development, and maturity levels of the parties involved
- Degree of harm (physical and/or emotional distress)
- Surrounding circumstances
- Nature and severity of the behavior(s)
- Incidences of past or continuing pattern(s) of behavior
- Relationship between the parties involved
- Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred

Note: Consequences must be fair and impartial.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a participant or staff member who engages in one or more acts of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or termination. Employees will also be held accountable for bullying or harassing behavior directed toward employees, volunteers, parents, participants or district officials.

Consequences for a participant who commits an act of bullying and harassment shall vary in method and

severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the individual, and the history of problem behaviors and performance. Remedial measures shall be designed to: correct the problem behavior; prevent another occurrence of the behavior; and protect the victim of the act. Effective discipline should employ a district-wide approach to adopt a rubric of bullying offenses and the associated consequences.

The consequences and remedial measures may include, but are not limited to, the examples listed below:

- Examples of Consequences
- Temporary removal from the program
- Loss of privileges
- Program suspension
- Legal action

All employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to their supervisor. All other members of the community, including participants, parents, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy to: Craig Talsma, Executive Director, 847-885-7500 or ctalsma@heparks.org.

Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The Hoffman Estates Park District prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying or harassment or cooperates in an investigation. The

consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

The Hoffman Estates Park District prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of bullying or harassment. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including legal action. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for an employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall be in accordance with district policies, procedures, and agreements.

The Hoffman Estates Park District requires district officials to annually disseminate the policy to all staff along with a statement explaining that it applies to all applicable acts of harassment and bullying that occur.

HEPD shall incorporate information regarding the policy against harassment or bullying into each employee training program and handbook.