

Illinois Center for Autism Policy on Bullying

This policy aligns with other board approved ICA policies. (Dec 13 2022)

Revised June 30, 2023 to include new language

This policy is consistent with the policies of the Illinois Center for Autism and is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians.

Statement of Intent

The Illinois Center for Autism is committed to a safe and civil educational environment for all students/clients* and recognizes that bullying is contrary to **105 ILCS 5/27-23.7** as well as Illinois Center for Autism's policies and prohibits bullying during:

- Any ICA sponsored education program or activity
- While in ICA, on ICA property, in ICA vehicles, or designated vehicle stops waiting for ICA vehicles
- At any ICA- sponsored or ICA- sanctioned events or activities
- The transmission of information from an ICA computer, an ICA computer network, or other similar electronic ICA equipment
- The transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-ICA related location, activity, function or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by ICA if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of ICA (*This only applies in cases in which an ICA administrator receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require ICA staff to monitor any non ICA-related activity, function, or program*)

***For the purposes of this policy, student/client is defined as anyone who attends ICA for the sole purpose of receiving special education and/or related services.**

Nothing in this section 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 US Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution

What is Bullying?

“Bullying (including cyber-bullying) is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct that is directed toward a student/client which may or may not be based upon physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, material status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, associations with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics,, or any other distinguishing characteristic that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- Placing the student/client or students/clients in a reasonable fear of harm to the student's/client's or students'/clients' person or property
- Causing a substantially detrimental on the student's/client's or students'/clients' physical or mental health
- Substantially interfering with the student's /client's or students'/clients' academic or work performance
- Substantially interfering with the student'/client's or students'/clients' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, privileges provided by ICA

“Bullying” may take on one for more of the following:

- Harassment
- Threats
- Intimidation
- Stalking
- Physical violence
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual violence
- Theft
- Public humiliation
- Destruction of property
- Retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying

This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of:

- Signs
- Signals
- Writing
- Images
- Sounds
- Data
- Intelligence of any nature

Transmitted in whole or in part by:

- Wire
- Radio
- Electromagnetic system
- Photo electronic system
- Photo optical system

Including without limitation electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications.

“Cyber-bullying” also 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 posted content or messages
- The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person
- Posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons

If any of these acts creates any of the effects listed above

Procedures for Reporting Bullying

- Student/client (or student/client representative) should report bullying incident to teacher/case manager immediately at the Illinois Center for Autism at (618) 398-7500
- Incidents of bullying may be reported anonymously by phone or in writing
- All cases/reports of bullying must immediately be reported to the supervisor of the program where the bullying occurred

Sandra Rodenberg – Educational Services Director/Principal at sandra@illinoiscenterforautism.org or by phone at 618-398-7500 ext. 303

Mia Stroter – Vocational Services Director at mia.stroter@illinoiscenterforautism.org or by phone at 618-398-7500 ext. 311

Elise Fields-Dixon – Client and Family Support Director at elisefieldsdixon@illinoiscenterforautism.org or by phone at 618-398-7500 ext. 203

Procedures for Investigating Reports of Bullying

- Parents/guardians of all students/clients involved in all individual instances of bullying, as well as threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm, will be notified within 24 hours and offered the opportunity to meet with administration to discuss the situation and what resources - social work services, restorative measures, social emotional skill building, referral to community resources, etc., are available to the students involved.
- All appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention as deemed appropriate will be included in the process
- The bullying incident will be investigated per ICA's internal investigation procedure and reasonable efforts will be made to complete the investigation within 10 attendance days after the date the report was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation
- Progress and findings of all investigations will be given to the supervisor of the program
- Parents/guardians of all student/clients involved in the investigation will be given the opportunity to meet with administration to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying
- If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted

All procedures followed while investigating and sharing information related to incidents of bullying will be consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights.

Outcomes of Investigation

- A plan will be developed to help the bully (bullies) change their behavior and will include what resources will be made available to ensure successful completion of the plan – social work services, restorative measures, social emotional skill building, referral to community resources, etc.
- In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion from ICA's programs will be considered
- After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying and or reprisal or retaliation do not take place. Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is strictly prohibited.
- Engaging in reprisal or retaliation will result in additional disciplinary action up to and including suspension or removal from ICA programs
- Individuals found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying will face disciplinary action up to and including suspension or removal from ICA programs

Policy Evaluation

The policy will be evaluated annually for effectiveness. The evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, reviewing the frequency of victimization; student, staff and family observations of school safety; identification of areas where bullying occurs; the type and frequency of bullying; and intervention of by standers. Information developed during this evaluation will be made available on the Illinois Center for Autism's website.