



## **FAQS REGARDING INCIDENTS OF BIAS, DISCRIMINATION, OR HATE CRIMES**

### **Q: WHAT IS AN INCIDENT OF DISCRIMINATION, HATE CRIME OR BIAS?**

A: When a member of our community is treated unfairly or is disadvantaged because of an aspect of their identity and/or as a member of a protected class, it may be an incident of discrimination or bias. Discrimination might take the form of subtle bias comments, hateful speech in the form of insults or epithets, or ongoing harassment or retaliation for a past event or report.

### **Q. WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?**

A: A “hate crime” is any criminal offense whereby the person or persons committing the offense acted with a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, gender, gender identity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, or ancestry.

### **Q. WHAT IS A BIAS-RELATED ACT?**

A: A “bias-related act” is an act directed at a person, group of persons, private property, or public property that is motivated in whole or part by racial, gender, gender identity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic prejudice. A bias-related act need not involve conduct that constitutes a criminal offense. All hate crimes are also bias-related acts, but not all bias-related acts will constitute a hate crime.

Some incidents of bullying, or repeated targeting of another person in an unwanted manner, may also be acts of discrimination. Criminal acts motivated by bias may be considered hate crimes and may involve additional legal consequences. When incidents of possible discrimination or bias do

occur, we are committed to conducting a full investigation to determine what harm has been done, how it can be fully addressed, and ways in which it can be prevented from occurring again.

**Q: WHAT IS PENNSBURY’S PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF DISCRIMINATION?**

A: Pennsbury takes any report or incident of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation very seriously. We have established a very specific and thorough protocol for reporting and investigating such incidents. The protocol, which includes definitions, examples, staff and student responsibilities, reporting processes, investigation process, resolution, expectations of confidentiality and potential disciplinary actions are outlined below in this document. The protocol directs the staff response to the incident to ensure that we maintain an environment free of discrimination and supportive of all students and families. Importantly, it is aligned with [best practices in this area](#).

**Q: HOW CAN I REPORT AN INCIDENT OF DISCRIMINATION OR A PATTERN OF BIASED BEHAVIOR?**

A: Students can report incidents of discrimination or any concerning pattern of biased behavior to any staff member or one of their trusted adults in the district. Parents/guardians can report specific concerns to their school principal or any district or school administrator, all of whom are trained in the protocol to respond to incidents. Complaints may also be submitted to our Superintendent or via the [district Title IX Reporting procedures](#). Additional information about [reporting procedures for incidents of bias, hate and discrimination](#), can be found on our website.

**Q: CAN I REPORT AN INCIDENT OF DISCRIMINATION OR BIAS ANONYMOUSLY?**

A: Reports of any concerning behavior may be made anonymously. Anonymous reports of bullying can also be submitted on our online district bullying reporting system, available at [Safe2Say Something \(S2SS\)](#). To the extent possible, PSD strives to honor requests for anonymity; however, this is not always possible. Anonymous reports are more difficult to investigate and respond to. Whenever possible, we encourage concerned community members to speak directly to a staff member with their concerns, knowing that we are always sensitive to the need for confidentiality of victims and reporters in any investigation. Retaliation by any community member for a report of discrimination or bullying is clearly prohibited by our policy.

**Q: HOW ARE INCIDENTS REPORTED AND INVESTIGATED?**

A: Reported incidents of discrimination, including harassment or retaliation, are promptly investigated by a designated official at each school. The protocol below delineates the specific steps the investigating official must take, including notifying the individuals involved, (including the families of students), interviewing witnesses, determining if a violation of school policy has occurred, and responding appropriately with consequences as well as support for those impacted by the incident. The protocol includes making a report to the Falls Township, Lower Makefield Township, and/or Tullytown Police Department if necessary. When relevant, the Anti-Defamation League is also notified, as are other groups that act as consultants on specific types of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.

**Q: HOW LONG DOES AN INVESTIGATION TAKE?**

A: Investigations are typically completed within 10 days, but may take longer in a more complex case.

**Q: IS THE RESPONSE THE SAME EVERY TIME?**

A: While the incidents are investigated and documented in accordance with the established protocol, the specific facts of each substantiated incident impact the specifics of the response. However, each case will typically include the following:

- Discipline the person responsible
- Education / Reflection Component using district resources
- Community Service Component using district resources
- Remedial or supportive actions, including counseling, to assist those directly impacted
- Corrective action or education steps for the individual and potentially the larger school community to ensure that similar events do not happen in the future

**Q: WHAT ARE THE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS TAKEN?**

A: Potential disciplinary actions for students who violate any of the supporting policies could include detention, suspension, educational components with reflections, and restorative practices that require them to acknowledge their responsibility and minimize its impact. A staff member would be subject to the disciplinary procedures of their bargaining unit, which might typically include a process of formal warnings and reprimands, suspension, or more serious consequences. Non-staff adult community members may be sanctioned by limiting or ending their participation in PSD community activities. In most cases, specific disciplinary steps taken are protected by relevant confidentiality laws.

**Q: IS THE COMMUNICATION ABOUT AN INCIDENT THE SAME EVERY TIME?**

A: Communication to the school or larger Pennsbury community about the incident and response varies based upon the details of the incident and its impact or potential impact on those involved.

**Q: HOW AND WHEN IS THE COMMUNITY ALERTED TO AN INCIDENT?**

A: There are many times when the community is alerted to a specific incident, but there are some when it is not. Administrators work in concert with teachers and families to determine the best approach given the circumstances of the incident. Specific consideration is given to protecting the confidentiality of individual students and promoting the optimal educational response for involved students. While not all incidents are reported to the entire community, the Pennsbury School District takes any report or incident of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation seriously and addresses it promptly and thoroughly.

**Q: HOW IS DATA KEPT ON REPORTS OF BIAS, DISCRIMINATION, OR RETALIATION?**

A: Any such incident that is investigated and addressed by PSD is documented and tracked by district administration. This data is then analyzed and tracked for patterns of behavior and types of effective responses. District administration will periodically report to the Board of Education on trends and commonalities that need to be addressed.

**Q: WHAT IS PSD DOING TO PREVENT INCIDENTS OF BIAS OR DISCRIMINATION?**

A: The Pennsbury School District works with both students and staff at all levels of our organization to prevent and address all forms of bias. The lessons implemented and professional development offered are age-appropriate and seek to create school communities that are inclusive, respectful, empathetic, and kind. Examples of some of the preventive work we are doing to build a strong foundation of anti-bias culture in our schools include the following initiatives and programs:

- [Equity Vision Statement & Beliefs](#)
- [Educational Equity Policy](#)
- Student Education through Social Emotional Learning Curriculum
- Staff Education

If you have additional questions about how the Pennsbury School District responds to incidents of discrimination or bias, please feel free to reach out to your school principal or any district administrator. [More detailed information on how to report an incident](#) can be found on the district's website.