



# Anti-Harassment / Discrimination / Intimidation / Bullying / Retaliation Policy

The Cottonwood School is committed to ensuring a professional work and learning environment without discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying on the basis of race or ethnicity (including ancestry, color, ethnic group identification and ethnic background; race is inclusive of traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles, which includes, but is not limited to, such hairstyles as braids, locks and twists), religious creed (including religious dress and grooming practices), color, national origin (including language use restrictions), immigration status, citizenship status, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, military and veteran status, or association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned characteristics or any other legally protected category. The Cottonwood School prohibits any such discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

The purpose of The Cottonwood School Governing Board approving this Anti-Harassment/Discrimination/Intimidation/Bullying/Retaliation Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Define Harassment, Discrimination, Intimidation, and Bullying
2. Identify Who the Policy Applies to
3. Identify Where the Policy Applies
4. Establish the Responsibility of Reporting
5. Identify Reporting Procedures
6. Identify Investigation/Complaint Procedures
7. Identify the Consequences of Retaliation
8. Outline the Protection of Individuals with Immigration Status
9. Outline the Procedures for Notifying Parents of Their Children's Right to a Free Public Education, Regardless of Immigration Status or Religious Beliefs

## 1. Definitions:

- **Harassment:** Harassment is unwelcome verbal or physical conduct prohibited by law directed toward, or differential treatment of, a student or staff member because of his/her membership (or perceived membership) in any protected group or on any other prohibited basis. The harasser can be a student, a School official or employee, or someone who is not an employee of the School, such as a vendor or parent. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive or degrading remarks, verbal abuse, or other hostile behavior such as insulting, teasing, mocking, name calling, degrading, or ridiculing another person or group
- Racial slurs, derogatory remarks about a person's accent, or display of racially offensive symbols
- Unwelcome or inappropriate physical contact, comments, questions, advances, jokes epithets or demands
- Physical assault or stalking
- Displays or electronic transmission of derogatory, demeaning or hostile materials or statements
- Graphic and written offensive or derogatory statements, which may include use of cell phones or the Internet

Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target or involve repeated incidents. Harassment creates a hostile environment when the conduct is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or opportunities offered by the School.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is a form of harassment based on sex, including sexual harassment, gender harassment and harassment based on pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions. It generally involves unwanted sexual advances, or visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser. The following is a partial list of violations:
  - Unwanted sexual advances
  - Offering educational benefits in exchange for sexual favors
  - Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances
  - Visual conduct: Leering, making sexual gestures, displaying of suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons or posters
  - Verbal conduct: Making or using derogatory comments, epithets, slurs and jokes
  - Verbal sexual advances or propositions
  - Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, sexually degrading words used to describe an individual, suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations
  - Physical conduct: Touching, assault, impeding or blocking movements
- **Intimidation:** Intimidation includes adverse actions intended to fill another with fear, to overawe or cow, as through force of personality or by superior display of wealth, talent, etc., or to force another into or deter from some action by inducing fear.
- **Bullying:** Bullying may take place in a variety of hostile acts that are carried out repeatedly over time. The acts involve a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the more powerful

child or group attacking those who are less powerful. It may be physical (hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing), verbal (taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, threatening), or psychological (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, or promoting social exclusion, extortion or intimidation). Bullying is any severe or pervasive action or conduct directed toward one or more students that have the effect of one or more of the following: 1) places a reasonable student in fear of harm to that student's person or property; 2) causes a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health; 3) causes a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance; 4) causes a reasonable student to experience interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by the School.

Other types of bullying:

- Sexual bullying includes many of the actions typical of bullying behavior with the added actions of exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual propositioning, sexual harassment and sexual abuse (touching, physical contact, sexual assault).
- Bias or hate-motivated bullying is a basic bias against or hate for a person or group. Examples include taunting one's race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disabilities. The bullying behavior may also be aggressive, antagonistic, and assaultive.
- Hazing is a form of aggressive behavior that usually involves intimidation and humiliation during an initiation for a student organization or body, club, group or sports team. It may involve conduct that is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current or prospective pupil. Hazing does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- Cyberbullying involves bullying conduct that is created or transmitted by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone or other wireless communication device, computer or pager communicating any of the following: 1) a message, text, sound or image; 2) a post on a social network Internet Web site, including a "Burn Page," an impersonation of another student, and a false profile.
- Cyber sexual bullying involves dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more effects described in (1) – (4) above. A photograph or other visual recording shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording or other electronic act.
- Social media bullying involves bullying through forums for social media, such as internet websites with free registration and ease of registration, internet websites offering peer-to-peer instant messaging (such as Snapchat, Tox, FireChat, Orbit, Bleep), internet websites offering comment forums (such as FaceBook, Twitter, Reddit) and internet websites offering image or video posting platforms (such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitch, Imgur).

- **Retaliation:** Retaliation is any adverse action taken against a student because he or she filed a charge of harassment, discrimination, intimidation or bullying complaint to the School or another agency or participated in an investigation about the same (such as an internal investigation or lawsuit), including as a witness. Retaliation also includes adverse action taken against someone who is associated with the individual opposing the perceived harassment, discrimination, intimidation or bullying.
2. **Who the Policy Applies to:** It shall be a violation of this policy for any student, teacher, administrator or other employee of The Cottonwood School to discriminate against, harass, intimidate or bully another student, teacher, administrator, other employee or anyone associated with The Cottonwood School through conduct or communication. This policy applies to all applicants and employees, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or someone not directly connected to The Cottonwood School (e.g. an outside vendor, consultant or customer).
  3. **Where the Policy Applies:** Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work–related setting outside the workplace, such as during business or field trips, meetings and business or school–related social events.
  4. **Responsibility:** All The Cottonwood School employees have a responsibility for keeping our work environment free of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying.
  5. **Reporting:** The Cottonwood School encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, or retaliation, regardless of the offender’s identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victims of such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, the Executive Director, or the Deputy Executive Director. In addition, The Cottonwood School encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct to promptly advise the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome and request that it be discontinued. Often this action alone will resolve the problem. The Cottonwood School recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through formal complaint procedures. Every effort will be made to keep such reports as confidential as possible, although it is understood that an investigation will normally require the involvement of third parties. The Cottonwood School is serious about enforcing its policy against harassment; however, The Cottonwood School cannot resolve a harassment problem that it does not know about. Therefore, employees are responsible for bringing any such problems to The Cottonwood School’s attention so it can take whatever steps are necessary to correct the problems.
  6. **Investigation/Complaint Procedure:** All complaints of harassment or discrimination will be promptly investigated. If the investigation substantiates the accusations, the appropriate corrective action will be taken. This may include, but not be limited to, reprimand, suspension or dismissal, depending on the nature and severity of the offense. Appropriate action will also be taken in the event the accusations are intentionally false or malicious in intent.

Individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy statement or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, the Executive Director, or the Deputy Executive Director. The Cottonwood School encourages the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and appropriate remedial action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained. Therefore, while no fixed reporting period has been established, early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with adequate investigation methods and appropriate corrective actions. Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately. Responsive action may include, for example, training, referral to counseling and/or disciplinary action such as warning, reprimand, withholding of a promotion or pay increase, reassignment, temporary suspension without pay or termination, as The Cottonwood School believes appropriate under the circumstances. Willful false and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

- 7. Consequences for Retaliation:** Retaliation against an individual who has a complaint or has formally reported discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying or has participated in an investigation of such a complaint is a serious violation of this policy and, like discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated and addressed.
- 8. Immigration Status:** If the Charter School possesses information that could indicate immigration status, citizenship status or national origin information, the School shall not use the acquired information to discriminate against any students or families or bar children from enrolling in or attending school. If parents or guardians choose not to provide information that could indicate their or their children's immigration status, citizenship status or national origin information, the School shall not use such actions as a basis to discriminate against any students or families or bar children from enrolling or attending school.

Each year, the School shall educate students about the negative impact of bullying other students based on their actual or perceived immigration status or their religious beliefs or customs. The School shall also train teachers, staff and personnel to ensure that they are aware of their legal duty to take reasonable steps to eliminate a hostile environment and respond to any incidents of harassment based on the actual or perceived characteristics noted above. Such training shall provide School personnel with the skills to do the following:

- Discuss the varying immigration experiences among members of the student body and school community;

- Discuss bullying–prevention strategies with students, and teach students to recognize the behavior and characteristics of bullying perpetrators and victims;
- Identify the signs of bullying or harassing behavior;
- Take immediate corrective action when bullying is observed; and
- Report incidents to the appropriate authorities, including law enforcement in instances of criminal behavior.

**9. Parental Notification:** Each year, the School shall notify parents and guardians of their children’s right to a free public education, regardless of immigration status or religious beliefs. This information shall include information related to the “Know Your Rights” immigration enforcement established by the California Attorney General. The School shall also inform students who are the victims of hate crimes of their right to report such crimes.

**10. Sexual Harassment Poster:** The School shall create a poster that notifies pupils of the applicable written policy on sexual harassment. The poster shall display, at a minimum, all of the following: 1) The rules and procedures for reporting a charge of sexual harassment; 2) The name, phone number and email address of an appropriate school official to contact to report a charge of sexual harassment; 3) The rights of the reporting pupil, the complainant, and the respondent and the responsibilities of the School in accordance with the School’s written policy on sexual harassment.

This poster will be prominently and conspicuously displayed in each bathroom and locker room at the schoolsite. It may be prominently and conspicuously displayed in public areas at the schoolsite that are accessible to, and commonly frequented by students, including, but not limited to classrooms, classroom hallways, gymnasiums, auditoriums and cafeterias. The governing board of the School shall have full discretion to select the appropriate public areas to display the poster at the schoolsite.

**11. Posting:** This policy shall be posted on the School’s internet website in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians/students.