



**New England Municipal Clerks' Institute and Academy
Board of Directors
Anti-Bullying Policy**

Purpose

The Board of Directors is committed to working together to maintain an environment that encourages and supports dignity in this learning experience. Disciplinary guidelines and procedures are set forth for those individuals* who feel they have been subjected to bullying.

*Reference to 'individual' shall include students, faculty and board members of NEMCI&A

Policy

The New England Municipal Clerks' Institute & Academy (NEMCI&A) prohibits bullying by all individuals at all levels.

Individuals who are determined to have bullied another person shall be subject to disciplinary action. Individuals who are determined to have vindictively and intentionally made false complaints of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Any retaliation against a person for filing a bullying charge is prohibited. Individuals found to be retaliating against another individual will result in expulsion without reimbursement and a letter to the local town officials.

Identifying Bullying

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behavior, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. An isolated incident of the behavior described in this definition may be an affront to dignity but a onetime incident is not considered to be bullying.

Bullying manifests itself as various types of behavior, including, but not limited to:

- * Humiliation
- * Intimidation
- * Verbal abuse
- * Physical abuse
- * Emotional abuse
- * Victimization
- * Exclude and isolate
- * Intrude through pestering, spying, stalking
- * Imply threats

When any of the above is repeated or targeted at one person or group, it may be considered 'bullying'.

Responsibilities

1. Chairman of the Board

The Chairman of the Board or designee will direct the investigation of all complaints and will maintain a confidential file on all charges of bullying.

2. Board Members

Board Members, on all levels, are responsible for explaining the complaint procedure to a complainant and to make individuals aware of the policy and to obtain additional information on the subject for them. They are responsible for dealing effectively with complaints as they occur. The individual should also be made aware that the Chairman of the Board will be notified of the complaint and that the Chairman is available for assistance, if they so wish.

3. Status of Investigation

The Chairman, or designee, shall keep the individual informed of the status of the investigation.

Confidentiality

All Board Members shall maintain the confidentiality regarding complaints in order to protect the parties involved, and information shall not be shared with anyone other than those involved in the investigation.

Complaint Procedure

1. Filing

An individual who believes he or she has been bullied may file a complaint with any of the following:

- a. A Board Member
- b. Chairman of the Board

A signed complaint should be filed immediately and should be as specific as possible.

2. Response to a complaint

All Board members, Students and Faculty are expected to treat any complaints immediately, seriously, and confidentially and to give an investigation top priority.

Investigation Procedures

Any Board member receiving a complaint of bullying shall immediately notify the Chairman of the Board. The Chairman, or designee, shall expediently investigate all complaints of bullying.

Investigator's Report

The Chairman shall compile a report of the findings of the investigation and offer advice on appropriate action.

Informal Procedure

While in no way diminishing the issue or the effects on individuals, an informal approach can often resolve matters. As a general rule therefore, an attempt will initially be made to address an allegation of bullying as informally as possible by means of an agreed informal procedure. The objective of this approach is to resolve the difficulty with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved.

- a. Any person who believes he or she is being bullied should explain clearly to the alleged perpetrator(s) that the behavior in question is unacceptable. In circumstances where the complainant finds it difficult to approach the alleged perpetrator(s) directly, he or she should seek help and advice, on a strictly confidential basis, from a Board Member. In this situation the Board Member should listen patiently, be supportive and discuss the various options open to the

person concerned.

b. All reported incidents will be recorded in written form. The importance of factual information is critical.

c. Having consulted with the Board Member, the complainant may request the assistance of the Board Member in raising the issue with the alleged perpetrator(s). In this situation the approach of the Board Member should be by way of a confidential, non-confrontational discussion with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low-key manner.

d. A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure will not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal procedure.

Disciplinary Procedures

After reviewing the facts of the investigation, the Chairman or designee shall administer appropriate discipline to any individual found to be in violation of this policy.

1. Severity

Disciplinary action shall be taken depending on the circumstances and variables of each individual situation. The Board will be consulted to determine the severity of the disciplinary action to be taken. Disciplinary action may range from verbal counseling to termination.

2. Guidelines for Administering Discipline

The following are provided as guidelines for judging the severity of a violation and administering appropriate and fair discipline. Progressive discipline principles will be used. However, each incident will be handled on a case-by-case basis and all the circumstances and variables fairly reviewed in determining the appropriate action.

a. An environment where comments, innuendoes or other language are intended to embarrass, intimidate or cause embarrassment, discomfort or distraction from activities is bullying. These violations generally warrant verbal or written reprimands.

b. Repetitive, one-sided and unwanted verbal, physical or emotional abuse which causes embarrassment, discomfort or distraction, is bullying. These violations may result in expulsion.

c. Frivolous complaints made which result in embarrassment to the innocent individual and result in the waste of the NEMCI&A Board resources will generally warrant a verbal or written reprimand.

d. Intentional and vindictive complaints which results in embarrassment,

discredit to one's character, loss of privacy, emotional duress, or hinders the opportunities of an individual and results in a waste of the NEMCI&A Board resources may result in expulsion.

Appeal Procedure

Any appeal will be made in accordance with the established NEMCI&A procedures and or [applicable labor management agreements.]

Reporting Bullying

This policy regarding the reporting of any bullying incident is consistent with the NEMCI&A policy. When an individual feels that they are being bullied, the following steps are suggested in reporting the bullying.

1. Record the specific comments or behavior that occurred, and when it occurred. Often the specific information is to the point and may be embarrassing; however, it is very important.
2. Report when the incident occurred, where it occurred, if there were any witnesses, if you are aware of any other individuals experiencing the same harassment as you, and any other evidence such as letters, notes, pictures, etc., which contributed to the incidents. Have records of what the offender said or did if you put them on notice. Have a record of exactly what you said or did to the offender in an attempt to prevent or stop the behavior. Record the reactions to your comments.
3. Remember that as an individual who believes that you have been harassed, you have a responsibility to assist the Board in the timely and proper resolution of your complaint. If you are prepared to provide the Board with the above information, it will go a long way in getting to the source of the problem and appropriately resolving it to you and the Board's satisfaction.

Investigation of Complaints

Complaints will be given top priority and handled immediately but an investigation will have to be conducted. All complaints will be forwarded to the Chairman to handle the investigation. Most complaints will not be solved easily, or overnight. An investigation requires interviews with you, the accused and any witnesses. The Chair will assign one Board member to interview the complainant and one Board member to interview the accused, separately and confidentially. They will reconvene with the Chair to discuss the complaint. Subsequently, all parties should be brought together to resolve the situation. Additional interviews may be conducted regarding the circumstances. This can be time consuming, but it must be done in order to be fair to all concerned and to establish the facts. The Chairman will keep you informed periodically of what is happening with the investigation.

Even after you have made a report, write down any other incidents that occur during the investigatory process. You should note the date, time, what occurred, and if there were any witnesses. This information will aid in an investigation and serve as additional evidence. If you feel you are being retaliated against because you have made a report, contact the Chairman. Retaliation is also against policy and will not be tolerated.

The victim of bullying has other rights which would be explained when appropriate. In some bullying cases, the behavior can be verbal, physical or emotional. In these cases the investigator will let the victim know what procedures to follow in regard to those types of behaviors.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of your reported complaint is very important. The Chairman is responsible for assuring that it will only be known to those directly involved in resolving the complaint. You may feel the need to talk to someone, but confidentiality is very important. Talk to the Chairman or designee, who can assist you in dealing with the situation and help you sort out your feelings or assist with any trouble you may be having in dealing with the situation.

Remember that you have a responsibility to assure confidentiality. Talking to the wrong people may result in your situation becoming widely discussed. In some situations it may also be detrimental to the investigation process. Use your discretion.



Policy on Bullying
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, _____, have received and reviewed the Policy on Bullying as
Approved by the Board of Directors of the New England Municipal Clerks'
Institute & Academy.

Signature

Date

Please turn in this acknowledgement at time of registration