

## **Protocol for Responding to Reports of Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence**

### **1. Protocol for Intervention: Staff Members**

A. Any school staff member who witnesses an act of teen dating violence will take the following steps:

- Verbally instruct the offending student to stop the abusive behavior.
- Separate the offending and targeted student.
- Contact the main office staff, who will immediately contact an administrator to assist if needed.
- Send the offending student to the Assistant Principal's office. If necessary, have the student escorted by an administrator or hall monitor.
- If the behavior took place in the classroom, the staff member should initiate a discipline referral.
- If the incident takes place outside the classroom, but still within the school building, the staff member should report the incident to an administrator, who will initiate a discipline referral.
- Report name(s) of any bystanders to an administrator.
- If the incident takes place at a school-sponsored event outside of the building, reports should be made to the supervising staff member on site (for example, the Athletic Director, Assistant Principal, Class Advisor, etc.)

B. Any school staff member who learns of or suspects an act of teen dating violence will take the following steps:

- If comfortable doing so, staff should speak with the alleged targeted student directly. Inform the student of their right to file a complaint of dating abuse any counselor or administrator.
- Following the conversation, the staff member will report their concerns verbally to the principal or their designee as soon as possible but no later than the end of the student's school day and must submit a written report no later than one day after.
- If a staff member does not feel comfortable talking directly with the student about their concerns, they should report the concerns verbally to the principal or their designee as soon as possible but no later than the end of the student's school day and must submit a written report no later than one day after.

### **2. Protocol for Intervention: Assistant Principal or Principal**

An assistant principal or principal who witnesses or learns of an act of teen dating abuse will take the following steps:

- Take action to ensure the physical safety and emotional well-being of the targeted student. Contact the school nurse, a guidance counselor or school psychologist to provide assistance.

- Verbally instruct the alleged offending student to stop the abusive behavior. Investigate the complaint in accordance with the procedure outlined in JICFC. Meet separately with the targeted student and alleged offending student. Seek the targeted student's input as to the best outcome of the situation. Assess the student's safety at school and at home, and discuss implications of notifying parents. Gather information from any students, teachers, guidance counselors, or staff members who may have any knowledge of the incidents. Document what they learn. Assistant principals should alert the Principal to this process.
- Offer the targeted student assistance in documenting the incident.
- Further investigate the complaint by speaking with the alleged offender and any witnesses or bystanders separately. Document all information.
- If the assessment by the administrator determines that the incident may constitute a crime, the administrator should notify the School Resource Officer or police immediately, as well as the Superintendent.
- Incidents involving sexual contact with students under the age of 16, or dating or sexual abuse of students under the age of 18 must be reported to the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- If the incident involves sex discrimination or sexual harassment, it must be reported to the Assistant Superintendent, who is the District's Title IX Coordinator.
- The targeted student should be referred to their counselor or school psychologist. If the school psychologist or counselor determines that the targeted student's mental health has been placed at risk, the counselor or school psychologist will make appropriate referrals.
- If the students are under 18, contact the parents/guardians of the targeted student and the alleged offender to inform them that an alleged incident of dating violence has occurred. Ask the parents/guardians to attend separate family meetings with the Assistant Principal and their child to discuss the incident. At no time should the targeted student and alleged offending party be brought together for a meeting.
- Track and document the progress of investigation and intervention to ensure that all important actions are taken.
- Schools must notify both parties in writing of the outcome of the investigation into the act or incident of dating violence.
- The school administrator must also refer the student and/or the student's parents/guardians to the Mansfield Public Schools Non-Discrimination Policy and Prohibition against Sexual Harassment, which addresses procedures for informal resolution and filing of formal complaints, and the Mansfield Public Schools Anti-Bullying Policy and provide copies of the same upon request, when these policies are applicable.

### **3. Working with the Targeted Student**

Assistant Principals and Principals will use the following methods of intervention with the targeted student:

- Conference with the targeted student and parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Identify immediate actions that can be taken to increase the targeted student's safety and ability to participate in school, minimizing fear or intimidation. Discuss this plan

- with the necessary teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologist, school resource officer, school nurse and hall monitors where appropriate.
- Inform the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) of school and community resources as needed, including their right to file charges or seek legal protection. Offer access to school or community based counseling as needed.
  - Encourage the student to report further incidents.
  - Monitor the targeted student's safety at school and school-sponsored events as needed. Assist the targeted student with safety planning for the school day and at school-sponsored events with assistance from the student's guidance counselor.
  - Assist students in accessing community-based resources for safety planning for after-school hours.
  - Document the meeting and any action plans on an Incident Report Form. If the targeted student or parent(s)/guardian(s) decline to document the incident, note this on the form.
  - Store all complaints and related documentation in a separate, confidential file and document subsequent follow-up actions and complaints as appropriate.
  - Assistant principals may provide the targeted student with the right to have a support person of their choosing present during appropriate stages of the investigation.

#### **4. Working with the Alleged Offender**

The Mansfield Public Schools require every reasonable effort be made to protect the due process rights of the alleged offender. At their discretion, administrators will adopt the following methods of intervention with the alleged offender:

- Conference with the alleged offender and parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Allow the alleged offender an opportunity to respond in writing to the allegations. Additionally, investigate the allegation in accordance with Policy JICFC.
- Identify and implement disciplinary and other actions and consequences that will be taken to prevent further incidents. Inform the alleged offender and parent/guardian of help and support available at school or in the community as needed. Offer access to school or community based counseling.
- Address the seriousness of retaliation against the targeted student for reporting the incident or cooperating with the investigation. Inform the alleged offender that retaliation or threats of retaliation in any form designed to intimidate the targeted student, those who are witnesses, or those investigating an incident will not be tolerated. In most cases retaliation or a threat of retaliation will result in the imposition of a short or long-term school suspension and, in appropriate cases, referral to the police.
- Document the meeting and action plans as appropriate.

#### **5. Ensuring Confidentiality**

The Mansfield Public Schools recognizes its responsibility to safeguard the privacy of its students, staff, and their families. The MPS, therefore, is committed to protecting the confidentiality of personal information concerning students, families, and staff. Disclosure of

information about students may be governed by federal and state laws. School administrators will consult with the MPS legal counsel as needed to comply with state and federal laws.

- Under state law, any information about a student's status as a target or perpetrator of dating abuse or as the petitioner or respondent of an order of protection and other related information that is either generated by or provided to school officials, regardless of its form, is part of the individual's student record (*see* Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, (603 CMR §23.00)). The information is confidential and must be kept private and secure, and may not be disclosed to third parties without the written consent of the parent or eligible student, except in limited circumstances. An "eligible student" is a student who is 14 years of age or older or who has entered the 9th grade, unless the school committee has extended rights to younger students or those who have not yet entered 9th grade (603 CMR §23.02). Once the student reaches the age of 18, the student or the parent may consent to the disclosure of information from the student's record to third parties unless the student has limited the parent's right in that regard. (Although a student 18 years of age or older has authority to limit the parent's right to consent to disclosure of their student records, the student cannot limit the parent's right to review them.)
- Authorized school personnel may have access to student records of students to whom they are providing services when access is necessary to perform their official duties (603 CMR §23.07(3)). In these circumstances, written consent of the eligible student or parent is not required. For example, if the student or student's parent has provided the school a copy of a court order of protection issued on behalf of one student against another student in the same school, the school may need to inform the assistant principal, the school nurse, teachers, and the student's guidance counselor for safety planning and other related purposes.
- A school may disclose information to parties in connection with a health or safety emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals, (603 CMR §23.07.)

#### **Parental Notification and Disclosure**

If school personnel determine that a student is currently in danger or there is potential for danger related to dating abuse, a parent/guardian must be notified. School counselors and administrators will work together with students experiencing dating abuse to find ways of involving parents/guardians in increasing their child's safety. If students choose to notify their parents that they are experiencing abuse, school personnel will assist the student in developing a plan for such disclosure, including meeting with students and parents as needed. The student may disclose the name of the alleged offending student to their parent, but the school may not be able to disclose the name depending on the circumstances and safety plan put into place.

## **6. Warning Signs of Dating Violence**

A pattern of behaviors may be an important sign that a student is involved in an unhealthy or abusive dating relationship. The Mansfield Public Schools provide the following warning signs to educate the school community on the characteristics that a student in an unhealthy or abusive relationship might exhibit. Warning signs may include but not be limited to the following:

- Name Calling and put downs – Does one student in the relationship use name-calling or putdowns to belittle or intimidate the other student?
- Extreme Jealousy – Does one student in the relationship appear jealous when the other talks with peers?
- Making Excuses – Does one student in the relationship make excuses for the other?
- Canceling or changing plans –Does one student cancel plans often, and at the last minute? Do the reasons make sense or sound untrue?
- Monitoring – Does one student call, text, or check up on the other student constantly. Does one student demand to know the other's whereabouts or plans?
- Uncontrolled Anger – Have you seen one of the students in the relationship lose their temper or throw and break things in anger?
- Isolation – Has one student in the relationship given up spending time with family and friends? Has the student stopped participating in activities that were once very important?
- Dramatic Changes – Has the student in the relationships appearance changed? Lost or gained weight? Does the student seem depressed?
- Injuries – Does the student in the relationship have unexplained injuries? Does the student give explanations that seem untrue?
- Quick Progression – Did the student's relationship get serious very quickly?

Many of these warning signs make a connection to one student in the relationship asserting control and power over the other. Recognizing one or more signs of teen dating violence plays an important role in shaping a policy to prevent, educate and intervene in acts or incidents of dating violence.

Updated:        January 26, 2021  
                      January 23, 2018

Adopted:        December 15, 2015

### **Cross References:**

JICFB Bullying Prevention and Intervention  
JICFB-R Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan  
JIC Student Discipline

**Legal References:**

[Implementation of policy and discipline code addressing teen dating violence in public schools](#)

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section2C>

**Resources:**

[Massachusetts Children's Alliance and Child Advocacy Centers](#)

<http://cacofbc.org>

[Jane Doe Inc](#)

<http://www.janedoe.org/>

[Boston Public Health Commission](#)

<http://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/violence-prevention/start-strong/Pages/Start-Strong.aspx>

[Emerge: Counseling and Education to Sop Domestic Violence](#)

<http://www.emergedv.com/>

[Break the Cycle](#)

<https://www.breakthecycle.org/>

[Love is Respect: Home of the National Teen Dating Abuse helpline](#)

<http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

[Futures Without Violence](#)

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:

1-866-331-6474

text : loveis to 22522