

Vancouver Public Schools Protect Students from Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB)

Schools are meant to be safe and inclusive environments where all students are protected from Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB), including in the classroom, on the school bus, in school sports, and during other school activities. This section defines HIB, explains what to do when you see or experience it, and our school's process for responding to it.

What is HIB?

- A. HIB is any intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act of a student that:
 1. Physically harms another student or damages their property;
 2. Has the effect of greatly interfering with another student's education; or,
 3. Is so severe, persistent, or significant that it creates an intimidating or threatening education environment for other students.
- B. HIB generally involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. HIB is not allowed, by law, in our schools.

How can I make a report or complaint about HIB?

Talk to any school staff member (consider starting with whoever you are most comfortable with). You may use our District's reporting form to share concerns about HIB (<https://vansd.org/incident-report/>) but reports about HIB can be made in writing or verbally. Your report can be made anonymously, if you are uncomfortable revealing your identity, or confidentially if you prefer it not be shared with other students involved with the report. No disciplinary action will be taken against another student based **solely** on an anonymous or confidential report. If a staff member is notified of, observes, overhears, or otherwise witnesses HIB, they must take prompt and appropriate action to stop the HIB behavior and to prevent it from happening again. Our district also has a HIB Compliance Officer (Elizabeth Mikaele: elizabeth.mikaele@vansd.org) that supports prevention and response to HIB.

What happens after I make a report about HIB?

- A. If you report HIB, school staff must attempt to resolve the concerns. If the concerns are resolved, then no further action may be necessary. However, if you feel that you or someone you know is the victim of unresolved, severe, or persistent HIB that requires further investigation and action, then you should request an official HIB investigation.
- B. Also, the school must take actions to ensure that those who report HIB don't experience retaliation.

What is the investigation process?

- A. When you report a complaint, the HIB Compliance Officer or staff member leading the investigation must notify the families of the students involved with the complaint and must make sure a prompt and thorough investigation takes place. The investigation must be completed within 5 school days, unless you agree on a different timeline. If your complaint involves circumstances that require a longer investigation, the district will notify you with the anticipated date for their response.
- B. When the investigation is complete, the HIB Compliance Officer or the staff member leading the investigation must provide you with the outcomes of the investigation within 2 school days. This response should include:
 1. A summary of the results of the investigation;
 2. A determination of whether the HIB is substantiated;
 3. Any corrective measures or remedies needed; and
 4. Clear information about how you can appeal the decision.

What are the next steps if I disagree with the outcome?

- A. For the student designated as the "targeted student" in a complaint:

If you do not agree with the school district's decision, you may appeal the decision and include any additional information regarding the complaint to the superintendent, or the person assigned to lead the appeal, and then to the school board.
- B. For the student designated as the "aggressor" in a complaint:

A student found to be an "aggressor" in a HIB complaint may not appeal the decision of a HIB investigation. They can, however, appeal corrective actions that result from the findings of the HIB investigation.

- B. For more information about the HIB complaint process, including important timelines, please see the district's <https://vansd.org/incident-report/> or the district's HIB Policy 3207 and Procedure 3207, included in this handbook.

Our School Stands Against Discrimination

Discrimination can happen when someone is treated differently or unfairly because they are part of a protected class, including their race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, creed, disability, use of a service animal, or veteran or military status.

What is discriminatory harassment?

- A. Discriminatory harassment can include teasing and name-calling; graphic and written statements; or other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating. Discriminatory harassment happens when the conduct is based on a student's protected class and is serious enough to create a hostile environment. A hostile environment is created when conduct is so severe, pervasive, or persistent that it limits a student's ability to participate in, or benefit from, the school's services, activities, or opportunities.
- B. The District's Nondiscrimination Policy and Procedure 3210 is included in this handbook or visit <https://vansd.org/nondiscrimination/>

What is sexual harassment?

- A. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct or communication that is sexual in nature and substantially interferes with a student's educational performance or creates an intimidating or hostile environment. Sexual harassment can also occur when a student is led to believe they must submit to unwelcome sexual conduct or communication to gain something in return, such as a grade or a place on a sports team.
- B. Examples of sexual harassment can include pressuring a person for sexual actions or favors; unwelcome touching of a sexual nature; graphic or written statements of a sexual nature; distributing sexually explicit texts, e-mails, or pictures; making sexual jokes, rumors, or suggestive remarks; and physical violence, including rape and sexual assault.
- C. Our schools do not discriminate based on sex and prohibit sex discrimination in all of our education programs and employment, as required by Title IX and state law.
- D. The District's Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure 3205 is included in this handbook.

What should my school do about discriminatory and sexual harassment?

When a school becomes aware of possible discriminatory or sexual harassment, it must investigate and stop the harassment. The school must address any effects the harassment had on the student at school, including eliminating the hostile environment, and make sure that the harassment does not happen again.

What can I do if I'm concerned about discrimination or harassment?

- A. Talk to a District Coordinator or submit a written complaint. You may contact the following school district staff members to report your concerns, ask questions, or learn more about how to resolve your concerns.

Concerns about discrimination please contact the District's civil rights coordinator:

Janell Ephraim
Civil Rights Coordinator
Vancouver Public Schools
2901 Falk Rd.
Vancouver, WA 98661
360-313-1000
Janell.ephraim@vansd.org

Concerns about sex discrimination, including sexual harassment contact the District's Title IX Coordinator:

Jeff Fish
Title IX Coordinator
Vancouver Public Schools
2901 Falk Rd.
Vancouver, WA 98661

360-313-1000
Jeff.fish@vansd.org

Concerns about disability discrimination contact the District's Section 504 Coordinator:

Allison Abernathy
Section 504 Coordinator
Vancouver Public Schools
2901 Falk Rd.
Vancouver, WA 98661
360-313-1000
allison.abernathy@vansd.org

Concerns about discrimination based on gender identity contact the District's Gender Inclusive Schools Coordinator:

Andre Hargunani
Gender-Inclusive Schools Coordinator
Vancouver Public Schools
2901 Falk Rd.
Vancouver, WA 98661
360-313-1000
Andre.hargunani@vansd.org

- B. To submit a written complaint, describe the conduct or incident that may be discriminatory and send it by mail, fax, email, or hand delivery to the school principal, District Superintendent, or Civil Rights Coordinator. Submit the complaint as soon as possible for a prompt investigation, and within one year of the conduct or incident.

What happens after I file a discrimination complaint?

- A. The Civil Rights Coordinator will give you a copy of the District's discrimination complaint procedure. The Civil Rights Coordinator must make sure a prompt and thorough investigation takes place. The investigation must be completed within thirty (30) calendar days unless you agree to a different timeline. If your complaint involves exceptional circumstances that require a longer investigation, the Civil Rights Coordinator will notify you in writing with the anticipated date for their response.
- B. When the investigation is complete, the District Superintendent or the staff member leading the investigation will send you a written response. This response will include:
1. A summary of the results of the investigation;
 2. A determination of whether the school district failed to comply with civil rights laws;
 3. Any corrective measures or remedies needed; and
 4. Notice about how you can appeal the decision.

What are the next steps if I disagree with the outcome?

If you do not agree with the outcome of your complaint, you may appeal the decision. More information about this process, including important timelines, is included in the district's Nondiscrimination Procedure 3210 and Sexual Harassment Procedure 3205, which are included in this handbook.

I already submitted an HIB complaint – what will my school do?

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying (HIB) can also be discrimination if it's related to a protected class. If you give your school a written report of HIB that involves discrimination or sexual harassment, your school will notify the Civil Rights Coordinator. The District will investigate the complaint using both the Nondiscrimination Procedure 3210 and the HIB Procedure 3207 to fully resolve your complaint.

Who else can help with HIB or Discrimination Concerns?

- A. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
1. All reports must start locally at the school or district level. However, OSPI can assist students, families, communities, and school staff with questions about state law, the HIB complaint process, and the discrimination and sexual harassment complaint processes.

2. OSPI School Safety Center (For questions about harassment, intimidation, and bullying)
Website: ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/school-safety-center
Email: schoolsafety@k12.wa.us
Phone: 360-725-6068
 3. OSPI Equity and Civil Rights Office (For questions about discrimination and sexual harassment)
Website: ospi.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/equity-and-civil-rights
Email: equity@k12.wa.us
Phone: 360-725-6162
- B. Washington State Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO)
The Washington State Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds works with families, communities, and schools to address problems together so every student can fully participate and thrive in Washington’s K-12 public schools. OEO provides informal conflict resolution tools, coaching, facilitation, and training about family, community engagement, and systems advocacy.
- Website: www.oeo.wa.gov
Email: oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov
Phone: 1-866-297-2597
- C. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces federal nondiscrimination laws in public schools, including those that prohibit discrimination based on sex, race, color, national origin, disability, and age. OCR also has a discrimination complaint process.
- Website: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>
Email: orc@ed.gov
Phone: 800-421-3481

Our School is Gender-Inclusive

- A. In Washington, all students have the right to be treated consistent with their gender identity at school. Our school will:
1. Address students by their requested name and pronouns, with or without a legal name change.
 2. Change a student’s gender designation and have their gender accurately reflected in school records.
 3. Allow students to use restrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identity.
 4. Allow students to participate in sports, physical education courses, field trips, and overnight trips in accordance with their gender identity.
 5. Keep health and education information confidential and private.
 6. Allow students to wear clothing that reflects their gender identity and apply dress codes without regard to a student’s gender or perceived gender.
 7. Protect students from teasing, bullying, or harassment based on their gender or gender identity.
- B. Review the District’s Gender-Inclusive Schools Policy and Procedure 3211, included in this handbook. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Gender-Inclusive Schools Coordinator:
- Andre Hargunani
Gender-Inclusive Schools Coordinator
Vancouver Public Schools
2901 Falk Rd.
Vancouver, WA 98661
360-313-1000
Andre.hargunani@vansd.org
- C. For concerns about discrimination or discriminatory harassment based on gender identity or gender expression, please see the information above.