

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, §2C, the Carver Public Schools are committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and respectful school environment free from violence and harassment. Teen dating violence occurring in any setting is unlawful, and teen dating violence occurring in any school setting will not be tolerated. Further, retaliation against an individual who has complained about or cooperated in an investigation of teen dating violence will not be tolerated. The Carver Public Schools will respond promptly to complaints and reports of teen dating violence or retaliation, and corrective action will be taken where necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate. The Superintendent shall develop administrative guidelines consistent with this policy.

Definition

Teen dating violence (also sometimes called teen or adolescent relationship violence) is a form of intimate partner violence that includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, or psychological abuse used to exert power and control over a current or former dating partner. Such conduct may occur in person, online, or through technology and may include, but is not limited to:

- Physical abuse: intentional use of force against a partner, such as hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, or throwing objects.
- Sexual abuse: any unwanted sexual behavior or coercion, including pressure to engage in sexual activity, unwanted touching, taking/sharing private intimate images without consent, or interference with a student's ability to give consent.
- Emotional or psychological abuse: behaviors intended to control, isolate, or intimidate a partner, such as threats, manipulation, humiliation, excessive jealousy, or controlling a partner's activities, friendships, or appearance.
- Verbal abuse: repeated use of language to demean or threaten, including name-calling, put downs or insults, yelling, or threats directed at the partner or others.
- Technological abuse: use of digital devices or platforms to harass, monitor, threaten, or control a partner, such as repeated texting or calling, tracking location, accessing accounts without permission, or sharing private images without consent.

Teen dating violence can affect students of any gender, sexual orientation, or background and may occur within in-person or virtual relationships. Such conduct may also constitute harassment, a form of discrimination that is prohibited by federal and state law; and/or such conduct may constitute bullying, including without limitation, cyberbullying, also prohibited by state law. Such conduct is also prohibited by the Carver Public Schools Student Handbook, Policy AC: Non-Discrimination Policy including Prohibition against Harassment and Retaliation and Policy JICFB: Policy Prohibiting Bullying.

Warning Signs

Teen dating violence often (but not always) involves patterns of controlling behavior that may escalate over time and may not be visible to those outside the relationship. Thus, it is important to know how to recognize warning signs of when you or someone else may be experiencing teen dating violence. Such warning signs

may include, but are not limited to:

- Excessive jealousy or attempts to control a partner's behavior or relationships,
- Isolation from friends, family, or activities,
- Repeated or threatening communication, including through electronic means,
- Sudden changes in behavior, mood, or academic performance,
- Evidence of fear, distress, or unexplained injuries, and
- Cycles of abusive behavior followed by apologies or promises to change.

If you have concerns that you or someone else may be suffering from teen dating violence, it is important to report this to a trusted adult/district staff member.

Reporting and Investigation

If any student, parent/guardian of a student, or other community member believes that a student has been subjected to dating-related violence, they may bring the matter to the attention of any district staff member, or the building principal/administrator of the school where the child attends. Everyone is encouraged to report incidents of dating-related violence as soon as possible. Reports may be made either verbally or in writing.

Staff members shall immediately report any instance of dating-related violence that the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee. Additionally, school staff must remember to comply with all statutory reporting obligations for suspected abuse and neglect.

When the Carver Public Schools receives a report of teen dating violence, whether the incident occurred on or off school property, or a report that a restraining order has been violated on school property, while traveling to or from school, or at a school-sponsored event, the District will promptly notify the parents/guardians of the victim and the appropriate authorities of the alleged incident, as required by M.G.L. c. 71, §2C and consistent with applicable state and federal confidentiality and student privacy laws.

The District shall take prompt and appropriate interim measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator, and school community. Such measures shall be individualized, non-disciplinary, and designed to minimize the burden on the parties while maintaining access to educational programs and activities. The District will consider the expressed needs and wishes of the alleged victim and perpetrator when determining appropriate measures and will monitor and adjust such measures as necessary throughout the investigation process.

An investigation will be conducted, including interviews with the victim (if willing to be interviewed) and the person filing the complaint, to determine if the behaviors are dating violence or other forms of harassment. The alleged offender will be interviewed separately. When the investigation is complete, parties involved will be informed, to the extent appropriate, of the results.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent practicable, consistent with the District's obligation to investigate and respond effectively. When informing others of the allegations (only as necessary), the importance of maintaining confidentiality will be stressed. Where applicable, the District will follow its Title

IX, bullying, discrimination, and harassment policies and procedures and may coordinate with law enforcement or other agencies as appropriate.

Following the conclusion of the investigation, students found to have engaged in teen dating violence shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Carver Public Schools Code of Conduct, Student Handbook, and District policies (if applicable), up to and including suspension or expulsion, consistent with applicable law. The District may also implement educational or behavioral interventions to address the conduct and promote healthy relationship skills.

Safety Plans

When/If a report is determined to be credible, the Carver Public Schools shall take appropriate steps to ensure student safety and prevent further misconduct. Such steps may include the development of a safety plan and access to supports such as:

- Adjustments to class schedules or school routines,
- Identification of safe spaces or staff supports,
- Modifications to transportation or extracurricular participation, and/or
- Directives limiting or prohibiting contact between students.

The safety plan will be shared with relevant staff, the parents/caretakers of the victim and offending student, or others, as necessary to implement the plan. Only necessary information about the specifics of a teen dating violence allegation or confirmed incident will be shared to the extent necessary to implement the safety plan. The District may also provide counseling services or referrals to community-based resources.

Prevention and Education

The district will provide age-appropriate health education to students, which will include education on healthy relationships, peer relationships, social awareness, and self-management. Mandatory training for all staff will include the district's policy on Teen Dating Abuse Prevention. Training will highlight staff's responsibility to provide a safe environment free of harassment as well as their responsibility to report any alleged violations of the policy. The guidelines and procedures for reporting alleged violations are outlined in Policy AC as well as the Staff Handbook and is also included in the annual mandatory training for staff.

CROSS REFS.: [AC](#), Non-Discrimination Policy including Prohibition against Harassment and Retaliation
[JICFB](#), Policy Prohibiting Bullying
 Student Handbook, Grades 6-12

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [71:2C 4](#)
 Title IX: 20 U.S.C. § 1681
 34 CFR § 106.40(b)

REFERENCES: CDC: [Dating Matters and Teen Dating Violence Resources](#)
 CDC: [Veto Violence, Healthy Relationships Toolkit](#)
 CDC: [REACH Beyond Domestic Violence – Teen Dating Violence Education](#)
[YWCA Central Massachusetts – Prevention and Education Programs](#)

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