

RESPONDING TO CYBERBULLYING AND SEXTING – TIPS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying! Cyberbullying is the use of any electronic communication technology to embarrass, humiliate, spread rumors, threaten or intimidate. Sending sexually explicit images, even consensually, may be considered distribution of child pornography, which is a crime! All types of bullying are subject to disciplinary action, suspension and possibly expulsion (BUL 5212.1 and Ed. Code 48900(r)).

Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in several ways. The electronic communications allow for a much broader audience and for anonymity on the part of the person who posts or sends. Oftentimes people will post, text or email messages that they would never say in person. The person who is targeted may feel publically humiliated since the viewing audience is virtually limitless.

Sexting is the posting and distribution of sexualized images or messages. The person typically posts or sends provocative pictures of themselves voluntarily. Posting, possession and distributing sexual images could constitute sexual harassment, or possession or distribution of child pornography, which is a crime. Law enforcement should be notified.

TIPS

The following tips provide administrators with practical strategies to respond to cyberbullying and sexting

- Cyberbullying that occurs **on campus** or during school-sponsored events are subject to the same disciplinary action as any other form of bullying. Administrators may review the activity on any District owned computer.
- If the alleged cyberbullying or sexting occurs *during the school day* on a personal cell phone, and the administrator has *reasonable suspicion* that the student has committed, or is about to commit, a crime or has violated statutory laws or school rules, the administrator may search the student's electronic device in accordance with the established District guidelines. Cell phones and electronic devices may be seized and searched only for content that is applicable to the nature of the suspicion. Evidence of threats or criminal activity should be addressed according to district guidelines.
- Administrators shall not download posts onto their personal or district equipment that constitute sexting. Printed evidence should be kept in a secured location, as approved and authorized by your direct supervisor and law enforcement.
- The school has jurisdiction over **off-campus** cyberbullying and sexting **only if** there is a substantial disruption to the school environment or the target's ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or privileges.
- While circumstances may limit schools capacity to discipline off-site behavior, schools do have unlimited capacity to educate.

For additional resources on cyberbullying, refer to <http://humanrelations.lausd.net>