



**VIBRANT MINDS CHARTER SCHOOL**  
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## **VMCS BOARD POLICY HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND BULLYING POLICY**

Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are all disruptive behaviors, which interfere with scholars' ability to learn, negatively affect scholar engagement, diminish school safety, and contribute to a hostile school environment. As such, Vibrant Minds Charter School (VMCS) prohibits any acts of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying altogether.

As used in this policy, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are described as the intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, written communication or cyber-bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, based on the actual or perceived characteristics of mental or physical disability, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions, and parental status), sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, immigration status, nationality (including national origin, country of origin, and citizenship), race or ethnicity (including ancestry, color, ethnic group identification, ethnic background, and traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles such as braids, locs, and twists), religion (including agnosticism and atheism), religious affiliation, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, age or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics or based on any other characteristic protected under applicable state or federal law or local ordinance. Hereafter, such actions are referred to as "misconduct prohibited by this Policy."

To the extent possible, VMCS will make reasonable efforts to prevent scholars from being discriminated against, harassed, intimidated, and/or bullied, and will take action to investigate, respond, address and report on such behaviors in a timely manner. VMCS school staff who witness acts of misconduct prohibited by this Policy will take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so.

This policy applies to incidents occurring on the school campus, at school-sponsored events, and activities regardless of the location, through school-owned technology, and through other electronic means, whether perpetrated by a scholar, employee, parent/guardian, volunteer, independent contractor, or other person with whom VMCS does business, and all acts of VMCS's Board of Directors (Board) in enacting policies and procedures that govern VMCS.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This policy becomes effective on August 1, 2024. Conduct occurring before August 1, 2024 will be addressed in accordance with the former version of this policy, which was entitled "Hazing Intimidation and Bullying Policy."

VMCS complies with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and local ordinances in its investigation of and response to reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

## **Definitions**

**Harassment** – Harassment means conduct based upon one or more of the protected characteristics listed above that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual’s educational or work environment, or that creates a hostile educational or work environment. Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes, comments, or slurs.
- Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement, or interfering with work or school based on any of the protected characteristics listed above.
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.
- Deferential or preferential treatment based on any of the protected characteristics listed above.

**Bullying** – Bullying is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act. Bullying includes one or more acts committed by a scholar or group of scholars that may constitute hate violence, or creates an intimidating and/or hostile educational environment, directed toward one or more scholars that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- Placing a reasonable scholar<sup>2</sup> or scholars in fear of harm to that scholar’s or those scholars’ person or property.
- Causing a reasonable scholar to experience a substantially detrimental effect on the scholar’s physical or mental health.
- Causing a reasonable scholar to experience a substantial interference with the scholar’s academic performance.
- Causing a reasonable scholar to experience a substantial interference with the scholar’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by VMCS.

**Cyberbullying** – Cyberbullying is an electronic act that includes the transmission of harassing communication, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, video or images on the Internet,

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<sup>2</sup> “Reasonable scholar” is defined as a scholar, including, but not limited to, a scholar with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of the scholar’s age, or for a person of the scholar’s age with the scholar’s exceptional needs.

social media, or other technologies using a telephone, computer, or any wireless communication device. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account and assuming that person's identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

**Electronic Act** – An Electronic Act means the creation or transmission originated on or off the school-site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- A message, text, sound, video, or image.
- A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
  - Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in the definition of “bullying,” above.
  - Creating a credible impersonation of another actual scholar for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of “bullying,” above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a scholar for the purpose of bullying the scholar and such that another scholar would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the scholar was or is the scholar who was impersonated.
  - Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of “bullying,” above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious scholar or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual scholar other than the scholar who created the false profile.
- An act of “Cyber sexual bullying” including, but not limited to:
  - The dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a scholar to another scholar or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in definition of “bullying,” above. A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
  - “Cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
- Notwithstanding the definitions of “bullying” and “electronic act” above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

### **Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Procedures**

VMCS has adopted the following procedures for preventing acts of bullying, including cyberbullying.

## **Cyberbullying Prevention Procedures**

VMCS advises scholars:

- To never share passwords, personal data, or private photos online.
- To think about what they are doing carefully before posting and by emphasizing that comments cannot be retracted once they are posted.
- That personal information revealed on social media can be shared with anyone including parents, teachers, administrators, and potential employers. Scholars should never reveal information that would make them uncomfortable if the world had access to it. Social media forums that make scholars vulnerable include –
  - Internet websites with free registration and ease of registration.
  - Internet websites offering peer-to-peer instant messaging.
  - Internet websites offering comment forums or sections.
  - Internet websites offering image or video posting platforms.
- To consider how it would feel receiving such comments before making comments about others online.

VMCS informs its employees, scholars, and parents/guardians of VMCS's policies regarding the use of technology in and out of the classroom. VMCS encourages parents/guardians to discuss these policies with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with such policies.

## **Education**

VMCS employees cannot always be present when bullying incidents occur, so educating scholars about bullying is a key prevention technique to limit bullying from happening. VMCS advises scholars that hateful and/or demeaning behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable in our society and at VMCS and encourages scholars to practice compassion and respect each other.

VMCS educates scholars to accept all scholar peers regardless of protected characteristics (including but not limited to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identification, physical or cognitive disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, and immigration status) and about the negative impact of bullying other scholars based on protected characteristics.

VMCS's bullying prevention education also discusses the differences between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and includes sample situations to help scholars learn and practice appropriate behavior and to develop techniques and strategies to respond in a non-aggressive way to bullying-type behaviors. Scholars will also develop confidence and learn how to advocate for themselves and others, and when to go to an adult for help.

VMCS informs VMCS employees, scholars, and parents/guardians of this Policy and encourages parents/guardians to discuss this Policy with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with this Policy.

### **Professional Development**

VMCS annually makes available the online training module developed by the California Department of Education pursuant Education Code section 32283.5(a) to its certificated employees and all other VMCS employees who have regular interaction with scholars.

VMCS informs certificated employees about the common signs that a scholar is a target of bullying including:

- Physical cuts or injuries
- Lost or broken personal items
- Fear of going to school/practice/games
- Loss of interest in school, activities, or friends
- Trouble sleeping or eating
- Anxious/sick/nervous behavior or distracted appearance
- Self-destructiveness or displays of odd behavior
- Decreased self-esteem

VMCS also informs certificated employees about the groups of scholars determined by VMCS and available research to be at elevated risk for bullying and provides its certificated employees with information on existing school and community resources related to the support of these groups. These groups include, but are not limited to:

- Scholars who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth (“LGBTQ”) and those youth perceived as LGBTQ; and
- Scholars with physical or learning disabilities.

VMCS encourages its employees to demonstrate effective problem-solving, anger management, and self-confidence skills for VMCS’s scholars.

## **Complaint Procedures**

### **Scope of the Complaint Procedures**

VMCS will comply with its Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) policy when investigating and responding to complaints alleging unlawful harassment, discrimination, intimidation, or bullying against a protected group or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of the protected characteristics set forth in the UCP that:

- Are written and signed;
- Filed by an individual who alleges that they have personally suffered unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, or by one who believes any specific class of individuals has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying based on a protected characteristic, or by a duly authorized representative who alleges that an individual scholar has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying; and
- Submitted to the VMCS UCP Compliance Officer not later than six (6) months from the date the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying occurred, or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying.

VMCS will comply with its Title IX Policy when investigating and responding to complaints alleging sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, in its education program or activity, as applicable.

The following procedures shall be utilized for complaints of misconduct prohibited by this Policy that do not fall within the scope of VMCS’s Title IX Policy or comply with the writing, timeline, or other formal filing requirements of the UCP. A copy of VMCS’s Title IX Policy and UCP is available in the main office.

### **Submitting a Report or Complaint**

All staff are expected to provide appropriate supervision to enforce standards of conduct and, if they observe or become aware of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, to intervene when safe to do so, call for assistance, and report such incidents. The Board requires staff to follow the procedures in this Policy for reporting alleged acts of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

Reports and complaints of misconduct prohibited by this Policy shall be submitted to the Executive Director (or the Chair of the Board if the complaint is against the Executive Director) as soon as possible after the incidents giving rise to the report or complaint.

Complaints regarding such misconduct may also be made to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Civil law remedies, including, but not limited to, injunctions, restraining orders, or other remedies or orders may also be available to complainants.

While submission of a written report is not required, and VMCS will investigate and respond to all oral and written reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, the reporting party is

encouraged to submit a written report. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action cannot be based solely on an anonymous report.

Scholars are expected to report all incidents of misconduct prohibited by this Policy and other verbal or physical abuses. Any scholar who feels they are a target of such behavior should immediately contact a teacher, counselor, the Executive Director, a staff person or a family member so that the scholar can get assistance in resolving the issue in a manner that is consistent with this Policy.

VMCS acknowledges and respects every individual's right to privacy. All reports and complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the integrity of the process to the greatest extent possible. This includes keeping the identity of the reporter and/or complainant confidential, as appropriate, except to the extent necessary to comply with applicable law, carry out the investigation and/or to resolve the issue, as determined by VMCS on a case-by-case basis.

VMCS prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual who files a report or complaint, testifies, assists, participates, or refuses to participate in any investigation or proceeding related to misconduct prohibited by this Policy. Such participation or lack of participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades, or work assignments of the individual. Individuals alleging retaliation in violation of this Policy may file a grievance using the procedures set forth in this Policy.

### **Investigation and Response**

Upon receipt of a report or complaint of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, the Executive Director or designee will promptly initiate an investigation. In most cases, a thorough investigation will take no more than twenty-five (25) school days.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Executive Director or designee will, to the extent possible with respect to confidentiality laws, provide the complainant with information about the investigation and resolution of the incident/situation. However, the Executive Director or designee will not reveal confidential information related to other scholars or employees.

If the complaint is against the Executive Director, a non-employee Board member who is not the Board Chair or a parent/guardian of a scholar at VMCS will conduct a fact-finding investigation and provide the complainant with information about the investigation and resolution of the incident/situation.

### **Consequences**

Scholars or employees who engage in misconduct prohibited by this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from VMCS or termination of employment.

### **Right of Appeal**

Should a complainant find VMCS's resolution unsatisfactory, for complaints within the scope of this Policy, the complainant may, within five (5) business days of notice of VMCS's decision or resolution, submit a written appeal to the President of the VMCS Board, who will serve as

the decisionmaker for the appeal or designate a decisionmaker for the appeal. The decisionmaker for the appeal will notify the complainant of the final decision.

### **Review of Policy**

This policy may be reviewed periodically by the VMCS Board.

Adopted: August 21, 2024

Amended:





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**HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, DISCRIMINATION & BULLYING  
COMPLAINT FORM**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Alleged Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person(s) you have a complaint against: \_\_\_\_\_

List any witnesses that were present: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the incident(s) occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the events or conduct that are the basis of your complaint by providing as much factual detail as possible (i.e., specific statements and conduct; what, if any, physical contact was involved; any verbal statements; etc.). (Attach additional pages, if needed):

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I hereby authorize VMCS to disclose the information I have provided as it finds necessary in pursuing its investigation. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true and correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Complainant

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

**To Be Completed by VMCS:**

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Meeting with Complainant Held on: \_\_\_\_\_