

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

DATING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

5.325*

It is the policy of the Sarasota School District that all of its students and school employees have an educational setting that is safe, secure, and free from dating violence and abuse. The District shall not tolerate dating violence and abuse of any kind. Dating violence or abuse by any student is prohibited on school property, during any school related or school sponsored program or activity, or during school sponsored transportation.

I. Definitions

- A. *Teen dating violence* is a pattern of emotional, verbal, sexual, or physical abuse used by one person in a current or past intimate relationship to exert power and control over another when one or both of the partners is a teenager.
- B. *Abuse* is mistreatment which may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive partner uses this pattern of violent and coercive behavior to gain power and maintain control over the dating partner. This may also include abuse, harassment, and stalking via electronic devices such as cell phones and computers, and harassment through a third party, and may be physical, mental, or both.

II. Reporting Teen Dating Violence or Abuse

- A. The principal or designee shall be responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy.
- B. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or designee.
- C. In addition to reporting the incident to the principal or designee, if a district employee or agent has reason to suspect that an alleged violation of this policy might constitute a crime, the district employee or agent shall also immediately report the complaint to law enforcement. Any uncertainty regarding whether an alleged violation might constitute a crime must be resolved in favor of reporting the incident to law enforcement.
- D. All other members of the school community, including students, parents as defined by Florida Statutes, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy anonymously or in person to the principal or designee.

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- E. In cases involving an alleged perpetrator who is of adult age and an alleged teen victim, certain suspicions of abuse must be reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline (1-800-962-2873) or local law enforcement pursuant to Section 39.201, Florida Statutes.
- F. The principal shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents how a report of dating violence and abuse may be filed either in person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon.
- G. The victim of teen dating violence or abuse, anyone who witnesses an act of dating violence or abuse, and anyone who has credible information that an act of dating violence and abuse has taken place may file a report of dating violence and abuse.
- H. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of teen dating violence or abuse will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments. Appropriate remedial action will be pursued for persons found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another of an act of dating violence or abuse.
- I. Any written or oral report of an act of dating violence and abuse shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s). Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- J. Incidents of teen dating violence and abuse shall be filed within ten (10) school days of the alleged incident or having knowledge of the incident.

III. Investigations

- A. The principal or designee shall select a staff member employed at the school and trained in investigative procedures to initiate the investigation. The staff member may not be the accused perpetrator or victim.
- B. Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses shall be conducted privately and separately. All interviews are confidential. Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses) will be interviewed separately and at no time will the alleged perpetrator and victim be interviewed together.
- C. The investigative process shall be completed within ten (10) school days from the time the report is filed.

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- D. The highest level of confidentiality possible will be upheld regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of teen dating violence and/or abuse and the investigative procedures that follow. School employees shall refrain from sharing confidential student information with other school employees, students, or community members, unless disclosure is required by law or is necessary to protect the student's safety. Any notification made must be consistent with the student's privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).
 - E. If it is determined that inappropriate behavior(s) has occurred, the investigator will make recommendations for disciplinary action to the principal or Superintendent.
- IV. Discipline
- A. Immediate action shall be taken to eliminate the behavior.
 - B. Disciplinary action shall be taken based on the circumstances of the behavior(s).
 - C. Discipline shall be consistent with the provisions of the *Code of Student Conduct*.
 - D. If a crime has been committed, the appropriate law enforcement agency shall be immediately notified.
- V. Restraining Orders
- A. If an order of protection has been issued, the student or his/her parent(s) should inform the school immediately.
 - B. The investigator will contact the abuser and his/her parent(s) to initiate a contract to stay away from the victim, consistent with the terms of the order, with penalties for known violations of the contract.
 - C. The principal or district administrator will notify law enforcement immediately if he/she has a reasonable belief that a criminal or civil restraining order has been violated.
 - D. The school resource officer and/or security officer will respond immediately to a report of a violation of a criminal or a civil restraining order.

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VI. Support Services for the Victim

The school shall provide a victim of dating violence and abuse with support services that may include but are not limited to

- A. A contract with the offender to stay away from the victim while on school grounds, on school transportation and during school sponsored programs and events;
- B. Reasonable accommodations, such as class schedule changes;
- C. If needed, the school will assist the student in creating an alternative education plan for the student such as transferring to a different school or the ability to make up school work missed due to dating violence.
- D. Security protection, such as safe egress/regress from school and within the school;
- E. Timely and comprehensive investigation of dating violence and abuse complaints.
- F. Information and assistance in securing intervention which includes assistance and support provided to parents/legal guardians, if deemed necessary and appropriate.
- G. Referrals for outside support and/or counseling.

VII. Methods of Intervention with the Alleged Perpetrator

- A. Allow the alleged perpetrator to respond in writing to the allegations.
- B. Identify and implement interventions that will be taken to prevent further incidents.
- C. Refer the alleged perpetrator and parents/legal guardians to help and support available at the school and withing the community.
- D. Address the seriousness of retaliations against the victim for reporting the incident or cooperating with the investigation. Inform the alleged perpetrator that retaliation or threats of retaliations in any form designed to intimidate the victim of dating violence or abuse, those who are witnesses, or those who investigate an incident, shall not be tolerated.

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- E. Provide for increased supervision of the alleged perpetrator.
- F. Document the meeting and action plans.

VIII. Curriculum

- A. The health education curriculum for students in grades 7 through 12 shall include dating violence and abuse. The teen dating violence and abuse component shall include, but is not limited to, the definition of dating violence and abuse, the warning signs of dating violence and abusive behavior, the characteristics of healthy relationships, measures to prevent and stop dating violence and abuse, and community resources available to victims of dating violence and abuse.
- B. The curriculum shall have an emphasis on prevention-based education.

IX. Training

- A. Teachers, administrators, counselors, instructional assistants, school nurses and other nonteaching staff such as bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers shall receive training about teen dating violence and abuse.
- B. Students, parents and school volunteers shall also be given instruction related to teen dating violence and abuse.
- C. Training on the District's policy prohibiting dating violence and abuse and related procedures shall be conducted, at a minimum, on an annual basis.
- D. The instruction shall include evidence-based methods of preventing dating violence and abuse and how to effectively identify and respond to incidents of dating violence and abuse within the scope of the school.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

1001.41, 1001.42, F.S.

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