

Iowa Safe Schools Law

Anti-Bullying & Anti-Harassment Act of 2007 (Iowa Safe Schools Law), Iowa Code 280.28:

Local school boards of ALL Iowa school districts (public schools) and all accredited nonpublic schools (private elementary, middle schools and high schools) must have a board policy on safe schools. The policy must include ALL of the following:

1.) A DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT & BULLYING

That definition must state substantially that harassment and bullying mean any electronic (this law also protects you from cyber-bullying which includes, but is not limited to, communication via email, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, and electronic text messaging), written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
- Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

2.) AN ANTI-HARASSMENT, ANTI-BULLYING STATEMENT

Schools must have a statement that no one shall engage in bullying and harassing behavior of students in school, on school property, or at any school function or school-sponsored activity (the Safe Schools Law protects you not just while you are on school property, but also when you are at any school function or school-sponsored activity—regardless of its location) with a description of the type of expected behavior from school employees, volunteers, parents or guardians and students when preventing, reporting and investigating harassment or bullying. The school must have written consequences and appropriate corrective action for a person who violates the anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy.

3.) A REPORTING PROCEDURE

Schools must have a procedure for reporting acts of bullying or harassment, including the name or job title of the school official responsible for receiving and investigating such reports. The law protects you from retaliation from others when you report harassment and bullying.

4.) AN INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

Schools must have a clear procedure for prompt investigation of complaints.



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5.) THE POLICY MUST STATE:

The policy must state that students will be protected from bullying and harassment based on any of the following traits or characteristics: age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, and familial status. The school board may add to this list, but may not omit any of the listed traits from its local policy.

6.) THE POLICY MUST BE PUBLICIZED:

The policy must be publicized, and the school must have a statement of how the school's anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy will be publicized. The most likely means of doing this will be in student handbooks, registration materials and periodic updates to communities.

7.) SCHOOLS OFFICIALS MUST REPORT ANNUALLY

School officials must annually report incidents of bullying and harassment, and discipline of bullies, to the Iowa Department of Education. This is information available to the public, both from the schools and from the Department of Education.

8.) SCHOOLS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE:

- Programs Designed to Eliminate Harassment & Bullying in Schools

The law highly recommends that schools establish programs to eliminate harassment and bullying. These programs can include Gay-Straight Alliances, Diversity Clubs and other student groups whose aim is to make the school safe for all students—especially those that are historically marginalized.

- Training for Teachers and Staff

The law highly recommends that schools provide training for their teachers and other staff in recognizing and reacting appropriately to bullying and understanding the school's anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy. If training cannot be provided (due to budget constraints), school officials must make sure that bus drivers, substitute teachers, volunteer coaches, support staff, etc., know about the school's policy, how to help if a student needs to make a complaint, and how to react if they witness bullying or harassment.

- Training for Students

The law highly recommends that schools develop a process to educate their volunteers and students about how to combat bullying. School officials must make sure that students know about the school's policy, how to make a complaint, and how to react if they witness bullying or harassment.