

Benchmark School

Abuse/Sexual Harassment Policy

(11/03)

It is the intent of Benchmark School to provide a safe environment for students, faculty, and staff where all girls, boys, men, and women can work, study and play together comfortably and productively, free from all forms of harassment and abuse of any kind.

WHAT IS ABUSE/SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Abuse/sexual harassment can take place in the following relational scenarios:

Adult to Adult – Adult to Child – Child to Child – Adult outside of Benchmark to Child
(ex. Bus driver, parent or other relative, scout leader, etc.)

Abuse and/or sexual harassment are illegal. The definition of abuse/sexual harassment is unsolicited, unwanted conduct that because of its severity and/or frequency, creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment; that is, behavior that a reasonable woman or man, girl or boy should not have to endure. This behavior can be physical, emotional or mental.

SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

...sexually suggestive or obscene writing

...sexually suggestive speech, such as obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender – specific traits or sexual propositions

...touching of a sexual nature, such as intentionally brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, pinching, coercing sexual acts and assault.

...Leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines

...evidence of physical harm to someone's body

...outburst of harsh and scathing words against another who is defenseless, etc.

ACTION:

If you feel you have been harassed, you should take one or more of the following steps:

...Let the offending person or people know that you want the behavior to stop. Say so firmly. Do not apologize. Speak directly and give a clear message about how you feel.

...If you do not feel comfortable confronting the person alone, take a friend along, or write a letter.

...Keep a record of when, where and how you were mistreated. This might include witnesses, direct quotes, actions, evidence, and any written communication.

...Two faculty members, Dr. Adam Lemisch and Mrs. Judy Sennett will serve as advisors for issues of sexual harassment. Speak to one of them promptly about the situation. Feel free to take a friend, your faculty advisor, or another teacher along for support.

All complaints of sexual harassment, including suspicion of physical abuse outside of Benchmark, will be investigated by these advisors and treated as confidentially as possible. The advisors, along with a faculty member they may wish to designate, will promptly investigate complaints and, where appropriate, report the findings and recommendations for disciplinary action to the Head of the School, who will decide what action to take.

A teacher, staff member, administrator, or student found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, ranging from warning to reprimand, suspension or dismissal, depending on the finding of the investigation of a complaint and the decision of the Head of School. If the Head of School is charged, a decision by the Board of Directors will prevail. Authorities outside of Benchmark will be notified when required by law to do so or otherwise deemed to be appropriate.

No one bringing forth a complaint of harassment, or assisting in the investigation of such a complaint, should be subject to retaliation. Report of such action will be promptly investigated and occurrences punished, as will frivolous or fallacious charges.

Benchmark School will hold yearly orientation meetings about this policy for new members of the school community (adults, adolescents and children) while continuing to work with current members on measures to keep the school as free from incidents of harassment/abuse as possible. A copy of this policy will be distributed to all faculty, members of the staff, administrators and families. A copy will also be posted in a highly visible place in each occupied building of the school.