

**Bullying Prevention Task Force FY14 Performance Oversight Questions**

- Q1. Describe the FY14 goals of the Bullying Prevention Task Force. Was the Task Force successful in meeting its FY14 goals? If not, please describe what prevented the Task Force from meeting its goals.

The FY14 goals of the Mayor's Youth Bullying Prevention Task Force (hereinafter referred to as the "Task Force") were to: (1) dramatically increase the number of covered entities with bullying prevention policies under the Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012 (the Act); (2) submit regulations for the Act for public comment; and to (3) engage the public through an event aimed at raising awareness about the Act and techniques for addressing or reducing bullying. The Task Force met all of these goals.

As background, it is important to note that in January of 2013, the BP Task Force released a comprehensive policy that provided guidance to covered entities on full implementation of the law including best practices based on research. The policy document also includes a sample policy, resources and supports available (at free or low cost) and a legal compliance checklist. The goal (of the policy) was to provide entities covered by the law with the tools and support for addressing bullying in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

During FY14 a significant effort was made to ensure full compliance of all covered entities, District agencies serving youth, DCPS and DCPCS schools and grantees who receive money from the District to work with youth. The Task Force decided that the Director of the Bullying Prevention Program would review all District agency policies and work with each agency individually to ensure full compliance with the law. All 10 District agencies covered by the legislation now have complaint policies. Those policies and the name and contact information for the point of contact is listed on the Office of Human Rights (OHR) website.

In an effort to have an independent review process for schools, OHR contracted with an outside expert (RFK Center for Human Rights, Project SEATBELT) in bullying prevention to assess each educational institution's policy. The expert provided each school with a compliance memo describing any language changes necessary to ensure full compliance. All school policies received are posted on the OHR website in a new "Know Your Policy" web portal, including the key bullying prevention contact in the school (when available).

Members of the Task Force worked with the program director to create an evaluation tool for grantees and together reviewed grantee policies and provided feedback on compliance to grantees. The Task Force now has over 70 compliant policies for grantees. These policies will be added to the web portal this spring.

During FY14, OHR drafted regulations for the Act and these were made available for public comment in October of 2014. The comment period was extended and now is closed. The Director of the program, in consultation with OHR General Counsel, is reviewing all comments and will resubmit for legal sufficiency. Once that process is completed, the regulations will be published.

On October 17, 2014 the Task Force hosted the community event "It Takes a District: Tools and Tips to Prevent Bullying" at the Turkey Thicket Recreation Center. We held workshops for adults and youth, and together families could engage in Tai Chi or Playworks (a recess based program in many of our schools that teaches social emotion learning along with games and activities to support fair play, health and exercise). Parents could

also participate in workshops on how to spot mental health challenges in their children and how to talk to their children about social media and online behavior. Adults also had the opportunity to learn about yoga and mindfulness; two important techniques to reduce stress and support positive behavior. Community partners and members of the Task Force provided the workshops. The Task Force also organized a resource fair of all the DC agencies and many of the non-profit partners who are engaged in this work in the city.

- Q2. Describe the goals for the Bullying Prevention Task Force for the remainder of FY15 and FY16 if applicable.

The Task Force will continue to prioritize creating and finding supports and trainings for agencies, schools and grantees that will focus on prevention and build on the school or agency's best understanding of what is needed in their community.

Additionally, the Task Force will continue engaging the community to ensure they know which supports are available to them and how they can help protect their children. The Task Force has identified school climate data as a key component to full implementation of the policies and is committed to ensuring all schools collect such data. Without this data it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the work that is necessary to prevent bullying.

- Q3. Provide a list of the current membership of the Task Force including each individual's name, affiliated organization, and ward of residence.

Please see attachment titled Q3.

- Q4. Are there currently any vacancies on the Bullying Prevention Task Force? If so, what is the reason for the vacancy? How long has the position been vacant? What steps are being taken to fill the vacancy?

The Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012 established a two-year time frame for the Mayor's Youth Bullying Prevention Task Force, with the possibility of a one-year extension if requested. In July 2013, the request was made and the Task Force was extended until August 2015. In July 2014 four names were submitted to replace specific individuals whose terms were expiring but whose roles were required by law. One of those designees has been approved and the other three are pending. We have been reassured that the other three individuals are in process and will be appointed. While we have 7 officially nominated members of the Task Force, as well as 5 members who are serving as representative of their agencies, the Task Force is made up of more than 40 individuals and there is no distinction made between appointed members and non-appointed members in Task Force meetings.

Q5. How often did the Task Force meet in FY 2014 and to date in FY 2015?

The Task Force met on the following dates: January 30, 2014, April 3, 2014, July 24, 2014, September 9, 2014, October 14, 2014, January 17, 2015.

Q6. What were the major accomplishments of the Task Force in FY14 and to date in FY15? Include the following:

a. Specific efforts to engage with the community;

- The Task Force hosted a community event “It Takes a District: Tools and Tips to Prevent Bullying,” which included workshops and activities specifically designed to support parents and build skills around self-regulation and positive social interactions, as well as address concerns about mental health and social media.
- OHR created a searchable online database named “Know Your Policy” (<http://ohr.dc.gov/page/knowyourpolicy>) that allows community members to find a school or District agency policy and obtain contact information for the lead bullying prevention staff member.
- Members of the Task Force or the director of the Citywide Bullying Prevention Program on behalf of the Task Force have led over 45 trainings, served on panels at schools and in the community, including a panel put together by Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and the DC Commission on Black Men and Boys. WHUR 96.3 FM at Howard University has invited the Director on twice in the last 4 months to address the topic of bullying.
- Families have directly contacted the Office of Human Rights regarding the policy and asking for support in a school. We have also received referrals from other organizations that serve on Task Force and the Ombudsman’s office. As a result we have engaged directly in over 20 cases ensuring that policies are in place and all students are supported. It has also been an opportunity to work directly with schools regarding this approach and learn what supports is needed.
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a. Efforts to engage with other city agencies, schools, and grantees;

Our legislation is unique in that engages schools, government and the community. Therefore the Task Force has conducted outreach to all covered entities and have created materials that reflect the broad reach of the law while giving specific guidance on how to abide by and implement it. Those materials include an informational flyer on what bullying is and how you can address it, and three tip sheets explaining how cyber bullying is addressed in the legislation, how to investigate an incident of bullying, and information for parents and families on what to do if you think your child has been a target or has targeted another young person. The Director, in consultation with the Task Force and with the support of outside experts, is in the process of creating a tool kit that a school or non-profit can use to help them develop a plan that is based on their needs, is age appropriate and focused on prevention.

b. Bullying policy compliance of city agencies;

All named city agencies in the bill have fully compliant policies and are listed on the OHR website with their point of contact. All agency points of contact participate on the Task Force but have also been engaged separately to ensure they have the resources and supports to fully implement the policy. Many of the agencies interact with youth through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). The Department of Employee Services, which runs SYEP, created a training video for all youth that participated in SYEP that let them know about the policy, the key contact in the agency and what to do if they experience bullying.

c. Bullying policy compliance of DCPS;

DCPS has a fully compliant policy and the point of contact for each school is listed on the OHR website in the “Know Your Policy” web portal. The Office of Youth Engagement at DCPS is in charge of developing resources, trainings and supports for DCPS schools.

d. Bullying policy compliance of Public Charter Schools; and

All charter schools were provided an opportunity for a partnership with a national non-profit that is a leader on bullying prevention. The Office of Human Rights partnered with the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights’ Project SEATBELT (RFK Center) to provide continuing supports to charters once they had a compliant policy. The RFK Center was selected to do this work because it took a collaborative and individualized approach, and worked with schools to analyze their data, understand their systems and determine appropriate next steps to take, based on researched best practices.

Each charter Local Educational Agency (LEA) that submitted a policy was issued a memo detailing any changes needed to ensure full legal compliance. Fifty-eight out of the 60 charters submitted a policy and of those 51 are fully compliant. Seven school policies still need to be revised and two schools never submitted a policy.

e. Bullying policy compliance of city grantees.

The City Youth Investment Corporation (CYITC) has been informing their grantees about the policy and the process. All grantees of CYITC are briefed about the policy and given the support and resources necessary to submit a compliant policy. As Director, I have attended multiple CYITC meetings with grantees to explain the policy and offer support and training to their staff. I have also provided workshops through the CYITC training institute on creating and implementing a policy. As a result of the partnership with CYITC, I have held trainings for a number of grantee staffs, including City Year, The Boys and Girls Club and Beacon House.

- Q7. Provide the committee with an update on the Task Force's efforts to collect city-wide bullying data. Have there been any impediments to collecting city-wide bullying data? If so, describe these impediments.

The Task Force recommended that the following data be collected:

- Incident data
- Data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Data from the Healthy School Profile
- Evidence based school climate data

Incident data will be collected from the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education. All local LEA's are required to submit data every other year to the Department of Education on bullying incidents, and the Task Force will use this data to avoid placing an unnecessary burden on schools. The data for 2103 should be available this spring and will be included in our report next December.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey is collected by OSSE as part of a Center for Disease Control (CDC) grant. The data includes questions about bullying and is collected from all middle and high school students in the district. This data is collected every other year and is being collected this year and available in 2016.

Healthy Schools Profile is also data collected by OSSE as part of a CDC grant. This data includes questions regarding if a school has a policy, how does it communicate with parents and what does it provide for staff. This data is collected yearly and available in the spring.

School Climate Data is not presently collected system wide. There is an opportunity for all middle and high schools to access a free platform for researched based school climate work next year. The school climate platform will provide schools analyzed data from researched-based surveys they administer (to students, faculty and community) in real-time and broken down by grade level, race or gender. The aggregate data will be shared with OSSE, which is critical for obtaining federal grants. We hope to work with the State Board of Education, OSSE, PCSB, and DCPS to see that this data is collected starting next year. We are also looking for opportunities to collect research-based school climate data for elementary schools.

Describe any partnerships, collaborations, or initiatives currently underway between the Task Force and other District government agencies. In particular, point out any new partnerships or collaborations developed, planned, or implemented over the last fiscal year. Include the following agencies:

- a. DC Public Schools;
- b. DC Public Charter Schools;
- c. DC Department of Parks and Recreation;
- d. DC Department of Employment Services;
- e. DC Department of Human Services;
- f. Department of Health;
- g. Department of Behavioral Health; and
- h. University of the District of Columbia and UDC Community College.

All of the agencies above are members of the Task Force and have worked diligently on their own policies and actively participated in our October event. As we build the supports necessary to implement the policy more cross agency work and training will be a priority. The agency that has been most engaged in providing resources and supports, has been OSSE. All of the early childhood programs supported by OSSE have been offered “ACT : Raising Safe Kids” training by the American Psychological Association (APA). ACT is a researched-based, developmentally appropriate training on positive discipline and age appropriate behaviors, and provides techniques for addressing aggression and conflict with young children. The APA has provided all of the trainings for free and OSSE has purchased all the materials so early childhood providers can implement the program in their locations. OSSE also provided training for the Roving Leader at the Department of Parks and Recreation on creating Safe Climates for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth. This is part of a training OSSE has developed under a CDC grant that is being used in schools. OSSE also supported a Restorative Justice pilot project in five schools – two charter schools and three DCPS schools – this year. Restorative Justice provides a new framework for addressing discipline issues that is based on students taking responsibility for their actions and repairing harm done to individuals and the community by their actions. While Restorative Justice must be used to address bullying in a very careful manner – the overall nature of Restorative Justice builds trust, empathy and responsibility -- three key ingredients in school climate and bullying prevention, and I hope the pilot will be expanded next year.

**Q8. Describe the training and support available to schools, agencies, and grantees to assist with bullying policy implementation and compliance.**

The bullying prevention model policy encourages schools, agencies and grantees to first assess what they are doing and build upon that framework. There is no single evidence-based program that works in all scenarios. What does work is for a school, agency or grantee to evaluate their efforts on social emotional learning, supports and services to students and the very intentional way they build school (agency or grantee) culture and climate and teach the rules for behavior. That is why we prefer to work with individual schools or in small groups of schools (when appropriate) to provide the right supports. The toolkit that is being developed will also provide schools and agencies a way to diagnose their climate and support the work necessary to create or maintain a positive climate, and address concerns they may have about individuals or groups in the school.

**Q9. What resources and supports are needed to increase bullying policy compliance among the District’s schools, agencies, and grantees?**

A comprehensive list of all grantees receiving money from the District to work with youth would be extremely helpful. We have many grantee policies (over 70) and will be adding them to the “Know Your Rights” web portal along with schools and agencies, but increased grantee awareness about the requirement is still necessary.

Two Public Charter Schools have not submitted a bullying prevention policy, and seven still need revisions made to become fully compliant. The Director will continue to reach out to these schools to assist them and urge compliance.

Q10. What resources are needed to help schools, agencies, and grantees focus on bullying prevention?

Primarily schools and agencies need to understand what is going on in their communities. Through school climate surveys that work can be supported. Once the larger picture of creating safe and supportive environments is addressed schools need to focus on supporting individual youth. Having a strong social emotional learning framework and the staff equipped to support the work is critical. Students who bully need to change their behaviors, and often need support in building empathy skills, which can only be accomplished when we understand and address the issues driving the behavior. Targets of bullying first need it to stop, but then need to build their resiliency so they do not become targets again. We need to provide these opportunities to all of our youth so they learn healthy and effective ways to deal with conflict, aggression, and bullying.

Q11. Describe the challenges the Task Force has faced in changing the culture among the District's schools, agencies, and grantees.

We know from research that it is critical to address both ends of the equation: the behavior of the aggressor and the resiliency of the student that was targeted. Bullying is a behavior, not a person, and we must get to the root of the behavior and redirect it. Studies have shown that lasting emotional damage can result from being the target of bullying, and that they need the support necessary to move past the incidents. Students who have been targeted are at higher risk for being targeted again, and they can also be at higher risk for engaging in other risky behaviors.

Our challenge is to encourage schools to embrace the best practices and research we know to work, instead of relying on the relatively easier but less effective method of punishment.

We also know that an outside group, a single assembly, or event does not build trust and relationships between the student and the teachers, nor can it begin to address the issues among the youth. So the approach of having an assembly or event is not where we should be focusing our time, efforts and funding. We know clearly from the research that having a trusting relationship with an adult, teaching students how to address problems and resolve conflict, and strategies for steering youth away from aggressive behavior are the building blocks necessary to reduce the number and severity of bullying incidents.

So we are asking the people that run our schools and programs for youth to better understand the emotional realities of their youth and address it in consistent and meaningful ways that teach and support them.

Q12. Identify all legislative requirements (both local and federal) that the Task Force lacks sufficient resources to implement properly.

Ensuring full compliance with the data requirements of the legislation could be accomplished most effectively through Council or school board action. Requiring schools to administer researched-based school climate surveys that will be used to support data driven decision-making is critical. Without such data schools cannot tailor their work to the needs of their community in an effective and consistent way.

Q13. Identify any statutory or regulatory impediments to the Task Force's operations.

*At this point we have not had any statutory or regulatory impediments.*

Q14. Has the Task Force adhered to all non-discrimination policies in regards to hiring and employment?

*The Task Force does not have a budget and therefore has not done any hiring.*

Q15. Have there been any allegations that the Task Force has violated hiring and employment nondiscrimination policies in FY14 or to date in FY15? If so, what steps were taken to remedy the situation or ensure that the violation does not occur in the future?

*Not applicable.*