

# ELMWOOD PARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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August 2023

**SUBJECT: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) Investigations: 2023-2024 SY**

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As we begin the 2023-2024 school year, we would like to welcome back each and every student and their families and hope you had a terrific summer.

Please be advised that during the upcoming school year, the Elmwood Park School District will resume all Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) protocol as conducted prior to the pandemic. All HIB investigations will be conducted within an in-person setting and will no longer be held in a virtual setting. Please review the HIB investigation procedures set forth in Board Policy 5512, a link to which is being provided [here](#). Please be reminded of the following investigation protocol that will be executed to address any potential HIB issue report:

Parents/guardians are to contact their school's principal and/or anti-bullying specialist ("ABS"), by telephone or by email. All contact information is found on each school website, and on the [district website](#). When contacting the principal or ABS, it is important that you provide updated contact information (address, telephone number and email address, as applicable) where you can be reached by the district.

Within one (1) school day, the school principal shall assign the matter to an ABS who will initiate an investigation. The school principal may assign additional personnel who are not anti-bullying specialists, to assist with the investigation, as needed. Parents will be contacted by the building principal when an investigation is being initiated; a letter will be sent to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators echoing the telephone conversation.

The ABS shall complete the investigation as soon as possible, but not more than ten (10) school days from the date s/he received the written report by the school principal. If additional, relevant information is provided to the ABS that is received by the end of the 10-day investigation period, the ABS may amend the investigation report to include the new information and reassess the findings. Parents/guardians will be contacted by the ABS during the 10-day period to schedule a day and time for the ABS to speak with the student, and parent, as needed. When an investigation has been concluded the building principal will contact the parents/guardians and a letter will also be sent outlining the conclusion of the investigation.

An ABS's conversation with a student, as part of an HIB investigation, will occur in person with the ABS being able to speak privately with a student. This provides the student with a "safe space" and an opportunity to openly share information with the ABS without pressure or fear of another person listening. ABS's are certified social workers, school counselors, school psychologists or similarly trained and certified individuals who are qualified to assess student's needs, offer support and evaluate student behavior and conduct in an educational setting.

It is requested that parents assist and cooperate with the investigation process to the greatest extent possible. Please be reminded of the ways that parents/guardians can help the ABS conduct a thorough and comprehensive investigation.

- Promptly comply with the ABS's requests for information;
- Resist and deter from contacting other-involved students or parents of those students for information about the reported incident, as this can taint information that is provided to the ABS, and can have the effect of influencing how another person participates in the investigation. Interference by a parent/guardian or another third party in the ABS's investigation could diminish the evidence that is received, for example, by making it unreliable or not credible.
- HIB investigations are deemed confidential to, among other things, preserve the privacy rights and expectations of all students. Any records created by the ABS are kept confidential and are protected against unauthorized disclosure to third parties.

Within two (2) school days of completing the investigation, the findings are forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools, who may decide to provide additional intervention services, establish training programs to reduce potential HIB and enhance the school climate, impose discipline, order counseling as a result of the findings of the investigation, or recommend other appropriate action.

The results of the investigation shall be presented to the Board of Education by the Superintendent of Schools at the next Board of Education meeting following the completion of the HIB investigation, along with the correlating information including: any interventions provided, training established, discipline imposed, or other action deemed appropriate by the Superintendent. Within five (5) school days following the Board of Education meeting, the parents/guardians shall receive correspondence from the Superintendent's Office confirming the presentation of the conclusion of the HIB case.

At the subsequent Board of Education meeting, the same information that was presented to the Board of Education the month prior, will be voted upon by the Board of Education, confirming the conclusion of the case. This action will be memorialized through correspondence sent by the Board Secretary.

Please be advised that within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving the information, parents/guardians may request a hearing before the Board of Education to oppose or support the determination. Unless extended upon consent by the parents, or unless a quorum cannot be established, the HIB hearing will be scheduled within ten (10) business days of the request for an HIB hearing.

Parents can submit information to the Board of Education for review, prior to the scheduled HIB hearing. Any information for the Board's consideration must be submitted to the Board Secretary, by email to [mjacobus@epps.org](mailto:mjacobus@epps.org) or by mail to the Board of Education office located at: 60 East 53rd Street, Elmwood Park, New Jersey 07407, prior to the scheduled HIB hearing.

Within five (5) school days following a HIB hearing, parents/guardians shall be notified, in writing (which may include email) of the Board of Education's determination. Parents/guardians will have 90 days to appeal the decision to the Commissioner of Education or 180 days from the date of the occurrence of the incident, to file a complaint with the Division on Civil Rights.

**If you believe your child's life or physical safety is in danger, please immediately contact local law enforcement or seek medical assistance.** Should you have academic or non-academic concerns regarding your child, which may not be HIB-related, please communicate this information to your child's guidance counselor and/or the school principal. School personnel will then communicate with you and your child to assess the concern and what services, as applicable, are available.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this pertinent information. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions.

Sincerely,

*Jillian Torrento*

Dr. Jillian Torrento, Assistant Superintendent of Schools/  
District Anti-Bullying Coordinator

Cc: Dr. Anthony Iachetti, Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Mark S. Jacobus, Business Administrator/ Board Secretary