

# Valley Forge Educational Services

## Bullying/Cyber Bullying Policy

### **PURPOSE:**

Valley Forge Educational Services (VFES) is committed to providing a safe and positive learning environment for each participant in its educational, therapeutic or leisure time programs. VFES recognizes that bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detracts from the safe environment necessary for successful learning, and may lead to more serious violence. For these reasons, VFES prohibits bullying by any individual enrolled in a VFES program.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Bullying** shall be defined as an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students within the VFES setting or that has substantial impact on the daily operation of a VFES setting that is severe, persistent or pervasive and that may result in any of the following:

1. Substantial interference with an individual's education or treatment.
2. Creation of a threatening environment.
3. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying as defined in this policy includes cyber bullying.

**Cyber bullying** is specifically defined as electronically sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices, including cell phones and other PDA's (personal digital assistants).

Cyber bullying can include:

- Sending cruel, vicious or threatening e-mails
- Creating Web sites that have stories, pictures and jokes ridiculing others
- Posting pictures of other individuals online with derogatory phrases or questions attached to them
- Using someone else's e-mail to send vicious or incriminating e-mails to others
- Using instant messaging tools to harass others

**Program setting** is defined as within the VFES buildings, on the VFES campus, in VFES vehicles, or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by VFES.

## **AUTHORITY:**

VFES prohibits any and all forms of bullying by participants in any VFES programs.

VFES directs any participant who has been bullied to promptly report such incidents to a VFES staff member.

VFES program participants who observe an act of bullying are encouraged to report such incidents to a VFES staff member.

Every employee of VFES is responsible for intervening when they observe bullying or become aware of any form of bullying and for reporting the incident to the proper staff/supervisor within the participant's specific program.

VFES mandates that complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly and that corrective action shall be taken when allegations are verified. Written documentation of the incident and the resulting investigation shall be maintained in a file separate from the educational or treatment record of the bully and the victim.

Confidentiality of all parties involved shall be maintained in accordance with VFES's legal, educational and clinical policies pertaining to confidentiality. There shall be no reprisal or retaliation resulting from good faith reporting of bullying.

## **DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Each VFES program participant shall be expected to respect the rights of others and to ensure an atmosphere free from bullying. Cognitive limitations, communication difficulties, or behavioral and mental health concerns shall not exclude an individual from these expectations.

VFES will develop guidelines and protocols to implement this policy.

VFES shall ensure that this policy and the corresponding administrative guidelines are reviewed annually or as needed with program participants, staff and parents.

VFES administrative staff will review this policy and its administrative guidelines a minimum of every three (3) years and recommend necessary revisions.

## **GUIDELINES**

The VFES Bullying/Cyber Bullying Policy shall be included in the Student Code of Conduct and disseminated annually to each VFES-Vanguard student and/or their parents

at the beginning of the academic year. Vanguard students starting after September shall receive a copy of this document when they are enrolled.

Individuals participating in other VFES programs shall receive this policy based on the determination of the director of that VFES program.

This policy shall be accessible in every program area and posted on the VFES website.

## **EDUCATION**

VFES will develop and implement bullying prevention and intervention programs. These programs will provide VFES staff, program participants and families with a clear definition of bullying and with appropriate training for effectively responding to and reporting incidents of bullying.

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS**

A program participant who violates this policy shall be subjected to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the VFES Bullying/Cyber Bullying Procedure developed for VFES programs. This may include, but is not limited to, counseling, conferencing with a parent, loss of program privileges, transfer to another group, program, or means of transportation, exclusion from VFES sponsored activities, in-school detention, out of school suspension, referral for counseling/therapy/hospitalization in the community or referral to law enforcement officials. For Vanguard School students, decisions regarding disciplinary action to be taken will be made jointly with the student's school district.

Developed: August 1, 2011

Approved: August 8, 2011

Implemented: 2011-2012 Academic Year