

## **SUBJECT: DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT**

The BOCES Board recognizes that learning environments that are safe and supportive can increase student attendance and improve academic achievement. A student's ability to learn and achieve high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate students, is compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to bullying, taunting and intimidation. Therefore, in accordance with the Dignity for All Students Act, Education Law, Article 2, the BOCES will strive to create an environment free of discrimination and harassment and will foster civility in the schools to prevent and prohibit conduct which is inconsistent with the BOCES educational mission.

The BOCES condemns and prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex by BOCES employees or students on BOCES property. In addition, any act of discrimination or harassment, outside of school sponsored events, which can reasonably be expected to materially and substantially disrupt the education process may be subject to discipline.

### **Dignity Act Coordinator**

At least one (1) employee at every BOCES location shall be designated as the Dignity Act Coordinator(s). The Dignity Act Coordinator(s) will be thoroughly trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (identity or expression) and sex. The BOCES Board shall appoint the Dignity Act Coordinator(s) and share the name(s) and contact information with all BOCES personnel, students, and parents/guardians.

If a Dignity Act Coordinator vacates his/her position, another BOCES employee shall immediately be designated for an interim appointment as Coordinator, pending approval from the BOCES Board, within thirty (30) days of the date the position was vacated. In the event a Coordinator is unable to perform the duties of the position for an extended period of time, another BOCES employee shall immediately be designated for an interim appointment as Coordinator, pending return of the previous Coordinator to the position.

### **Training**

Training will be provided each school year for all BOCES employees in conjunction with existing professional development training to raise staff awareness and sensitivity of harassment and discrimination directed at students that are committed by students or BOCES employees on BOCES property. Training will include ways to promote a supportive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, emphasize positive relationships, and demonstrate prevention and intervention techniques to assist employees in recognizing and responding to harassment and discrimination, as well as ensuring the safety of the victims.

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**SUBJECT: DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT (Cont'd.)**

Rules against discrimination and harassment will be included in the Code of Conduct and disseminated pursuant to law and Commissioner's Regulations.

**Reports and Investigations of Discrimination and Harassment**

The BOCES will investigate all complaints of harassment and discrimination, either formal or informal, and take prompt corrective measures, as necessary. Complaints will be investigated in accordance with applicable policies and regulations. If, after an appropriate investigation, the BOCES finds that this policy has been violated, corrective action will be taken in accordance with BOCES policies and regulations, the Code of Conduct, and all appropriate federal or state laws.

The BOCES will annually report material incidents of discrimination and harassment to the State Education Department as part of the Uniform Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting System (VADIR).

**Prohibition of Retaliatory Behavior (Commonly Known as "Whistle-Blower" Protection)**

Any person who has reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been subjected to discrimination or harassment by an employee or student, on BOCES grounds or at a BOCES function, who acts reasonably and in good faith and reports such information to BOCES officials or law enforcement authorities, shall have immunity from any civil liability that may arise from making such report. The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed at complainants, victims, witnesses and/or any other individuals who participated in the investigation of a complaint of discrimination or harassment.

NOTE: Refer also to Policies [#1438 – Annual Organizational Meeting - Appointments and Designations by the BOCES](#)  
[#2410 -- Code of Conduct on BOCES Property](#)  
[#2420 -- Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment in the BOCES](#)  
[#2430 -- Uniform Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting System \(VADIR\)](#)  
[#6440 -- Sexual Harassment of Students](#)  
[#6490 – Bullying: Peer Abuse in the BOCES \(Students\)](#)  
[#6495 -- Hazing of Students](#)  
[#6460 -- Equal Education Opportunity](#)

Adopted: 8/9/2012