Administrative Procedure 175

PROTECTION OF STAFF

Background

Employees, students, volunteers, parents/guardians and all others who interact with Aspen View Public Schools are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which promotes a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviour.

On occasion, members of staff and volunteers may have to deal with parents/guardians, students, members of the public, or colleagues who exhibit anger or express their frustrations or demands in a manner which is demeaning to the well-being of a staff member(s). Division staff are expected to respond to such challenges with a professionalism that may defuse the causes of such behaviour and could allow problems or concerns to be resolved.

On rare occasions, the professional behaviour of Division staff may be unsuccessful in defusing offensive behaviour by others. The Division has an obligation to support, assist and educate its staff and volunteers with respect to issues surrounding abuse, harassment or defamation associated with the carrying out of their duties. Such situations are to be addressed, where possible, through informal resolution processes, including mediation or conciliation. Where such processes are unsuccessful or where the severity of the situation warrants, the Superintendent is authorized to use legal remedies through the Division's legal counsel.

Definitions

Abuse is conduct directed toward an employee that is threatening, intimidating, demeaning, hostile or otherwise harmful, whether verbal, physical, written or electronic. Abuse may include:

- threats, name-calling, gestures, swearing or other degrading verbal conduct;
- intimidation;
- striking, grabbing, pulling, kicking or other physical aggression;
- assault; and
- other conduct that humiliates, degrades, elicits fear or takes unfair advantage of an employee.

Defamation is any expression that attacks or injures the reputation or honour of an individual or recognized group by, among other things, false and malicious statements. Defamatory expressions may malign, slander or libel an individual or recognized group.

Harassment is any single incident or repeated behaviour, conduct, comment or communication that is objectionable or unwelcome and that a person knows or ought reasonably to know would cause offence or humiliation to an employee, or adversely affect the employee's well-being.

Harassment includes conduct based on a protected ground under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, as well as other abusive, threatening, intimidating or demeaning conduct.

Harassing behaviour may include conduct that is criminal in nature or other abusive, disruptive or inappropriate conduct.

Conduct that may be criminal in nature may include:

- Oral threats that give rise to a genuine concern for personal safety;
- Physical abuse or assault;
- Stalking or other conduct that may constitute criminal harassment;
- Threats conveyed by telephone, digital or social media, electronic mail or other written communication that give rise to a genuine concern for safety.

Other abusive, disruptive or inappropriate conduct may include:

- Shouting, swearing or the use of personally demeaning or sarcastic expressions;
- Intentionally using an intimidating presence or entering Division property without permission;
- Numerous and lengthy calls or messages that disrupt an employee's ability to perform their duties; and
- Frequent frivolous or vexatious written complaints that require an employee to spend an unreasonable amount of time responding and detract from their duties.

Procedures

1. Communicating with Angry Persons

   In the performance of their duties, Division staff may be faced with individuals experiencing serious levels of frustration, concern or anger. Such individuals may initially conduct themselves in an uncivil or rude manner. Wherever possible, staff members are to use communication techniques that may defuse frustration or anger and allow problem resolution to occur. In working with angry or concerned persons, staff members are expected to:

   1.1. Conduct themselves in a civil and cordial manner.

   1.2. Anticipate, where possible, personal sensitivities and avoid comments or behaviours that may unnecessarily heighten those sensitivities.

   1.3. Call for support from a colleague or administrator if rude, confrontational behaviour persists.

   1.4. Assert their legal rights while meeting their responsibilities.

   1.5. Adjourn meetings with angry persons if, in their judgement, there is no possibility at the time for civil discourse.

   1.6. Respect the requirements of the *Access to Information Act and Protection of Privacy Act* when discussing unsuccessful or difficult interactions, and limit disclosure to those who require the information for supervisory, administrative or legal purposes.

2. The Division will provide:

   2.1. Staff learning opportunities in personal communication, conflict resolution and problem solving; and

   2.2. Staff learning opportunities to assist staff in dealing with the personal and emotional consequences of interactions with angry or abusive persons.

3. Reporting

3.1. When a staff member believes they have been subjected to physical abuse, threats or other conduct that may be criminal in nature, the staff member is to immediately inform their supervisor and ensure the incident is documented in accordance with Division reporting procedures.

3.1.1. Where the conduct may constitute workplace harassment or violence, Administrative Procedure 710 — Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention shall also apply.

3.1.2. Where the conduct involves serious wrongdoing or suspected criminal activity, Administrative Procedure 172 — Reporting of Serious Wrongdoing shall also apply.

3.2. When an individual believes they have been subjected to abuse, harassment, defamation or other inappropriate conduct, they are to keep records, where possible, of the incident or incidents.

3.3. If the matter brought to the attention of a supervisor is not resolved through the supervisor's intervention, the matter shall be reported to the Superintendent or designate, who may consult with legal counsel.

3.3.1. Where applicable, the affected staff member is advised to contact their union or professional association for support or representation.

3.4. If the intervention of the Superintendent or designate does not satisfactorily resolve the matter, it will be referred to legal counsel for advice and possible action.

4. Responding to Harassment or Abusive Conduct

4.1. When a staff member believes that another Division employee has subjected them to workplace harassment or violence, the staff member shall follow Administrative Procedure 710 — Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention.

4.2. When a staff member believes that a student has subjected them to harassment, abuse or violence, Administrative Procedure 710 — Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention shall apply, and the student's conduct shall also be addressed in accordance with applicable student conduct and discipline Administrative Procedures.

4.3. If the applicable procedures identified in sections 4.1 or 4.2 are insufficient to address the behaviour or protect the staff member, the reporting and escalation procedures outlined in Section 3 may also be followed.

4.4. In addition to any requirements that apply under Administrative Procedure 710 — Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention, when a staff member believes that a parent/guardian, volunteer, visitor or other person has subjected them to harassment or abusive conduct, the staff member shall:

4.4.1. Seek the assistance of their immediate supervisor in developing a plan to address the issue.

4.4.2. Where appropriate and safe to do so, make reasonable efforts to meet with the parent/guardian, volunteer, visitor or other person. The immediate supervisor is to be present.

4.4.3. Ensure that the concerns or allegations associated with the harassment are clearly and specifically identified.

4.4.4. Listen to and seek to understand the other person's perspective, including the basis for the concern being expressed.

4.4.5. Seek, where possible, a reasonable resolution of the concern with the involvement of the parties.

4.4.6. Keep an accurate written record of relevant events, dates, times, locations and witnesses.

4.4.7. If the harassment or abusive conduct persists, follow the reporting and escalation procedures outlined in Section 3.

4.5. Where a Principal, department manager, Superintendent or designate believes that harassment or abusive conduct toward an employee is disrupting or interfering with the operation of a school or Division work site, the Division may exercise its authority under Section 256 of the *Education Act* to control access to or conduct on Division property.

4.5.1. Where harassment or abusive conduct involves loitering, trespassing or unauthorized presence on Division property, the Division may take appropriate action in accordance with the Education Act and other applicable legislation.

4.5.2. The incident shall be documented in accordance with Division reporting procedures.

5. Systemic Investigations

5.1. When the Superintendent has reason to believe that harassment or abuse of an employee has occurred, but no complaint has been registered, the Superintendent may initiate a systemic investigation where:

5.1.1. There is a focussed pattern of inquiries, complaints or behaviour over time that suggest the existence of a specific problem; or,

5.1.2. There is reason to believe a broader or systemic problem exists in the learning or work environment that causes, contributes to or encourages harassment; or

5.1.3. As a result of an investigation, a complaint is not substantiated but there is reasonable evidence that a broader systemic problem exists.

5.2. Prior to investigating, the Superintendent or designate shall describe in writing the conditions providing reasonable grounds for an investigation.

5.3. Where the Superintendent authorizes a systemic investigation, the appropriate parties shall be advised of:

5.3.1. The intent to conduct the investigation,

5.3.2. The reasons for initiating the investigation, and

5.3.3. The process or procedures to be followed.

5.4. Where a systemic investigation identifies a broader issue requiring Board awareness or action, the Superintendent shall report the matter to the Board.

6. False or Bad-Faith Complaints

6.1. If an investigation determines that a complaint made by an employee was knowingly and intentionally false, malicious or made in bad faith, the employee may be subject to disciplinary or legal action as the circumstances warrant.

6.2. A complaint that is not substantiated does not, in itself, constitute a false or bad-faith complaint.

6.3. Where the employee is a certificated teacher or teacher leader, the conduct may also be subject to the professional discipline process established under the Education Act..

Approved: November 2026
Amended:

Reference: Section 3, 3.1, 11, 33, 52, 53, 196, 197, 222, 256 *Education Act*
Access to Information Act
Emergency Management Act
Emergency Medical Aid Act
Health Information Act
Occupational Health and Safety Act
Protection of Privacy Act
Public Health Act
Communicable Disease Regulation
In-Person Learning Regulation