

**DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR ALL:  
CREATING AND MAINTAINING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT  
A GUIDE FOR DYCD CONTRACTORS**

**Compliance with Human Rights and Other Applicable Laws**

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) requires its contractors to comply with city, state and federal human rights and other applicable laws. Relevant provisions in these laws are reflected in DYCD Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and related contracts.<sup>1</sup> Thus, contractors must prevent discrimination and abuse based on actual or perceived factors such as race, color, creed, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, alienage or citizenship status. The term “abuse” is defined broadly to include any physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse or other maltreatment.

All contracts relating to youth programs also contain provisions for recording and reporting injuries and existing or suspected incidents of child abuse or property loss. Contractors are required to prominently post a notice in the program facility with the names and contact information for DYCD reporting requirements, in English and such other language(s) as are appropriate. If the allegations involve staff, DYCD requires immediate notification and subsequent written reports.

**Creating and Maintaining a Welcoming Environment**

In addition to complying with anti-discrimination and other applicable laws, DYCD expects all programs for children and young people that it funds to foster positive youth development, promote appreciation for diversity, teach respectful attitudes and behaviors and ensure welcoming environments for all participants. As a representative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said recently, “*For youth to thrive in their schools and communities, they need to feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe and supported.*”<sup>2</sup> Participants in DYCD programs should never have to confront behaviors that make them feel unwelcome or unsafe. They need to be confident they will be surrounded by supportive adults and peers and know they will be consistently treated with dignity and respect.

This guide seeks to facilitate compliance with DYCD requirements relating to the creation and maintenance of a welcoming program environment.<sup>3</sup> This is not something that emerges automatically. It has to be deliberately created and diligently maintained. Contractors must consciously seek to build an inclusive culture and put in place systems that guarantee fair treatment and protect participants from hurtful behaviors. The strategies outlined below are intended to help contractors adopt policies and practices that are explicitly designed to ensure that every young person in their programs feels both welcome and safe.

## **DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR ALL: KEY STRATEGIES FOR DYCD CONTRACTORS**

*Purposefully build an organizational culture that fosters dignity and respect for all, using multiple strategies including leadership, written policies, training/education, supervision and role-modeling*

- Consistently emphasize the importance of a safe, welcoming environment and the potential for harm when some individuals feel unwelcome, disrespected, or unsafe.
- Introduce staff and participants to traditions/cultures that are less familiar.
- Role-model, for staff and participants, welcoming and respectful behaviors, stress the importance of avoiding stereotypes, and encourage everyone to consider his/her own values, beliefs, and internal biases.
- Ensure that staff at all levels, paid and unpaid, show respect and courtesy to everyone: participants, family members/caregivers, co-workers, supervisors, and visitors.
- Educate everyone to recognize and challenge discrimination, prejudice, harassment, and bullying, whatever form it takes and whenever it occurs -, biased or hateful comments, jokes and taunts, threats and intimidation. Whenever possible, transform incidents into teachable moments and opportunities to build an inclusive culture.
- Teach staff not to make assumptions about participants or co-workers—about their backgrounds, circumstances, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity - and avoid asking unnecessary personal questions.

*Be educated and informed about issues of diversity including race/color, ethnicity/national origin, religion/creed, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability*

- Be informed and express openness to diverse cultural and religious heritages and traditions.
- Train staff to know the meaning of “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning/Queer” (LGBTQQ); to respect the way individual participants define themselves; and to understand the difference between *sexual orientation*<sup>4</sup> and *gender identity*.<sup>5</sup> Help staff to adopt gender-affirming or gender-neutral language, recognizing that self-identity and gender identity can be fluid and may change over time.
- Raise awareness that individuals can be sensitive about a wide range of characteristics that differentiate them from others.

*Use program activities to deliberately foster a culture of inclusion and combat unacceptable behaviors*<sup>6</sup>

- Inform participants and staff about the New York City Department of Education’s *Respect for All* policy.<sup>7</sup>
- Educate staff and participants about different types of bullying behavior and the causes and consequences of bullying, including verbal or physical threats and intimidation, cyber-bullying, and taunting that reflects bias based against someone’s personal characteristics such as actual or perceived race, ethnicity,

- color, religion/religious practices, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, and disability.
- Use informal and formal discussion time to encourage youth to interact with peers outside their immediate circles.
- Teach participants to recognize stereotyping and its negative consequences.
- Schedule activities that address the issue of exclusion/rejection of LGBTQ youth.
- Provide access to resources on bullying and related issues.<sup>8</sup>

*Display visible signs of diversity and “safe-space” symbols and notices to show everyone that they are welcome and to highlight the values of inclusiveness and civility*

- Intentionally represent diversity through posters, artwork, and photographs.
- Prominently display agency rules prohibiting bias-related language and behavior.

*Establish and enforce behavioral codes that prohibit unacceptable types of behavior*

- Issue clear written guidance on unacceptable behaviors.
- Educate staff and participants to recognize unacceptable behaviors such as verbal abuse (in person, by phone and in emails), teasing and taunting, derogatory language, bias-related jokes, slurs, written and graphic materials, graffiti, words on clothing, social exclusion, and intimidation and explicit threats.

*Establish policies and practices to prevent discrimination or the appearance of discrimination based on a person’s actual or perceived personal characteristics*

- Address all participants and staff with their preferred names and titles, and use pronouns that are appropriate, for example, to their gender identity.<sup>9</sup>
- Establish dress codes that allow for compliance with gender-specific provisions in an appropriate manner that is consistent with gender identity and expression. If possible, designate single occupancy restrooms as “gender neutral.”
- Be alert to the underlying causes of bullying-related incidents and make appropriate referrals to local health, mental health and other community resources: “*understanding bullying is complicated by the fact that a young person can be a bully, a victim, or both a bully and a victim ...*”<sup>10</sup>

*Establish policies/protocols for reporting, investigating and addressing alleged breaches of behavioral codes*

- Require all program staff to intervene if they witness breaches of behavioral codes, report all incidents that come to their attention, and prevent retaliation against those who report incidents.
- Assign responsibility for investigating and responding to allegations to specific senior staff members.
- Establish procedures for responding to complaints about breaches of behavioral codes, including requirements for designated staff to respond within a specified timeframe and keep the executive director informed.
- Alongside notices that list prohibited unacceptable behaviors, prominently post the names of staff designated to address complaints and information about how to contact DYCD with any concerns.

## SELECTED RESOURCES

### GLSEN Safe Space Kit

[http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/294-7.pdf](http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/000/294-7.pdf)  
<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/antibullying/index.html>;

Teaching Tolerance <http://www.tolerance.org/activities>

### New York City Department of Education

- **Respect For All:** <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/default.htm##2>
- **Citywide Standards of Intervention and Discipline Measures: The Discipline Code and Bill of Student Rights and Responsibilities, K through 12:**  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B4C3EAD9-AA61-4430-A6C3-D389F6238700/108973/DiscCode2012.pdf>
- **Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) Audit of Bias-Related Harassment Incidents Summary Findings for 2008-9 and 2009-10<sup>11</sup>**  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/47C3401D-BEAA-41E4-BC8E-C595E9A9CA44/105514/OORSbiasaudit20092010.pdf>,  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/47C3401D-BEAA-41E4-BC8E-C595E9A9CA44/105512/OORSbiasaudit200820092.pdf>

### New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

<http://www.state.ny.us/governor/press/090810-DignityStudentsAct.html>

### Federal Government Resources

- **FindYouthInfo.gov** <sup>12</sup> [http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic\\_bullying.shtml](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic_bullying.shtml)
- **StopBullying.gov** <http://www.stopbullying.gov/index.html>

*Bullying is a form of youth violence, aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying usually includes: an attack or intimidation with the intention to cause fear, distress, or harm that is either physical (e.g., hitting, punching), verbal (e.g., name-calling, teasing), or psychological/relational (e.g., rumors, social exclusion); a real or perceived imbalance of power between the bully and victim; and repeated attacks or intimidation between the same children over time (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010).*

- **US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Dear Colleague Letter October 26, 2010**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html>
- **Electronic Aggression/Cyber-Bullying**  
[http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/spotlight\\_cyberBullying.shtml](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/spotlight_cyberBullying.shtml)

## EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

### 1. Mixing It Up Activities

- Buddies Mixers - <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/buddies-lunch-day-mixer>;
- Mix It Up –Score One for Humanity <http://www.tolerance.org/blog/mix-it-score-one-humanity>

#### Objectives

- To get students to engage in discussion/conversation and share activities with peers outside their normal social circle.
- To improve communication and promote empathy between students who know little about each other.

#### Activities

- During snack time, students are randomly or strategically seated away from their closest friends or peers with whom they feel most comfortable. Instead, they engage with students they know less well, chatting, playing games or discussing specific topics they are given as a group.

### 2. Checking on Stereotypes <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/checking-stereotypes>

#### Objective

- To teach the meaning and negative consequences of stereotyping.

#### Activities

- Students discuss the meaning of stereotypes and stereotyping
- Students write down a stereotype about themselves or someone they know well.
- The cards are collected and some students are asked to select one and read it to the group.
- Students are asked how they think someone would feel to be stereotyped in this way.
- Students share ways to recognize stereotypes and combat and eliminate them.
- Students discuss or write responses to questions such as:  
*How did it feel to share a way you have been stereotyped? Did you hear a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what was it and why did you use it? What are your ideas on eliminating stereotypes?*

### 3. Bullying Quiz <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/bullying-quiz>

#### Objectives

- To teach students how evidence regarding behavioral patterns can challenge personal beliefs and assumptions about social behavior
- To use evidence about bullying behavior to inform daily decisions about social interactions and understand the need to make personal decisions in bullying situations
- To use factual information to consider consequences and alternatives of personal behavior choices.

#### Activities

- Students are asked to define bullying and write up the words or definitions of different kinds of bullying.
- Students complete the bullying quiz individually.
- After completing the quiz and sharing their answers, students discuss the activity using guided questions.

#### 4. **Bullying and LGBT Students** <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/bullying-and-lgbt-students>

##### Objective

- To discuss the bullying of LGBT students using the Mexican tradition of *El Paseo* as a starting point.

##### Activities

- Students sit in two co-centric circles (an inner and an outer circle) and are asked to pick a partner from the other circle.
- Students are informed they will be set tasks/asked questions and a fixed amount of time to think of the answer (e.g. 30 seconds) and to actually answer the questions (e.g., 1minute). *Topics/Questions:*
  - How do you see yourself and why do you see yourself this way?
  - How you think others see you and how do you feel about it.?
  - Was there a time when one aspect of your identity seemed to work to your advantage, in school or outside of school?
  - Have you seen someone being bullied and wished you had done something?
  - Have you seen someone being bullied and said or did something to stop it?
  - Describe a time when you thought someone couldn't talk about some aspect of themselves safely (such as religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual identity, etc.). What do you think it was like for this person?
  - If both partners answer the questions within the allotted time, they remain silent. When time is up, students in both the circles move clockwise, so each one acquires a new partner and the process begins again.
  - Students write-up or discuss how they felt during the activity. To target a specific area, there might be an open a discussion e.g., about how LGBTQ students feel in school or individual and group responsibility relating to bullying behaviors.

#### 5. **“No –Name Calling Week”** <http://www.nonamecallingweek.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/about/index.html>

##### Objective

- To focus national attention on the problem of name-calling in schools and to provide the tools and inspiration to launch an on-going dialogue about ways to eliminate name-calling in communities.

##### Activities

- Students discuss common derogatory names or phrases they have heard
- Students pledge to participate in a “ No Name Calling Week”
- Students choose relevant activities such as making posters, creating stickers, or writing songs that explain “No Name Calling Week.”

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the New York City’s Human Rights Law at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/hrlaw.html> and language incorporated into DYCD Out-of-School Time, Beacon and Cornerstone contracts.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Kann, Surveillance and Evaluation Research Branch, Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2011/p0606\\_yrbsurvey.html](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2011/p0606_yrbsurvey.html); see also the “Dear Colleague” Letter of October 27, 2010 from Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights: “Bullying fosters a climate of fear and disrespect that can seriously impair the physical and psychological health of its victims and create conditions *that negatively affect learning, thereby undermining the ability of students to achieve their full potential.*”

See <http://www2.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html>

<sup>3</sup> Contractors should note that compliance with this guidance may not discharge any obligations they may have under federal, state or city laws relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination. In this regard, see, for example, “Dear Colleague” Letter of October 27, 2010, *Ibid*; New York City’s Human Rights Law <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/ch1.html#1>; New York State’s Human Rights Law <http://www.dhr.state.ny.us/doc/hrl.pdf> and <http://www.dhr.state.ny.us/mission.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Sexual or romantic attraction to another person.

<sup>5</sup> How someone understands or expresses his/her own gender.

<sup>6</sup> See below for descriptions of activities designed to foster inclusion and combat bullying.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/default.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> See below for a select list of resources.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Guidance Regarding Gender Identity Discrimination, New York Commission on Human Rights December 2006. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/pdf/GenderDis\\_English.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/pdf/GenderDis_English.pdf). DYCD Contractors providing services for youth would come within the definition of “public accommodations” under Title 8 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York.

<sup>10</sup> Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009. BullyingInfo.org/

[http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic\\_bullying.shtml?utm\\_source=BullyingInfo.org&utm\\_medium=Redirect&utm\\_campaign=BullyingSummitt](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic_bullying.shtml?utm_source=BullyingInfo.org&utm_medium=Redirect&utm_campaign=BullyingSummitt)

<sup>11</sup> The latest data published by DOE (for the school year 2009-2010) indicates that bias-related incidents comprised a small percentage of total behavioral incidents, with the highest percentage of bias-related incidents in the category of “Gender/Sex.” The majority of bias-related cases among students in K-Grade 5 were Level 2 and 3 incidents, defined as “Disorderly Disruptive Behaviors” and “Seriously Disruptive Behavior” respectively. The majority of bias-related incidents among students in Grades 6-12 were Level 4 incidents, defined as “Dangerous or Violent Behaviors.”

<sup>12</sup> FindYouthInfo.gov was created by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP), which is composed of representatives from 12 Federal agencies that support programs and services focusing on youth.