

## **Scenarios: Bullying, Harassment, or Other Misconduct? High School**

*Scenarios created by Tracey Tsugawa, Vermont Human Rights Commission*

1. Dylan is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade gay student who is out. Over the summer, one of Dylan's friends reports to the principal that other students from the high school have created a website that says "Dylan is gay" and includes derogatory comments about Dylan and his "lifestyle." Dylan's friend tells the principal that Dylan is now afraid to come back to school in the fall because the website includes threats to physically harm him. The principal goes online and finds the website. While the students who created the website are using screen names, they provide enough information about themselves for the principal to easily identify who the students are.
2. David is standing in line getting food in the high school cafeteria. Two of David's friends, Seth and Trevor, walk up to David and start giving him a hard time about the pants he is wearing and start calling David a "faggot" and say that David's pants are "gay." Two cafeteria staff members, Anna and Carol, who handling the food service overhear Seth and Trevor's comments towards David.
3. George Washington High School's basketball team traveled to West Coventry High School for a basketball game. The George Washington High School team has three African American players on its team. West Coventry High School has an all White basketball team. At the basketball game, several West Coventry students in the stands start taunting the GWHS Black players during team timeouts and during play. The West Coventry students do not use any overt racial epithets but the taunting clearly refers to the GWHS players' race (e.g., "Come on LeBron, why did you miss that shot?" "Michael Jordan missed a shot, Michael Jordan missed a shot!") Students, parents, and teachers from both schools are sitting in the stands and overhear the remarks of the West Coventry students. The two high schools are in two different school districts.
4. Andrew is a star track athlete at Jonestown Middle School. During the summer he develops a stress fracture in his left leg and returns to school using crutches. While in the hallway, some of Andrew's friends start teasing him and call him a "gimp" and imitate the way he walks with the crutches. Andrew laughs with his friends and does not seem bothered by the comments. Off to the side, Jered, another student with cerebral palsy who uses crutches all the time, hears the comments and is visibly upset. Jered says nothing to the other boys and keeps walking to class. Mr. Cook, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, and Mr. Peterson, one of the custodial staff, see and overhear the interaction between Andrew and his friends. In addition, Mr. Peterson sees Jered's reaction to the comments.

### **Process Questions:**

1. Is this bullying or harassment or some other form of misconduct? If it is harassment, what is/are the protected category/ies? If you are not sure, what additional information do you need to determine if it might be harassment or bullying?
2. What immediate reactive responses are needed to manage or resolve this situation and who needs to be involved? What would you do and/or say? Consider how you would respond to the target, perpetrator, bystanders, parents, and/or school staff.
3. What follow-up steps need to be taken and by whom?

