

Racism-Free Schools Law and Bullying Prevention Data Collection Guidance

August 7, 2024

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is tasked with implementing data provisions of two recent Public Acts -- the Racism-Free Schools Law ([Public Act 103-0472](#)) and Bullying Prevention ([105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#)), as modified for data collection per PA [103-0047](#)). These Public Acts require that, starting with the 2024-25 school year, all Illinois school districts; charter schools; and nonpublic, nonsectarian elementary or secondary schools collect, maintain, and submit to ISBE non-identifiable data pertaining to incidents of bullying, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Data Collection and Reporting Requirement

Data **reported to ISBE** must be non-identifiable, meaning it should not include any information that can be used to identify individual students or staff members. Non-identifiable data includes aggregated statistics and counts of incidents without personal identifiers, such as names, student IDs, or other unique identifiers. Data must be collected for each verified allegation of bullying and each reported allegation of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, and reported within this template. Locally, you will collect personally identifiable information, as you will need the relevant details to investigate and respond appropriately to the allegations. However, when reporting this data to ISBE, **only the fields identified in this template should be provided. Text description fields must not contain any personally identifying information.**

What if the specific date of the alleged incident is not known?

Schools and districts will be asked to report on the date that they received the allegation. This may or may not be the same as the date that the alleged incident occurred. Many times, schools may receive a report of an alleged incident that occurred days, weeks, or months before it was reported. School officials should make every attempt to determine the date that the alleged incident occurred. An estimated date can be entered if an exact date is not known.

What is a “verified allegation of bullying”?

A verified allegation of bullying is a complaint that if investigated would meet the definition of “bullying” found in Section 27-23.7(b) of the School Code. This means schools and districts will need to capture this data regardless of the outcome to determine if an act of bullying occurred.

Refer to the following definition of bullying to determine if a student's complaint is a verified allegation of bullying.

Bullying is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

If a complaint received does not meet the above definition of bullying, it is not a verified allegation of bullying that needs to be collected and reported upon.

How does a school report on multiple incidents, multiple offenders, or multiple victims of bullying?

Bullying is a temporal event that occurs at a specific time and place (even if the place is virtual). A school or district should only report one verified allegation of bullying even if there are multiple victims or offenders. For example, an allegation that two offenders were bullying three victims on the school bus at 7:30 a.m. should be reported as one verified allegation of bullying. If the same offenders and victims are involved in an incident in the lunchroom at 11:30 a.m., this should be reported as a second verified allegation of bullying. The number of victims and the number of offenders will need to be included on the spreadsheet, but this will only be counted as one verified allegation of bullying per incident.

Are there differences in the reporting for bullying and the Racism-Free Schools Law?

There are differences in the two laws, but ISBE has combined its process for collecting data to streamline and reduce the burden on schools and districts. In order to appropriately collect this data, schools will need to determine if an allegation is based upon the following:

- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin
- Discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex
- Discrimination or harassment on the basis of religion
- Discrimination or harassment on the basis of disability
- Retaliation
- Verified allegation of bullying (non-cyber related)
- Verified allegation of bullying (cyber related)

Schools will be allowed to make multiple choices to best fit the allegation.

Excel Spreadsheet for Data Collection and Submission Process

ISBE is providing an Excel spreadsheet designed to help schools and districts report this data for the 2024-25 school year. The spreadsheet is structured to capture the necessary information while ensuring that all data remains non-identifiable. To reiterate: The spreadsheet should be used for data reporting of the verified allegations of bullying as required under 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, as well as the data required for reported allegations of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation as required by the Racism-Free Schools Law.

Please follow these directions when sending the requested information for the 2024-25 school year to ensure that it is delivered securely:

1. Go to the ISBE website.
2. Select "System Quick Links" located at the top left of the homepage.
3. Select "Send ISBE a file" at the very bottom of the dropdown menu.
4. Complete the required fields on the Attachment Manager form.
5. Select "Bullying & Racism-Free Schools Data" in the "ISBE eMail Name" field.
6. Click on the "Submit" button at lower right when complete.

Starting with the 2025-26 school year, data will be collected via an electronic reporting system through IWAS that is currently being built. ISBE will migrate the data it collects from schools and districts during the 2024-25 school year for posterity purposes.

Submission Deadline

The data reporting period shall be August 1 through July 31 annually. Data will be due to ISBE each year by August 15, which will allow for a correction window following the end of each reporting period. ISBE is providing the spreadsheet and this guidance before the start of the school year so that administrators can collect their data beginning on the first day of school. This proactive approach will help ensure comprehensive and accurate reporting. Please ensure that your school administrators and staff are aware of these new requirements and are prepared to begin data collection at the start of the 2024-25 school year.

Support and Guidance

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please reach out to ISBE at bullyingpolicy@isbe.net. ISBE will compile questions to inform the development of detailed guidance, which will be published later this year.