

RELATIONSHIP ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

Introduction

The Ferndale School District strives to create a culture of care where all individuals feel safe, valued, and respected. The purpose of this policy is to create guidelines that promote healthy relationships and consent while addressing and preventing relationship abuse and sexual assault that may impact students, families, and employees. Violence of any kind is a violation of human rights and an obstacle to learning. Domestic and sexual violence are specific types of violence that limit potential, thrive in silence, and exist for many reasons. Among these root causes are: limiting ideas about gender roles and power; privilege, oppression, and objectification based on sex, gender, race, and class; and cultural norms related to violence. Trauma related to domestic or sexual violence can cause absenteeism, lack of focus, abusing drugs or alcohol to cope with trauma, and mental health issues. Therefore, it is the policy of the Ferndale School District to provide trauma-informed support to employees, students, and families impacted by relationship abuse and sexual assault. As educators, we believe that it is also important to provide prevention information that builds skills leading to consensual, healthy relationships.

Definitions¹:

Relationship abuse: a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. This can also be called domestic violence, intimate partner violence, or dating violence.

Sexual violence: a sexual act committed against someone without that person's freely given consent. Examples of sexual violence include: completed or attempted sexual penetration, unwanted sexual contact, and unwanted sexual experiences without contact (such as exposure to pornography).

¹ These definitions were created by the Centers for Disease Control. For more information, see the Centers for Disease Control-Violence Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/>

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POLICY

The Superintendent will implement measures to prevent domestic/dating or sexual violence and to respond to these incidents when they are reported.

The Superintendent will:

1. Educate students, families, and staff about relationship abuse and sexual violence.
2. Work to prevent relationship abuse and sexual violence through educational programs and awareness activities.
3. Establish clear expectations that relationship abuse and sexual violence need to be reported.
4. Develop an accessible, trauma-informed protocol for reporting and responding to students, parents, or staff experiencing relationship abuse or sexual violence. This includes ensuring accessibility for those with disabilities or limited English proficiency.
5. Ensure that protocols include safety planning, confidentiality guidelines, and allow the victim to voice their preferences in the response.
6. Ensure that staff explore the accommodation options of the student accused of violence before those of the victim.
7. Take interim measures to prevent the reporting party (or the person who has experienced the abuse or violence, if they did not report themselves) from being subjected to retaliation, harassment, or intimidation.
8. Refer the victim and/or complainant to local support programs and community resources, such as Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services or Lummi Victims of Crime.