



**The New York State Center for School Safety**

Providing support to schools, families, and communities

# The Dignity for All Students Act:

## Scenarios for Everyday Implementation

October 2022



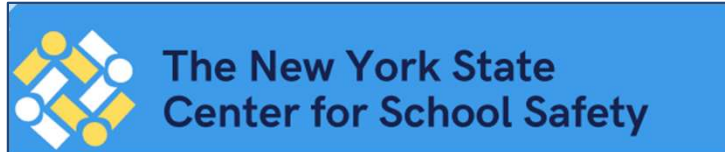
New York State Education Department



New York State Center for School Safety



# Welcome! We are glad you're here!



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# Session Agenda

- ❖ Introduction to the the technical and adaptive challenges of implementing the Dignity Act
- ❖ Small Group Scenario Exercises
  - How to support students when there is no evidence of a material incident
  - How to engage and communicate with families
  - Addressing misconceptions around reporting
- ❖ Debrief Closing Activity



# Session Outcomes

- ❖ This session is designed to support you, your school, and your district with Dignity Act implementation.
- ❖ We will guide you through a series of scenarios to help trouble shoot implementation challenges.
- ❖ Your role is challenging. Challenges provide opportunities.



# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Legislative Intent:

“... To afford all students in public schools an environment free of discrimination and harassment. The purpose of this...is to foster civility in public schools and to prevent and prohibit conduct which is inconsistent with a school’s educational mission.”

Image of  
students  
and  
teacher

Ed. Law Article 2 Section 10





# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Hallmarks of an environment that honors dignity:

- ❖ Respect is unconditional
- ❖ Dignity and respect not merit based
- ❖ All identities accepted and affirmed
- ❖ Schools are places where all students feel that they belong

Image of  
students  
and  
teacher



# The Dignity for All Students Act

Image of  
group  
discussion

## Beware of False Dichotomy:

Treating all students with  
respect does not mean  
removing accountability for  
behaviors in conflict with the  
rules and values of the  
school.



# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Two compatible responses to the Dignity Act:

- ❖ Set rules and limits for behaviors
- ❖ Promote positive and respectful norms of behavior for all members of school community

Image of  
team  
discussion





# What do we mean?

## Technical vs. Adaptive

### Technical Solutions

- ❖ Fixing or improving the current system
- ❖ Processes and procedures
- ❖ Use solutions that have worked for similar problems
- ❖ Usually, a relatively quick fix
- ❖ Bring order and predictability

### Adaptive Solutions

- ❖ Changing hearts and minds
- ❖ Involve people's needs and interactions
- ❖ Requires new and different ideas
- ❖ Require ongoing attention and analysis
- ❖ Challenges the Status Quo



# Section: No Evidence

Image of conversation  
bubbles “He Said”, “She  
Said”, “They Said”



# The Dignity for All Students Act

DASA requirements differ from traditional discipline approaches:

- ❖ Many behaviors are not detectable by adults
- ❖ Perception of students must be taken into account
- ❖ Focus on protecting students and less on applying consequences to rule breakers
- ❖ Successfully responding to individual incidents is not sufficient
- ❖ Holistic/systemic environment issues must be addressed



# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Interpreting Complaints

- ❖ Context is not just important - *it's everything*
- ❖ Perceptions and intentions must be accounted for

Image of a student who is upset



# Bullying occurs in the blind spot of adults

Image of car with other cars in the blind spot



# The Dignity for All Students Act

Why begin with the term “mistreatment” rather than bullying or harassment?

- ❖ Mistreatment avoids prejudging vocabulary and relying on assumptions and judgments about students.
- ❖ Creates a more open mind for gathering information about incidents.
- ❖ It will give you data that will help establish positive norms.



# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Matrix Variables

Clarity of Offensiveness:



Intent:



## Matrix/Guide for Determining Material and Deciding Upon Response

### Intent

Unintentional



Deliberate

Off hand derogatory comments.  
Directed towards no one but  
overheard.  
E.g., "That's so gay".

1

2

Directed derogatory  
remarks/insults

3

4

Jokes with no derogatory  
comments, but could be taken the  
wrong way by some

Directed remarks toward someone  
with no offensive words but  
offensive tone.  
E.g., "Cool dress you have there."

Blatant

Clearly  
Offensive



Clarity

Ambiguous



# Matrix/Guide for Determining Material and Deciding Upon Response

## Intent

Unintentional



Deliberate

<p>Off hand derogatory comments. Directed towards no one but overheard. E.g., "That's so gay".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Not witnessed or heard by staff</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Can be easily dismissed</i></li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Teachable Moments</i></li> </ul> <p>1</p>	<p>Directed derogatory remarks/insults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Usually requires a disciplinary response following staff intervention</i></li> </ul> <p>2</p>	<p>Blatant</p> <p>Clearly Offensive</p> <p>Ambiguous</p> <p>Clarity</p>
<p>Jokes with no derogatory comments, but could be taken the wrong way by some</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Not witnessed or heard by staff</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Can be easily dismissed</i></li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Related to the vulnerability of some students</i></li> <li><i>Teachable Moments</i></li> </ul> <p>3</p>	<p>Directed remarks toward someone with no offensive words but offensive tone. E.g., "Cool dress you have there."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Not witnessed or heard by staff</i></li> <li><i>Often requires clarification and warning regarding future occurrences</i></li> <li><i>Teachable Moments</i></li> </ul> <p>4</p>	



# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Using Research on Resiliency to Understand Context:

Image of  
Orchid

***Orchids***  
Very special  
conditions

Image of  
Tulip

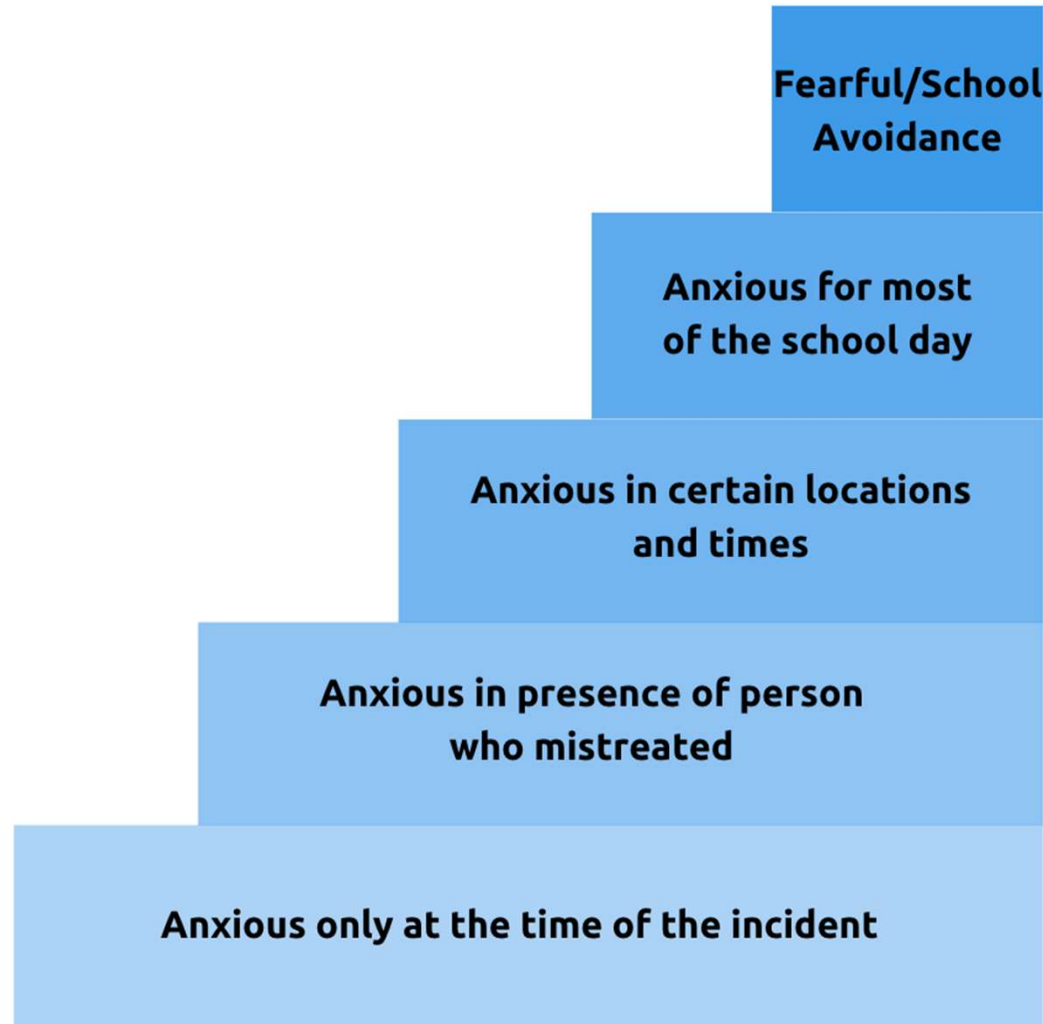
***Tulips***  
Typical conditions

Image of  
Dandelion

***Dandelions***  
Any conditions



# Assessing the Impact on the Student





# Scenario: No Evidence

A student comes to you in distress. They have recently requested to be identified by pronouns and a name that better fit their gender identity.

The student claims a group of students were intentionally and repeatedly using their **dead name\*** and incorrect pronouns and have been doing so since the beginning of the year.

Upon investigation, both the students and teachers who witnessed the incident report that this was not malicious but, in fact, an honest mistake.

## Objectives

What (if anything) can be done to support the gender-diverse student?

What might be a good educational response/approach to address the root of the incident?

Would your team be able to designate this as a material incident?

What more info might you need to make this determination?

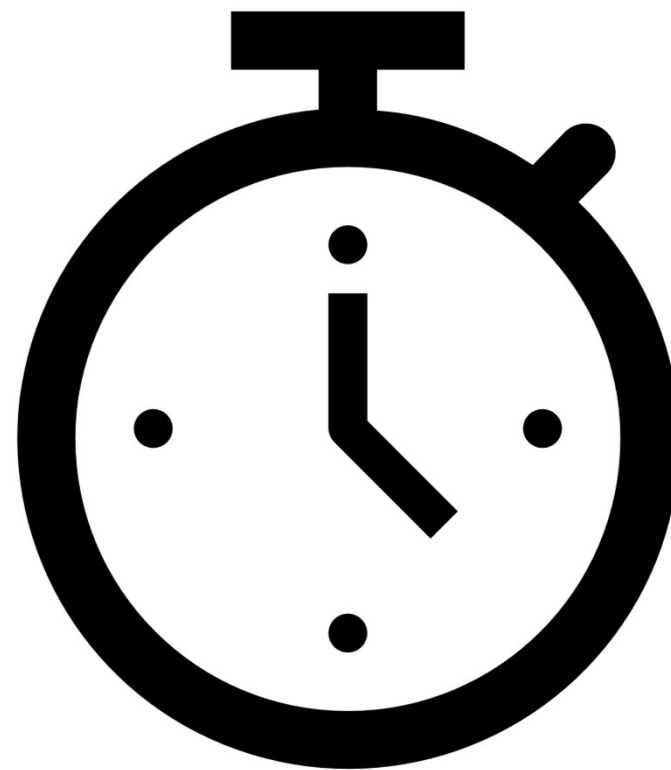
*\*The birth name of a transgender person who has changed their name as a part of their transition*



# Share Out

## Scenario: No Evidence

- ❖ Provide one key takeaway from your group discussion
- ❖ Please keep your responses to under 30 seconds





# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Guidelines for Responding to Student Complaints:

Image of  
adult  
listening to  
student

- ❖ Listen. Listen. Listen
- ❖ Do not dismiss or make quick judgments
- ❖ Welcome and affirm complaints
- ❖ Express concern for student safety
- ❖ Express determination to keep students safe
- ❖ Explain steps that will be taken
- ❖ State that parents may need to be informed



# The Dignity for All Students Act

What can be done with a lack of evidence:

- ❖ Express concern for student who was targeted
- ❖ Regular check-ins
- ❖ Increased supervision
- ❖ Speak to student who possibly bullied and put on notice
- ❖ Increase staff awareness
- ❖ Clear directions for whom to report to
- ❖ Enlist support from other students
- ❖ Communicate plan to protect and support student who was targeted



# Section: Family Engagement

Image of two adults talking





# The Dignity for All Students Act

## Guidelines for Responding to Parental Complaints:

### Practice TEA Time

Image of  
adult  
holding  
child's  
hand

**Practice:** *don't leave your response to chance*

- ❖ T = Thanks
- ❖ E = Empathize
- ❖ A = Acknowledge/Ask

**Time:** *don't shortchange and be clear about timeline*



# Scenario: Family Engagement

You receive a call from a parent who is very upset. The parent begins the call by yelling about how their child is continually harassed by a group of students in the afterschool program and accuses the team of not caring or doing anything. The parent gives the names of two students the parent believes to be the source of the problem and demand that they are suspended.

You are familiar with this parent's daughter. The staff generally perceive her as a "troublemaker" and report that they believe she has instigated at least some of these incidents, instead of simply being the targeted student.

## Objectives

After this call, how can this parent be sure that you will make a good faith effort to protect their child?

What can be done to support and communicate better with this family moving forward?

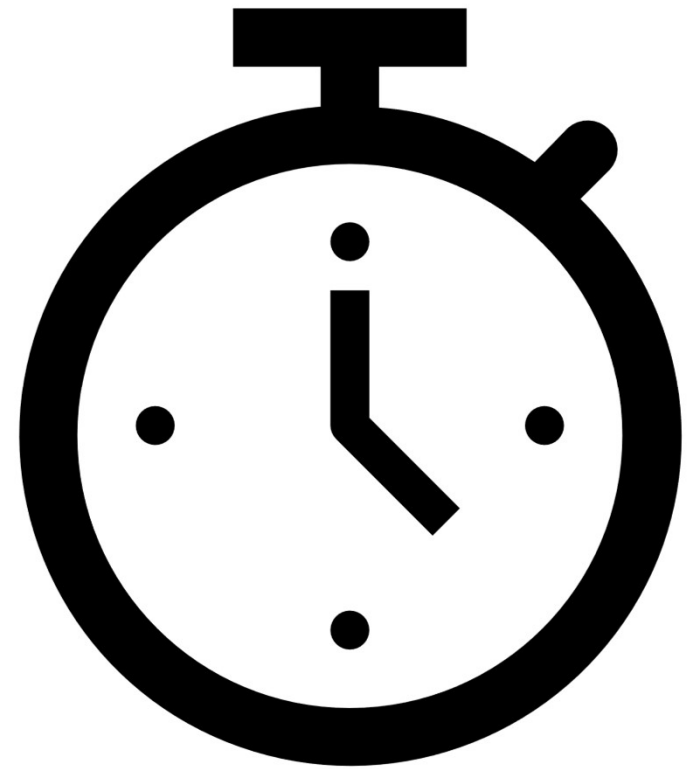
Please consider the location and accessibility of your Dignity Act forms and coordinator.



# Share Out

## Scenario: Family Engagement 1

- ❖ Provide one key takeaway from your group discussion
- ❖ Please keep your responses to under 30 seconds





## Scenario 2: Family Engagement

A Muslim student is brought into your office. She was seen by several adults and students in the building pushing another student in the locker and punching them in the face.

This student has been in your office before to report the other student and their friends of taunting her for weeks, pulling at her hijab, and calling her racial slurs.

### Objectives:

Create a communication plan for the parents of all students involved.

Please account for:

- The initial investigation
- What if it is found to be a material incident?
- What if it is not found to be a material incident?
- Next Steps and Supports

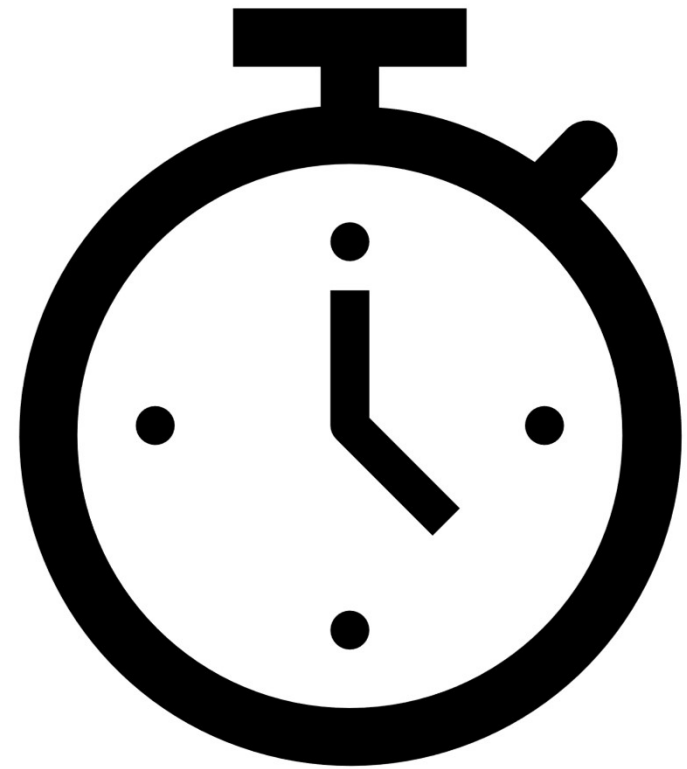
What role might your Code of Conduct play in this scenario?



# Share Out

## Scenario: Family Engagement 2

- ❖ Provide one key takeaway from your group discussion
- ❖ Please keep your responses to under 30 seconds





## Section: Misconceptions Around Reporting

Image of tangled thoughts



# Scenario: Misconceptions around Reporting

A white, male student tells one of his teachers that he thinks he is being cyberbullied.

Specifically, other male students have been saying that he has a “punchable face” on snapchat. This student now feels afraid to attend some of his classes and has been skipping to avoid these students.

## Objectives:

What reporting responsibilities does this teacher have?

What investigative steps might your team take?

Could this be labeled a material incident under DASA?

## Criminal Justice Approach

## Educational Approach

Traditional discipline used-rules/consequences

Traditional still in place but supported by climate and culture

Responds to incident after it happens

Emphasizes preventing incident

People in leadership are enforcers

Needs shared leadership

Concerned with student who bullies/harasses and target of it

Focus on all students

Responds to limits being exceeded

Focus on behavior within limits

Doesn't involve teaching social skills

Tries to give students skills to be successful

Requires evidence to ascertain perpetrator

Can address problem and help students without being dependent on evidence

Lack of applying consequences can be perceived as doing nothing

Many steps can be taken to address problems

May decrease likelihood of bystanders reporting

May increase likelihood of bystanders reporting

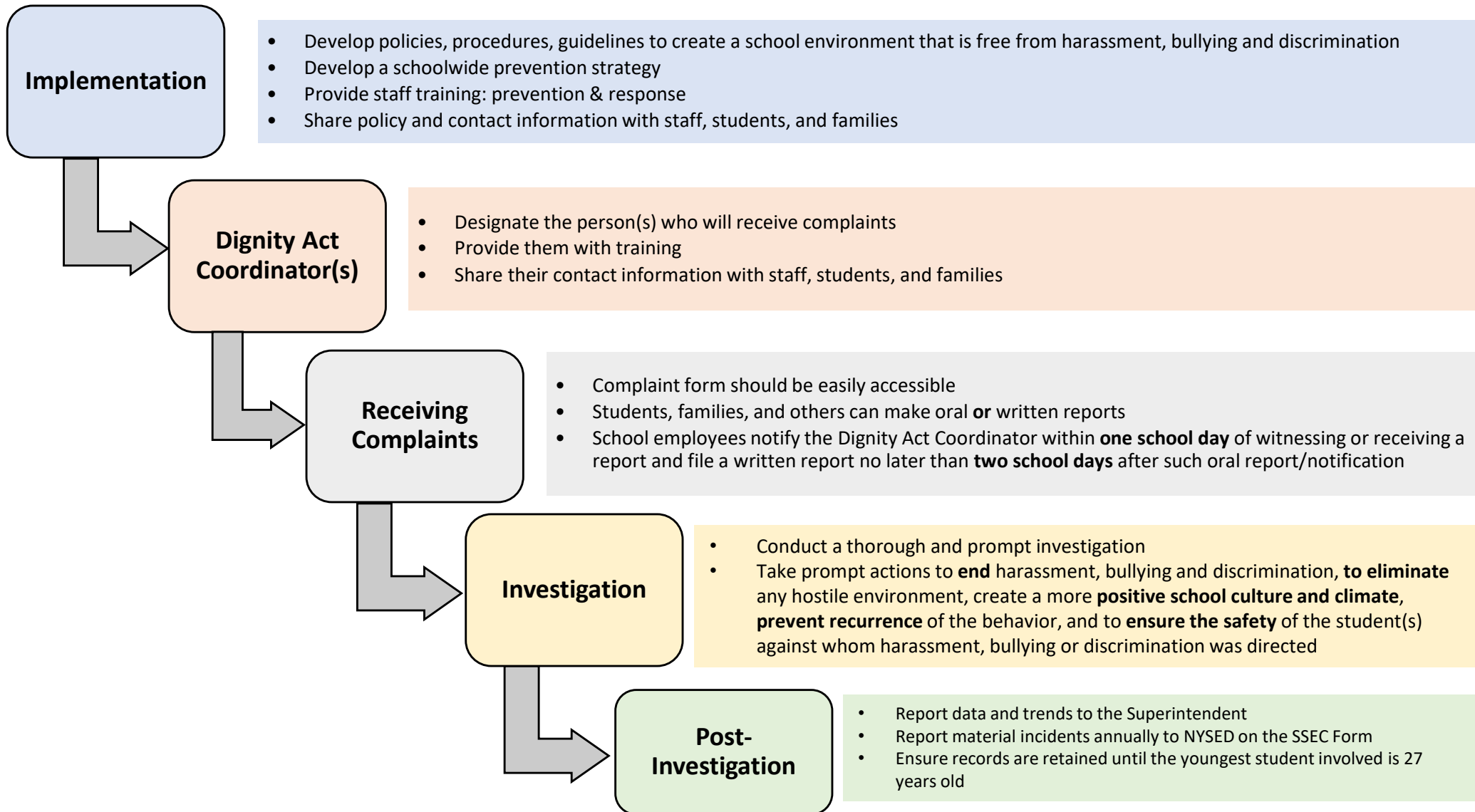
It's about stopping a negative

It's about promoting positive skills





# Implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act





# Implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act



New York State  
Center for School Safety

## DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT

*Implementation Resource List*

OCTOBER 2022

[www.nyscfss.org](http://www.nyscfss.org)

### **Implementation**

Each district must implement policies, procedures, and guidelines intended to create a school environment that is free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination, that include but are not limited to provisions which:

Requirement	Considerations	Resources to Support Implementation



# Dignity for All Students Act

- What was new information?
- What are you already doing?
- What is one next step for your district/school?

Image of note with a question mark



# Thank you for joining us!

Please [complete an evaluation](#) for  
our session today

Please include ideas for resources  
or additional training!

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For more information

## New York State Education Department

Office of Student Support Services

518-486-6090

[SSEC@nysed.gov](mailto:SSEC@nysed.gov)

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>

## New York State Center for School Safety

844-897-9567 or 800-330-1420 (ext. 205)

[NYSCFSS.org](http://NYSCFSS.org)

*Please contact our team with questions or to request additional information*





# Thank you for your thoughtful participation!

Image of a thank you  
note