



Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation in Maryland Public Schools

Incidents Reported Under the Safe Schools Reporting Act
Ed. Art. § 7-424(g)(1)

Division of Student Support and Federal Programs

March 2025

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.

State Superintendent of Schools

Geoff Sanderson

Deputy State Superintendent

Office of Accountability

Wes Moore

Governor

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D.

President, Maryland State Board of Education

Monica Goldson, Ed.D. (Vice President)

Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, MSN, PNP, RN-BC

Alverne "Chet" Chesterfield

Kenny Clash

Clarence C. Crawford (President Emeritus)

Abhiram Gaddam (Student Member)

Nick Greer

Dr. Irma E. Johnson

Dr. Kim Lewis

Rachel L. McCusker

Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, D.A., CCC-SLP

Xiomara V. Medina, M.Ed.

Samir Paul, Esq.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
By The Numbers: A Look at Statewide Reported Bullying Data	4
Locations of Reported Incidents.....	7
Descriptions of Reported Incidents.....	8
Age of Targeted Students.....	9
Age of Alleged Offenders.....	10
Students With Disabilities and Reported Bullying Involvement	11
Alleged Offender’s Motives	12
Incident Investigation	13
Interventions, Supports and Corrective Actions	15
Number of Days Missed from School By Targeted Students	17
Number of Days Missed from School By Alleged Offenders	18
Number of False Allegations Reported	19
Summary and Considerations	21

Introduction

The Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005 became effective on July 1, 2005. Pursuant to Section 7-424 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) required all county boards of education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to report incidents of harassment or intimidation against students in public schools within their jurisdiction to the Maryland General Assembly. Additionally, MSDE was required to submit an annual report to the Maryland General Assembly summarizing the information included on the bullying, harassment or intimidation reporting forms filed with local boards during the previous school year.

To ensure effective implementation of the law according to the reporting requirements, MSDE has engaged with each local educational agency (LEA) to inform the appropriate collection and reporting of information. This report describes the process used by MSDE to carry out the mandates of the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005. The reporting period for the March 2025 report encompasses information from the 2023-2024 school year.

MSDE requires each LEA to provide data using the *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Incident Reporting Instrument*, which is in the form of a fillable spreadsheet. Data in this instrument includes the following information:

- Number of reported incidents by LEA;
- Incident rates per one thousand students;
- Location of incidents;
- Descriptions of incidents;
- Ages of targeted students;
- Ages of alleged offenders;
- Motives of alleged offenders;
- Students With Disabilities and Bullying Involvement;
- Investigative methods used;
- Interventions, Supports and Corrective actions taken by schools;
- Number of days missed by targeted students;
- Number of days missed by alleged offenders; and
- The number of false allegations reported.

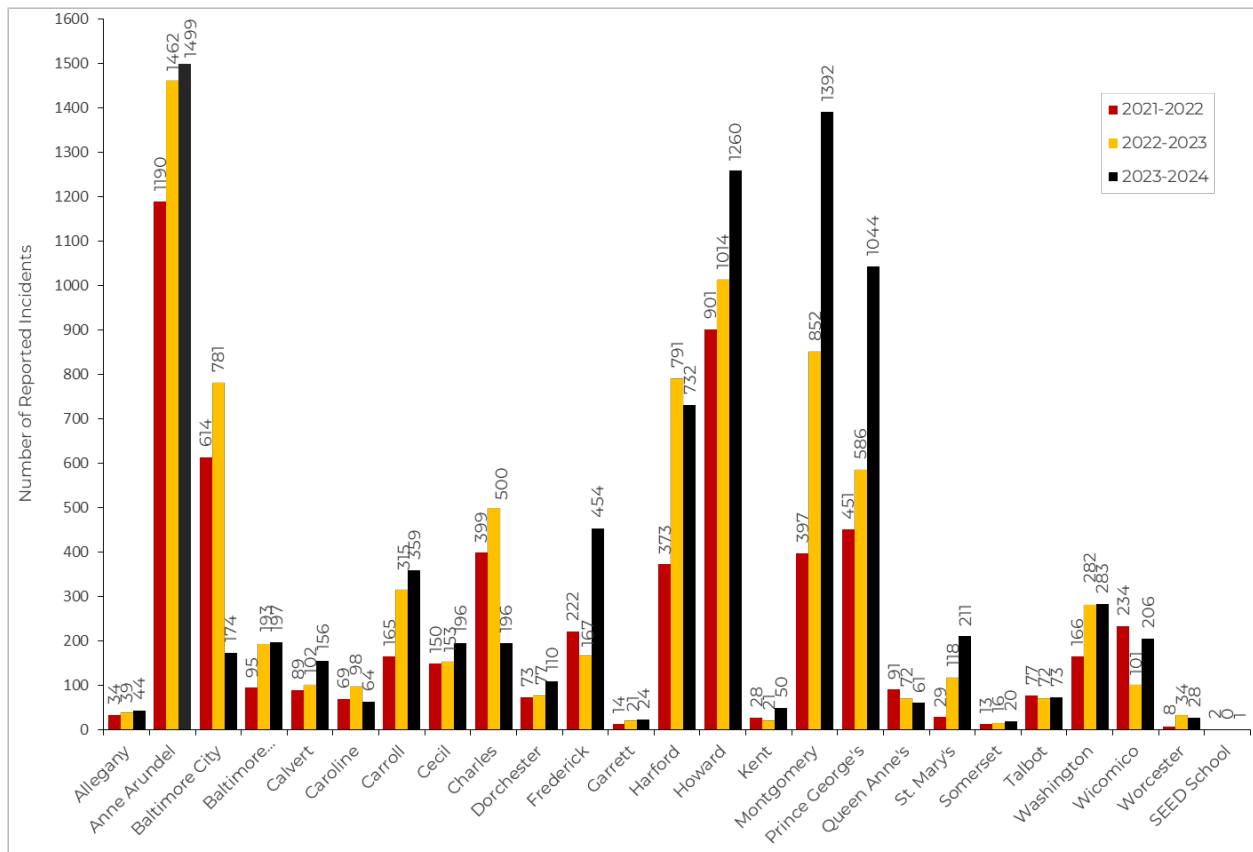
By The Numbers: A Look at Statewide Reported Bullying Data

The 24 LEAs and the SEED School of Maryland reported data for the 2023-2024 school year.

There were **7,867** reported incidents of bullying, harassment or intimidation during the 2022-2023 school year in Maryland public schools. In the 2023-2024 school year, there were **8,834** reported incidents. This represents an increase of **12.3%** in reported incidents between the two years.

The number of reported incidents in each LEA is shown in Figure 1, 19 LEAs indicated an increase in the number of reported incidents. Five LEAs and the SEED School indicated a decrease in the number of reported incidents.

Figure 1: Number of Incidents



The rate of reported bullying incidents in LEAs per 1,000 students enrolled during the 2023-2024 school year is shown in Table 1.

The rate of reported bullying incidents in LEAs per 1,000 students enrolled during the last three years is shown in Table 1 17 LEAs had an increase in the rates of reported incidents per 1,000 students, while six LEAs had a decrease in reported rates of incidents, with one LEA reporting no difference.

Table 1: Number of Reported Incidents Per 1,000 Enrolled Students by Local Education Agency and School Year (2021-2022 to 2023–2024)

Number of Reported Incidents Per 1,000 Enrolled Students			
Local Education Agency	School Year		
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Allegany	4.2	4.8	5.4
Anne Arundel	14.3	17.3	17.8
Baltimore City	7.9	10.3	2.3
Baltimore County	0.9	1.7	1.8
Calvert	5.8	6.6	10.3
Caroline	12.4	17.3	11.3
Carroll	6.6	12.2	13.7
Cecil	10.1	10.2	13.1
Charles	14.8	18.1	7.1
Dorchester	16.0	17.0	23.9
Frederick	4.9	3.6	9.5
Garrett	4.0	6.0	6.9
Harford	9.8	20.8	19.2
Howard	15.7	17.6	21.9
Kent	15.7	12.0	28.9
Montgomery	2.5	5.3	8.7

Prince George's	3.5	4.5	7.9
Queen Anne's	12.2	9.7	8.1
St. Mary's	1.7	6.7	12.3
Somerset	4.7	5.8	6.9
Talbot	17.0	15.9	16.2
Washington	7.5	12.6	12.6
Wicomico	16.0	6.8	13.7
Worcester	1.2	5.0	4.1

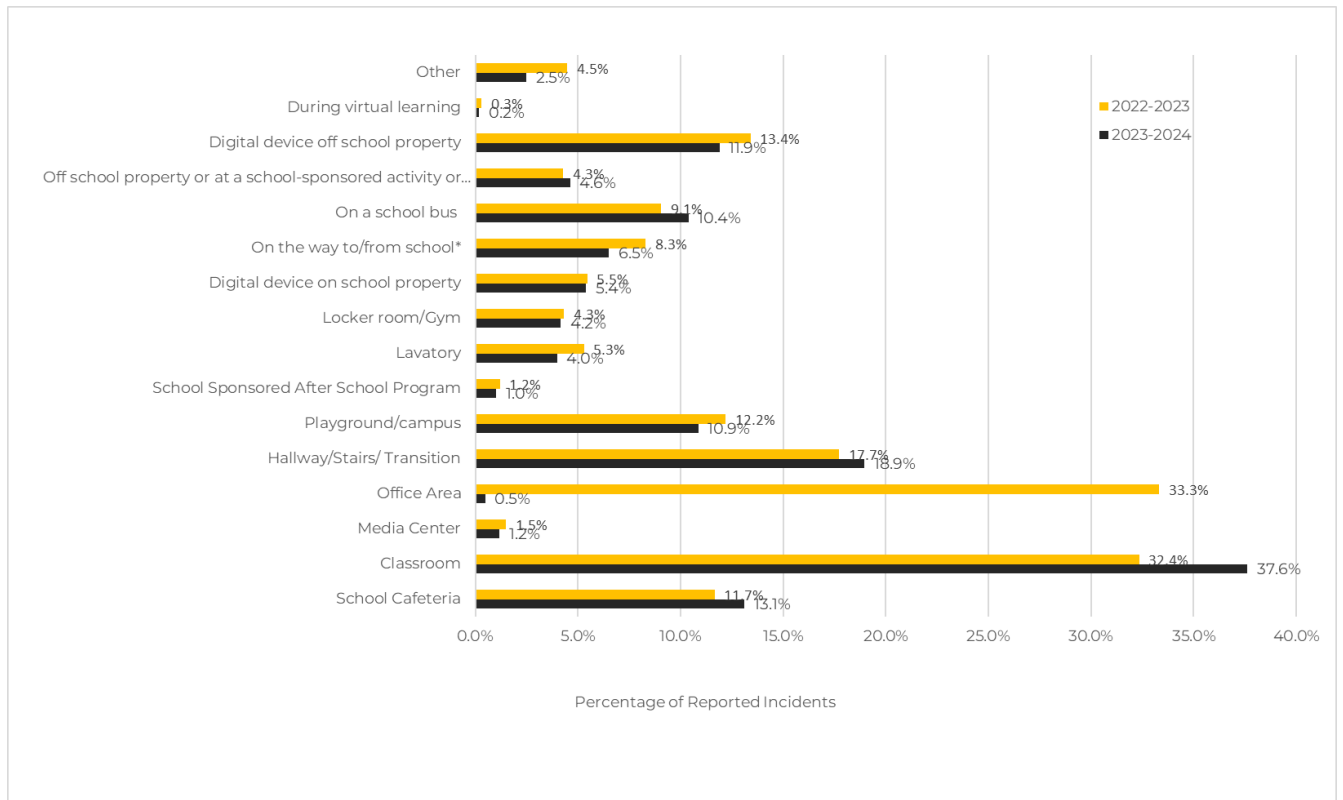
Locations of Reported Incidents

Figure 2 shows the statewide locations of reported incidents. Individuals completing the bullying, harassment or intimidation reporting forms were asked to choose from a list of locations both on and off school property. Many of the submitted reports included multiple locations.

The most common location of reported incidents in 2023-2024:

- Classroom (37.6%)
- School hallways/stairs and transitions (18.9%)
- School cafeteria (13.1%)
- Digital device off school property (11.9%)
- School playground or campus (10.9%)
- On a school bus (10.4%)

Figure 2: Statewide Locations of Reported Incidents for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

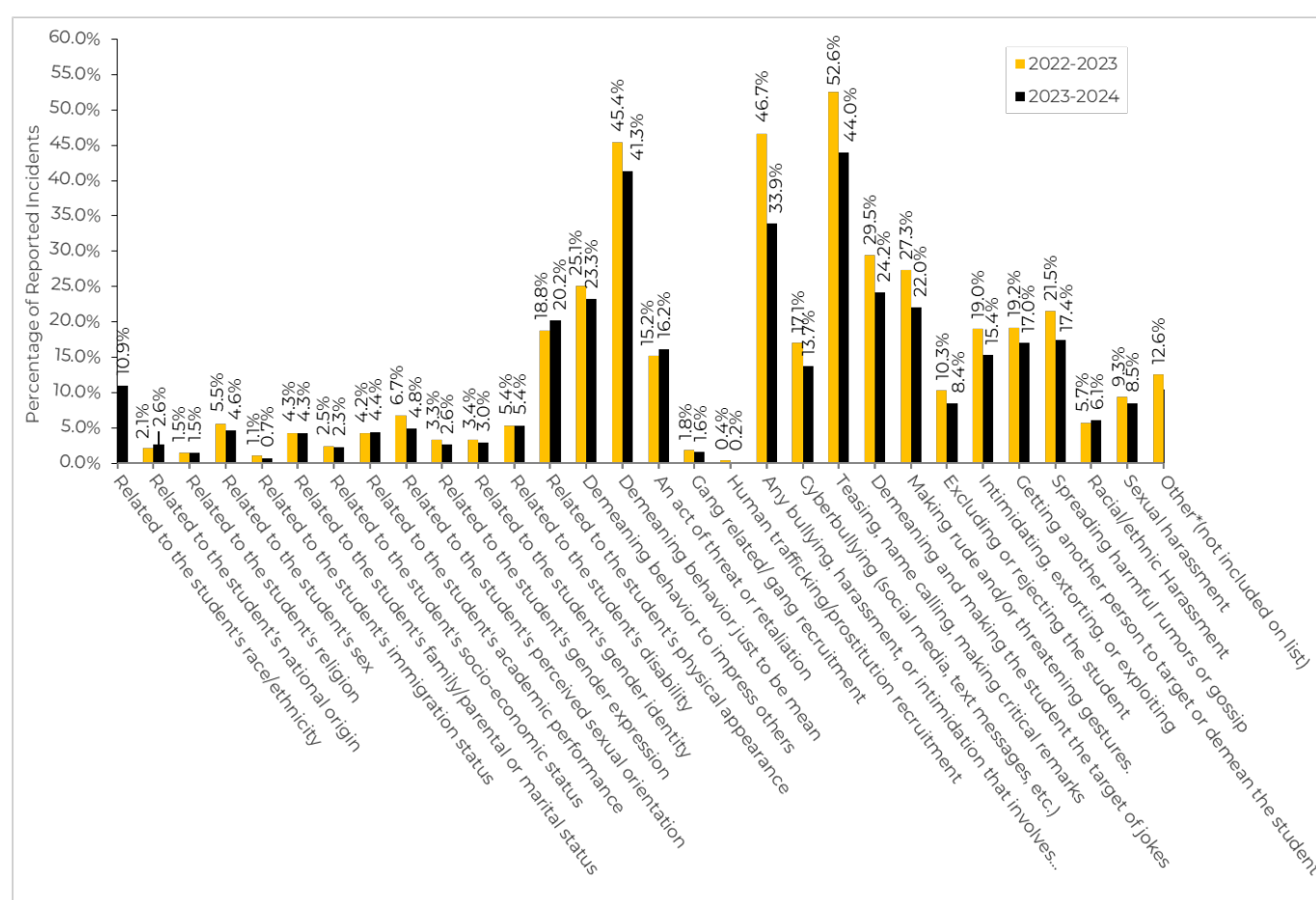


Descriptions of Reported Incidents

Individuals completing the reporting form were asked to choose from a list of descriptions to convey the alleged bullying behavior. The list was compiled from research of the most prevalent types of bullying (see Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form). As detailed in Figure 3, the three most common descriptions of reported incidents in 2023-2024 were:

- Teasing, name calling, making critical remarks, or threatening in person by other means (44.0%)
- Demeaning behavior just to be mean (41.3%)
- Any bullying, harassment, or intimidation that involves physical aggression (33.9%)

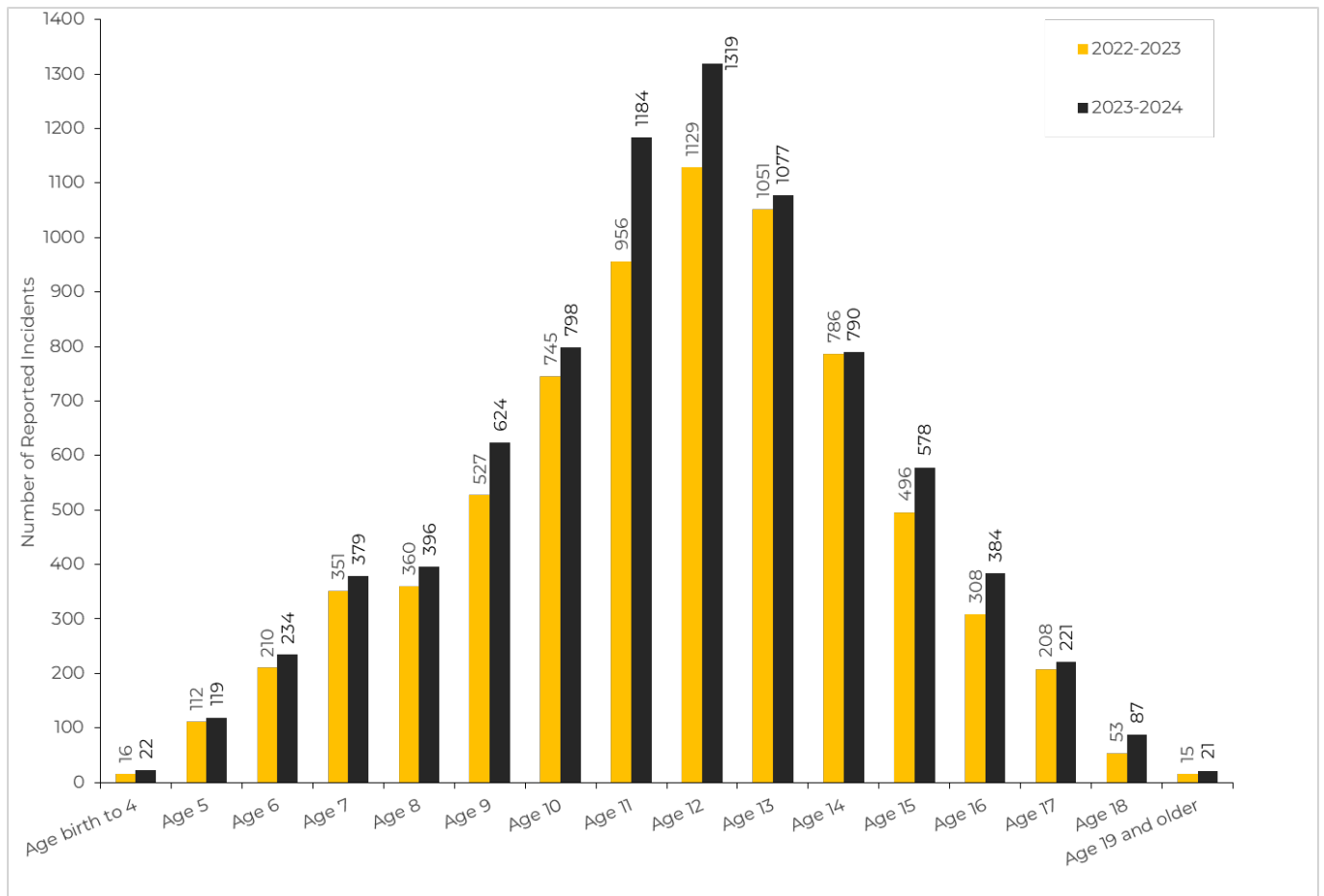
Figure 3: Statewide Descriptions of Reported Incidents for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024



Age of Targeted Students

Figure 4 represents the age of targeted students reported in bullying, harassment, and/or intimidation incidents ranging from birth to four years of age, through to 19 years of age or older. In the 2023-2024 school year, as in past years, the majority of targeted students were between 10 and 14 years of age, representing the middle school years.

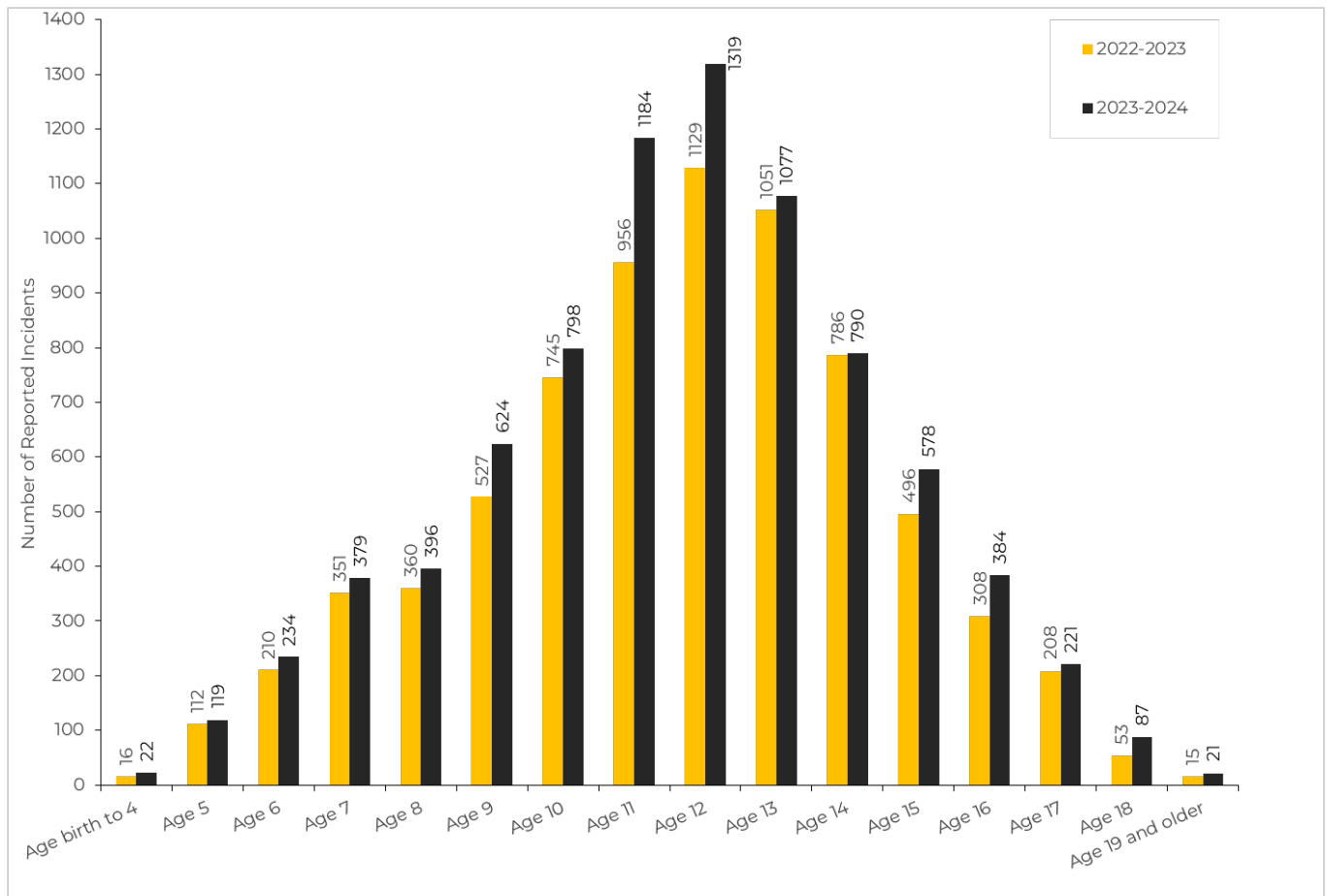
Figure 4: Statewide Ages of Targeted Students for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024



Age of Alleged Offenders

As detailed in Figure 5, the age of alleged offenders ranged from birth to four years of age, through 19 years of age or older, with the majority of alleged offenders between 10 and 14 years of age. This has been consistent over the past three years.

Figure 5: Statewide Ages of Alleged Offenders for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

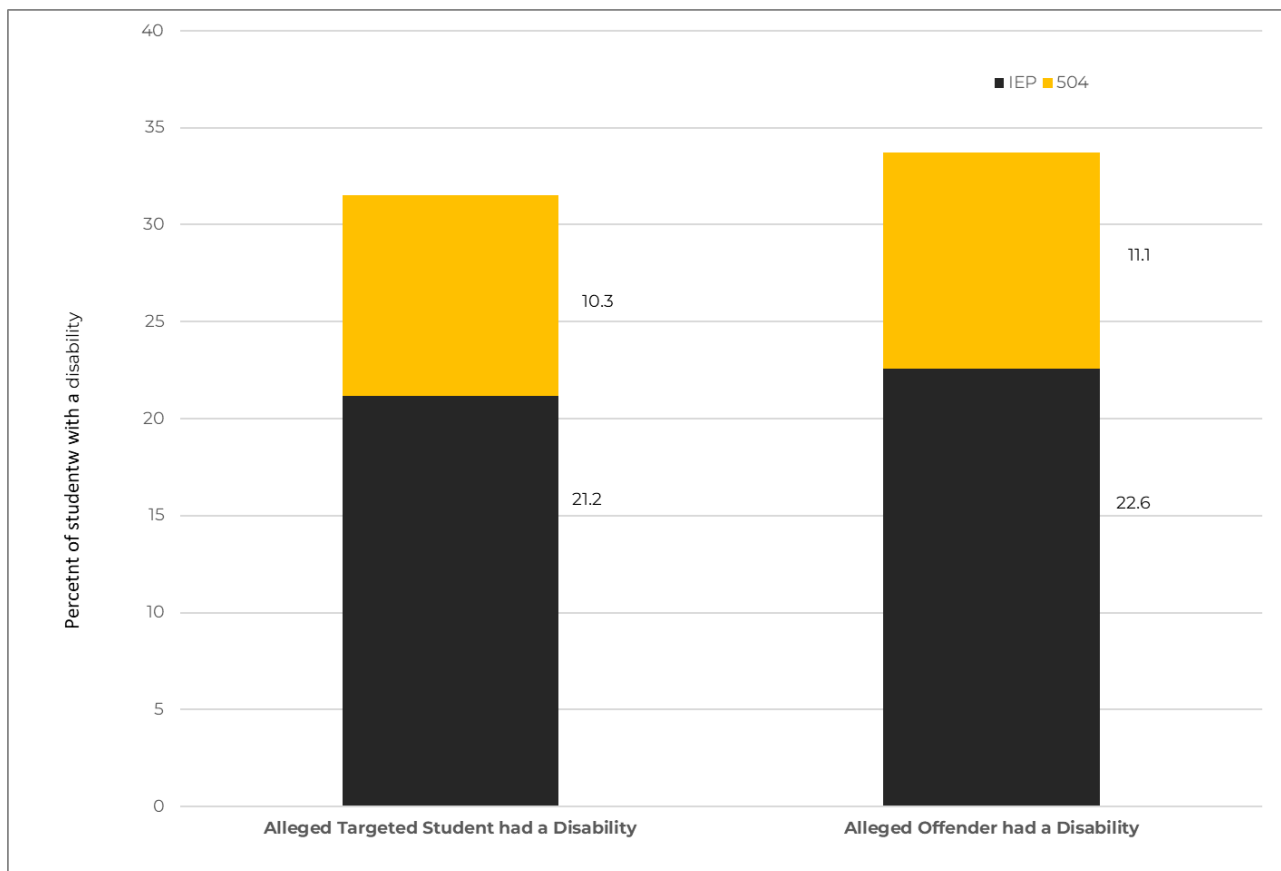


Students With Disabilities and Reported Bullying Involvement

As detailed in Figure 6:

- 31.5% of the reported incidents involved targeted students identified as having a disability, (21.2% were students with IEPs and 10.3% were students with a 504 plan)
- 33.7% of the reported incidents involved an alleged offender identified as having a disability (22.6% were students with IEPs and 11.1% were students with a 504 plan.)

Figure 6: Statewide Reported Data: Students with Disabilities and Reported Bullying Involvement

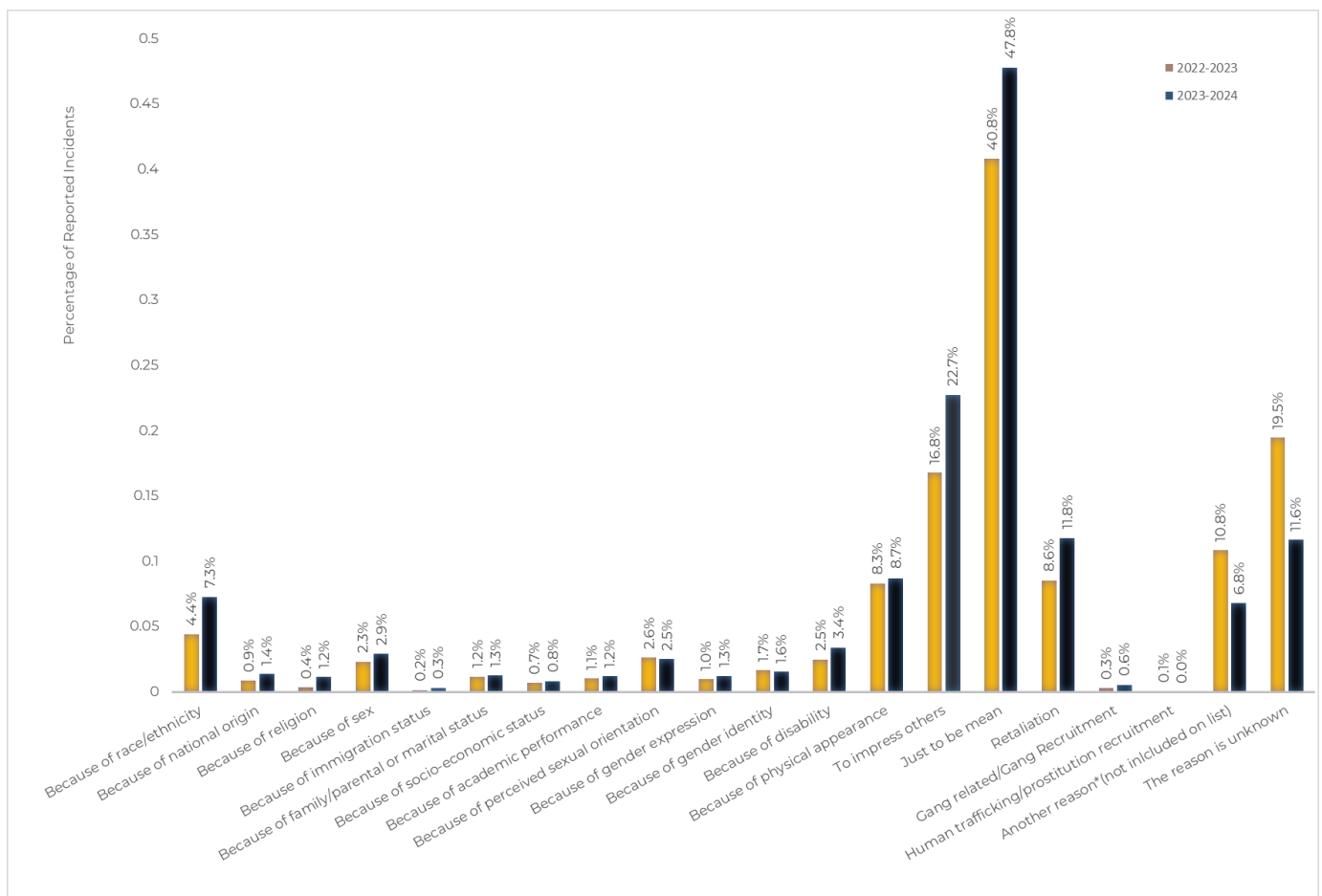


Alleged Offender's Motives

When completing the bullying investigation form, school administrators were asked to choose from a list of to convey the possible alleged offender's motives. As detailed in Figure 7, the most commonly identified offender's motives in 2023-2024 were:

- The leading motive reported is "Just to be mean" (47.1%).
- To Impress Others: was cited as a motive in a considerable number of incidents (22.7%).
- Retaliation was cited as a motive for a large number of incidents (8.1%).
- Because of Physical Appearance was cited in 8.7% of incidents.
- Because of Race/Ethnicity was cited in 7.3% of incidents.

Figure 7: Statewide Description of Alleged Motives as Reported by School Investigation for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024



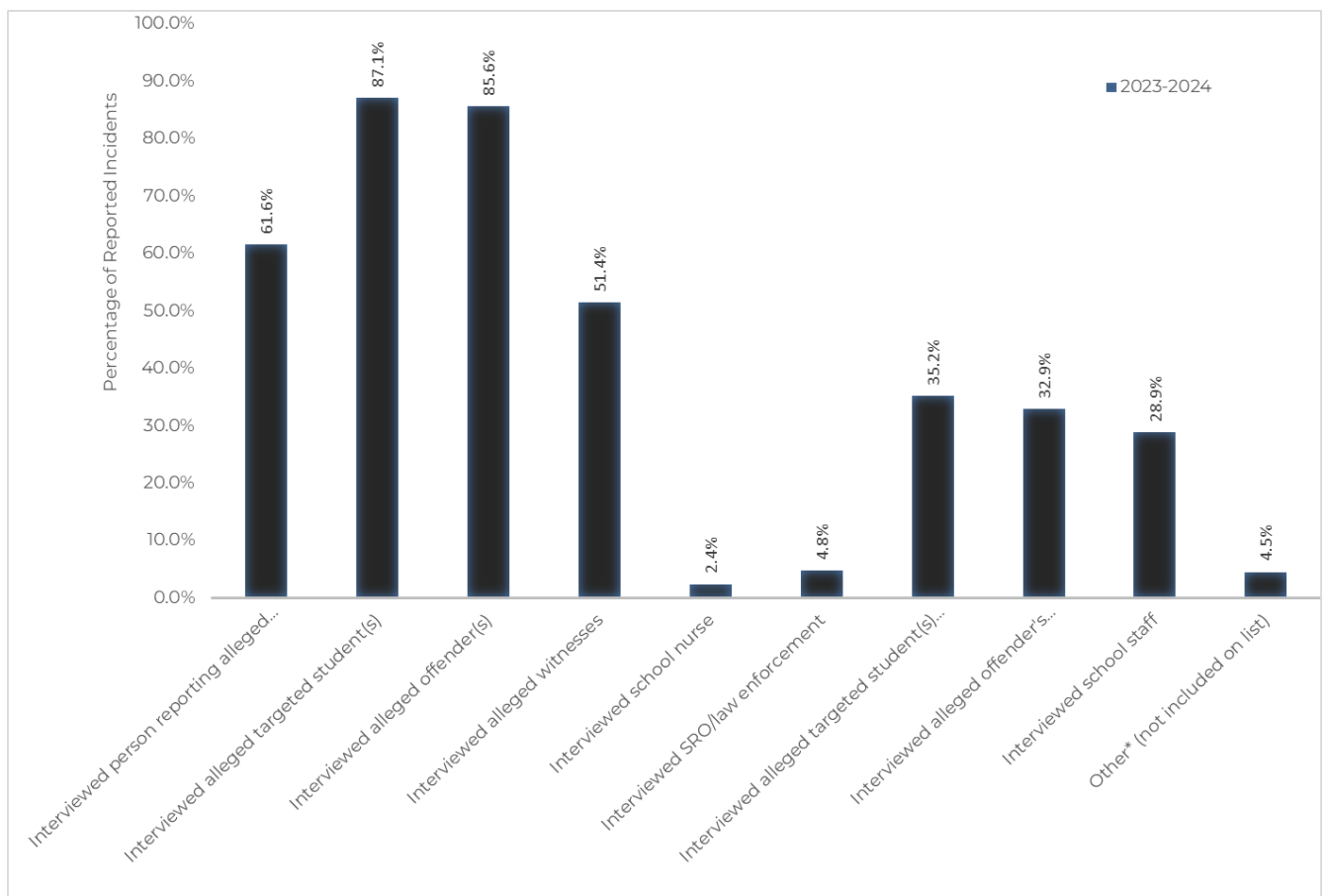
Incident Investigation

After the submission of a *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form*, the investigative process begins for school administration. The investigation process typically includes interviews with students, families, and school staff, followed by the collection and review of relevant documentation. Once the investigative process has been completed, the outcome and determination is made by school administration.

As detailed in Figure 8, schools are heavily involved in interviewing those involved. The most common investigative methods in 2023-2024 were:

- Interviewed targeted student 87.1%
- Interviewed alleged offender(s) 85.6%
- Interviewed person reporting alleged incident 61.6%
- Interviewed alleged witnesses 51.4%

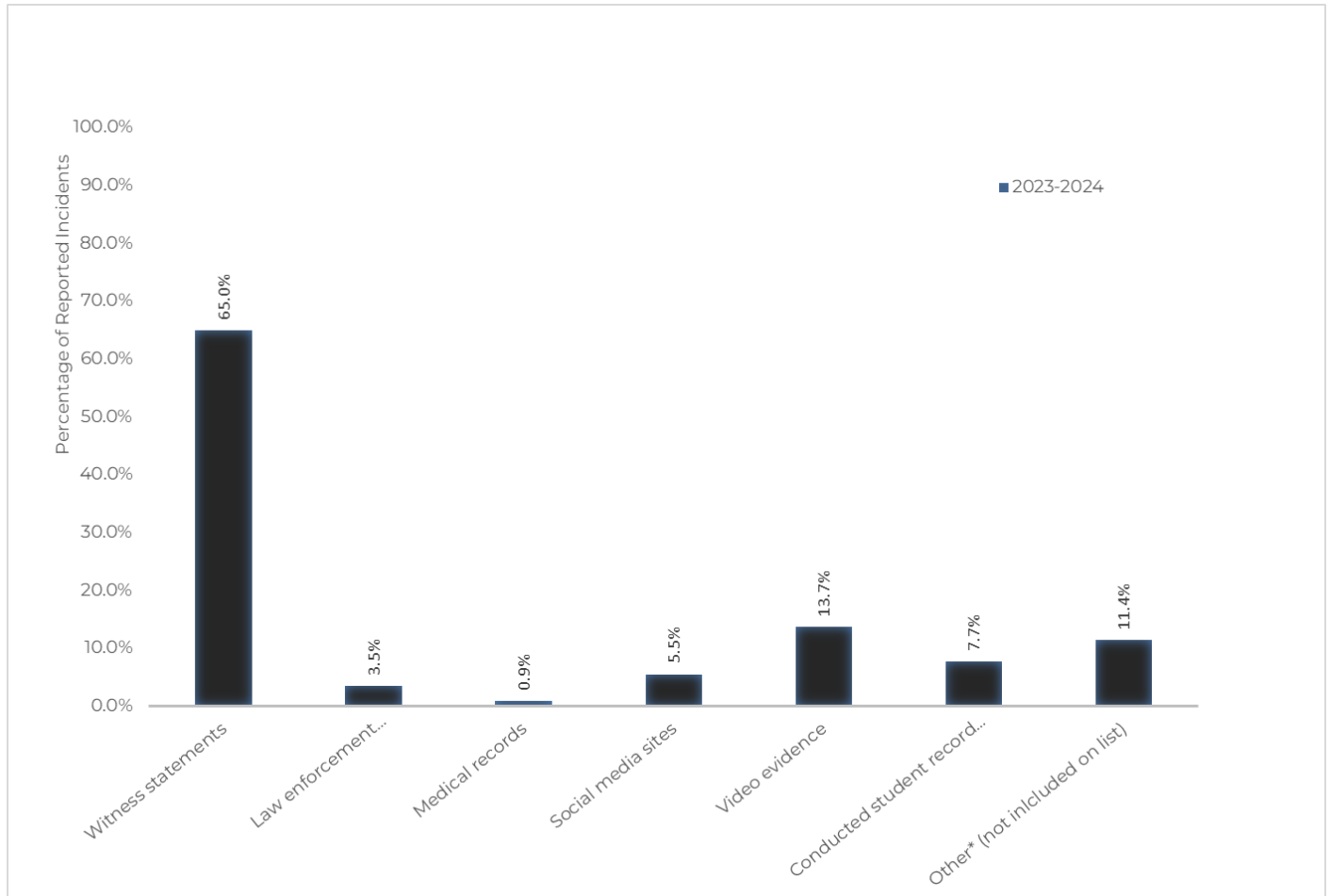
Figure 8: Investigative Actions for 2023-2024



As detailed in Figure 9, the most common types of relevant documentation were:

- Witness statements 65%
- Reviewing video evidence 13.7
- Conducting student record review 7.7%

Figure 9: Relevant Documentation for 2023-2024



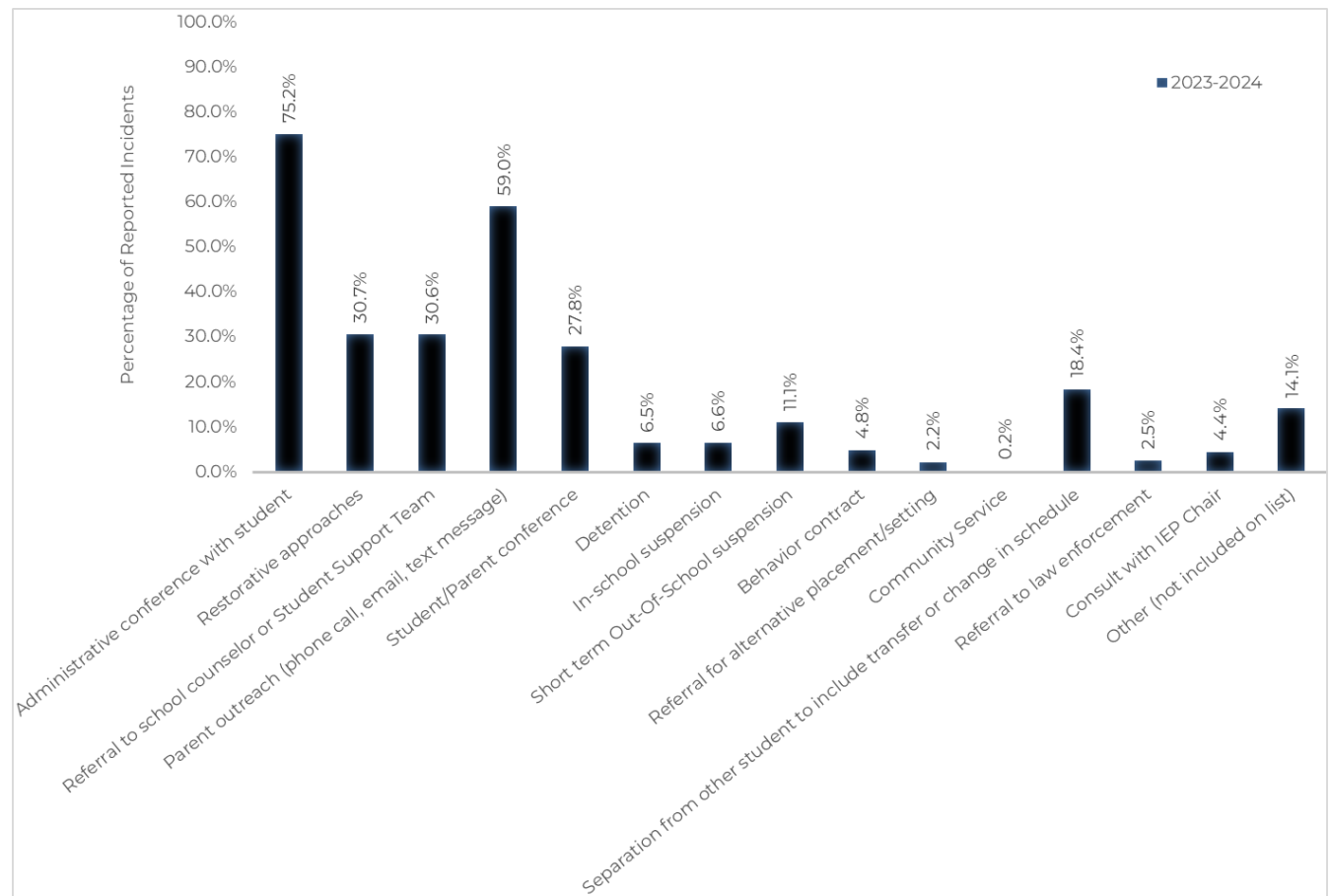
Interventions, Supports and Corrective Actions

For the 2023-2024 school year, LEAs reported the types and frequency of interventions, supports and corrective actions taken by school staff for the alleged offender and the interventions and supports provided for the targeted student.

As detailed in Figure 10, the most common interventions, supports and corrective actions for the alleged offender were:

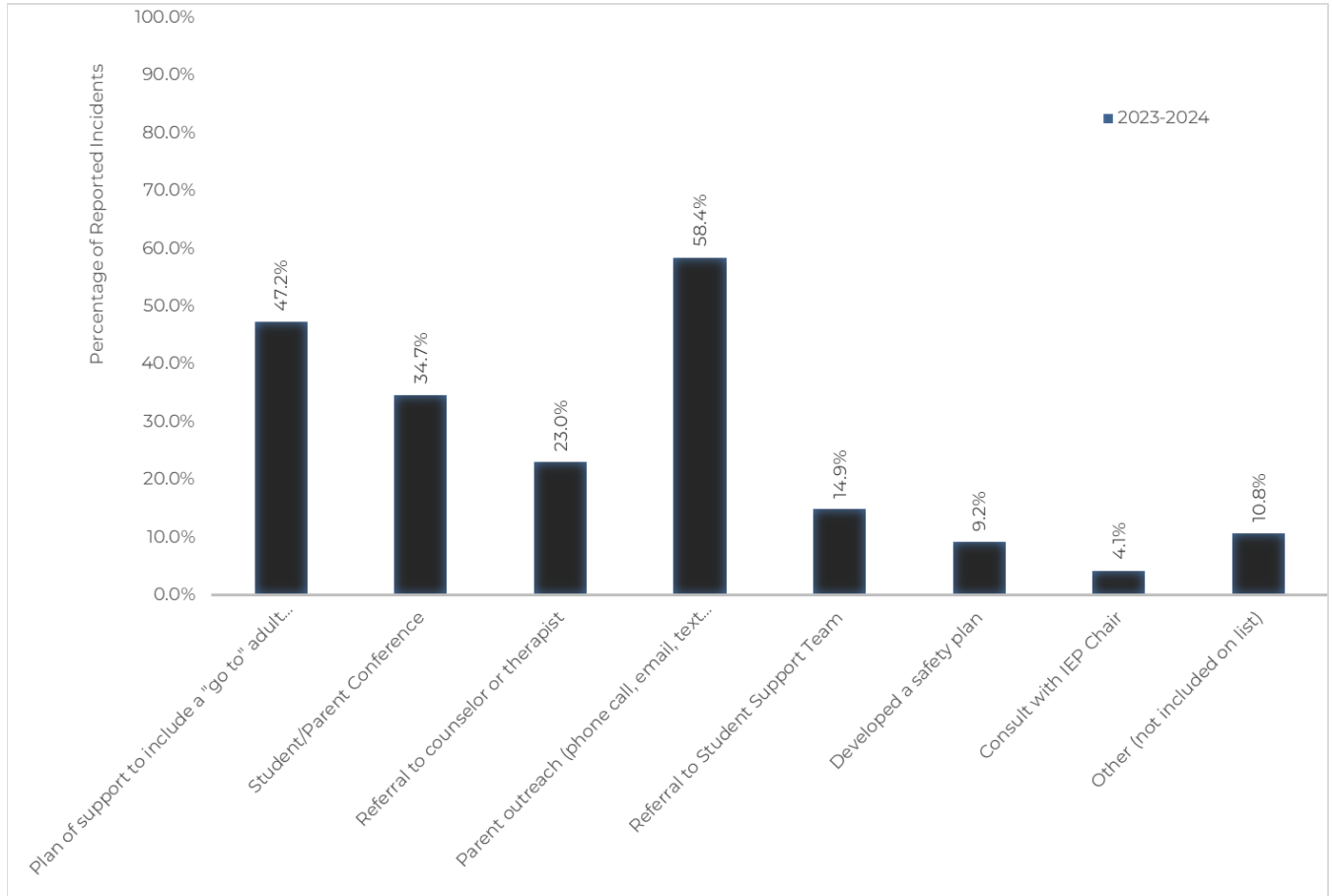
- Administrative conference (75.2%)
- Parent outreach (59.0%)
- A Restorative Approach (30.7%)
- Referral to School Counselor or Student Support Team (30.6%)
- Student/Parent conference, (27.8%)

Figure 10: Interventions, Supports and Corrective Actions for Alleged Offenders for 2023-2024



As detailed in Figure 11, the most common interventions, supports, for the targeted student included parent outreach (58.4%), a plan of support to include a "go-to-" adult in the school (47.2%), and a student/parent conference (34.7%).

Figure 11: Interventions, Supports and Corrective Actions for Targeted Students for 2023-2024

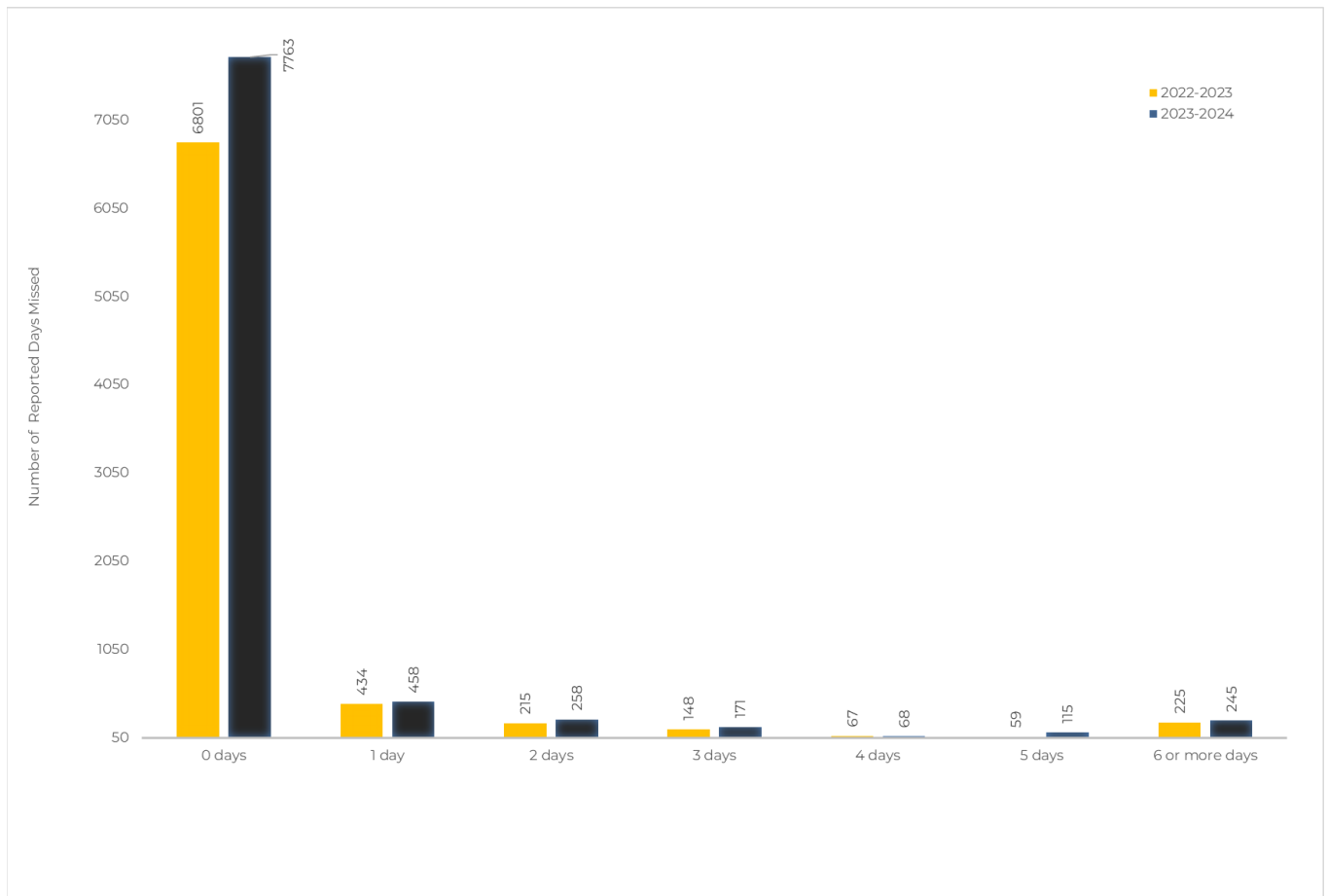


Number of Days Missed from School By Targeted Students

Figure 12 shows the number of days students who were identified as the targeted student, missed as a result of a reported incident of bullying, harassment or intimidation in 2023-2024.

- **7,763** students did not miss any days of school
- **458** students missed one day of school,
- **429** students missed two-three days of school.
- **428** students missed four or more days of school,

Figure 12: Statewide Absences as a Result of Incidents for Targeted Student 2022-2023 and 2023-2024



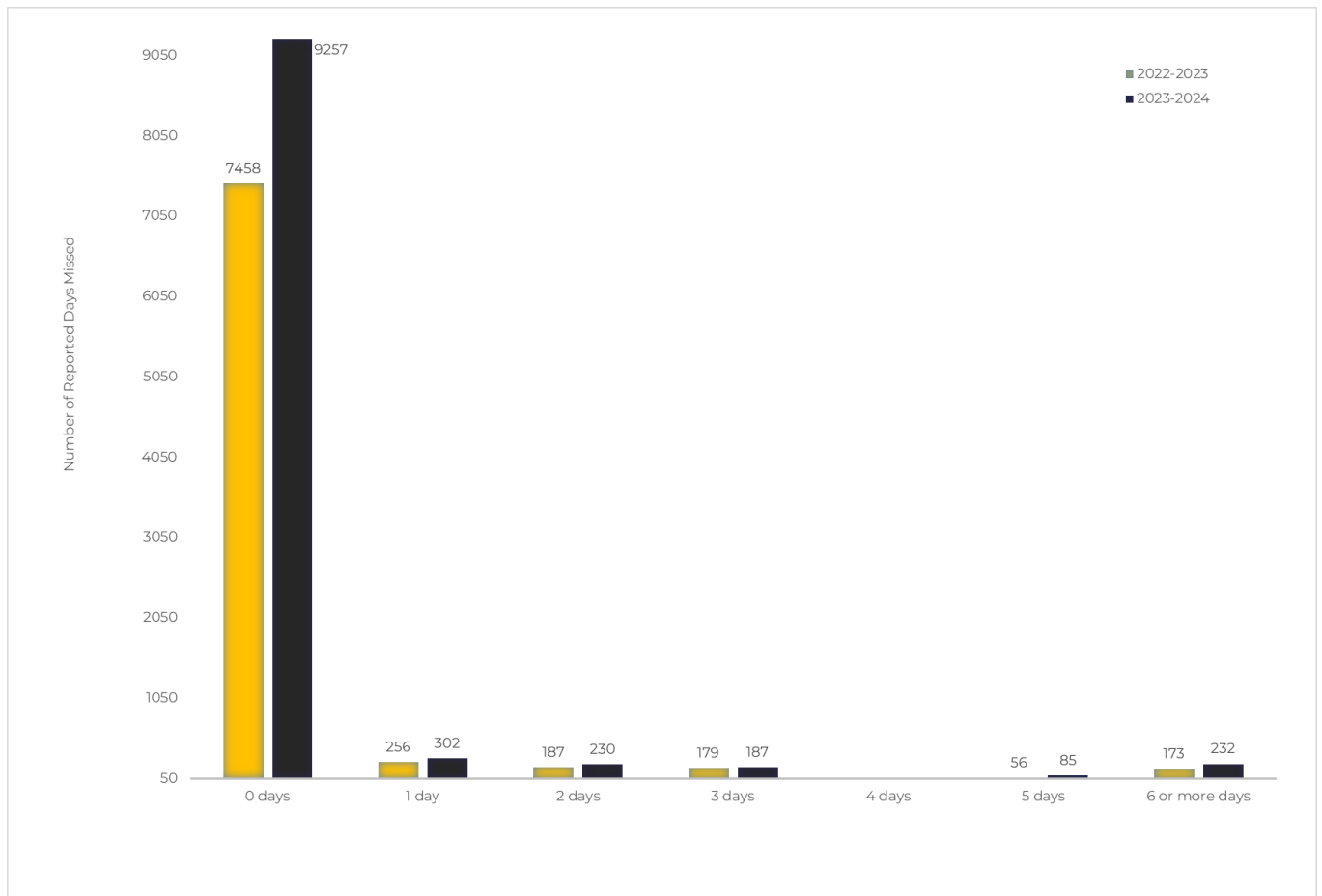
Number of Days Missed from School By Alleged Offenders

Figure 13 shows the number of days students who were identified as alleged offenders missed as a result of a reported incident of bullying, harassment or intimidation in 2023-2024

- **9,257** students did not miss any days of school,
- **302** students missed one day of school,
- **230** students missed two days of school
- **272** students missed three to five days of school, and
- **232** students missed six or more days of school.

It is unknown from the data whether the alleged offenders missed school due to out of school suspensions, injury, or other reasons.

Figure 13: Statewide Absences as a Result of Incidents for Alleged Offenders 2022-2023 and 2023-2024



Number of False Allegations Reported

A false allegation is an unfounded accusation of bullying, harassment, and/or intimidation.

By year totals for false allegations:

- 2022-2023: 7867 incidents with 280 false allegations = 3.6%
- 2023-2024: 8834 incidents with 281 false allegations = 3.2%

Number and Percentage of Incident Reports that Were Categorized as False Allegations by Local Education Agencies

Local Education Agency	Count 2022-2023	Percent 2022-2023	Count 2023-2024	Percent 2023-2024
Allegany	6	15.4%	4	9.1%
Anne Arundel	54	3.7%	32	2.1%
Baltimore City	19	2.4%	3	1.7%
Baltimore County	2	1.0%	3	1.5%
Calvert	1	1.0%	3	1.9%
Caroline	3	3.1%	2	3.1%
Carroll	13	4.1%	17	4.7%
Cecil	0	0.0%	2	1.0%
Charles	17	3.4%	0	0.0%
Dorchester	0	0.0%	3	2.7%
Frederick	0	0.0%	5	1.1%
Garrett	1	4.8%	1	4.2%
Harford	24	3.0%	33	4.5%
Howard	63	6.2%	69	5.5%

Kent	3	14.3%	0	0.0%
Montgomery	27	3.2%	47	3.4%
Prince George's	30	5.1%	36	3.4%
Queen Anne's	2	2.8%	0	0.0%
St. Mary's	1	0.8%	8	3.8%
Somerset	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Talbot	5	6.9%	1	1.4%
Washington	5	1.8%	6	2.1%
Wicomico	2	2.0%	6	2.9%
Worcester	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
SEED School	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Summary and Considerations

MSDE is submitting this report to provide the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly with the information requested by Education Articles §7-424 and §7-424.1, Annotated Code of Maryland. During the 2023-2024 school year, incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation were reported in Maryland's public schools using the reporting system mandated by the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.

When comparing data from the 2023-2024 school year with the data from the 2022-2023 school year, there was a 12.9% increase in total reported incidents.

The increase in reported incidents underscores the need for continued and enhanced prevention and intervention efforts. MSDE's ongoing initiatives and the recommendations outlined in the report offer a roadmap for creating safer and more supportive school environments for all students. It is essential that each LEA continues to educate staff, students, and families about bullying and intimidation, and encourage targeted students to report incidents when they occur.

The overall analysis of reported data remains consistent with information contained in previous reports. Most targeted and alleged offenders were middle-school age. Many of the targeted students reported being teased, called names, or threatened, while others reported incidents of physical aggression or cyber-bullying. The investigation of reported bullying incidents primarily involved interviewing the targeted student(s), offender(s), witnesses, the targeted student's parent/guardian, and/or teachers and/or other school staff.

LEAs reported to the State the reported numbers of bullying involvement and students with disabilities. The data from 2023-2024 shows that 31.5% of the reported incidents involved targeted students identified as having a disability, (21.2% were students with IEPs and 10.3% were students with a 504 plan) and 33.7% of the reported incidents involved an alleged offender identified as having a disability (22.6% were students with IEPs and 11.1% were students with a 504 plan.)

Areas for Consideration:

- **Targeted Interventions:** Given the prevalence of "demeaning behavior," schools should focus on proactive interventions that address the root causes of bullying and promote positive social behaviors.
- **Focus on Middle School:** Given the peak at ages 11-13, more focused prevention efforts within the middle school years are needed.
- **Address "Just to be Mean":** The high percentage of incidents motivated by "just to be mean" indicates a need to explore and address underlying social and emotional issues within the school environment.
- **Support for Vulnerable Students:** Prioritize the support and protection of students with IEPs and 504 plans, as they appear to be disproportionately affected by bullying, while ensuring that all students who perpetrate bullying are held accountable, regardless of any accommodations.

The following actions have been taken as a means of improving the prevention of, and the response to, bullying, harassment, or intimidation in Maryland schools:

- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has a course available, **An Introduction to Bullying Prevention for Maryland Educators**. This is an online, asynchronous course designed to help Maryland educators gain a better understanding of school-based bullying *and will offer* strategies that can immediately be used by school staff to provide a safer learning environment for all of our students.
- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is offering a six-part **Bullying Prevention Webinar Series for Maryland Educators**. The webinars run from February through May of 2025 and include the following topics:
 - **Overview** of bullying trends in Maryland using **state-specific data**.
 - **Awareness and Understanding of Bullying Behaviors**: Identifying physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying and their impact.
 - **Strategies to Address and Respond to School-Based Bullying**: Practical interventions and responsive actions to mitigate bullying.
 - **Supporting Students Who May Be Vulnerable to Bullying**: Addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, students with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations.
 - **Leadership and Professional Development Around Bullying Prevention**: Investigations, capacity building, and school-wide implementation strategies. For school leaders, administrative designees, and aspiring school leaders.
 - **Hate Bias**: Exploring bias-based bullying and promoting inclusion to address hate-related incidents.
- **Maryland's Model Policy to Address Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation** guides LEAs in their bullying prevention and response efforts. Maryland's Model Policy, required by the General Assembly, mandates that each LEA develop their own policies and regulations requiring professional development for staff, student lessons, increased support for students, and information and awareness for families about the bullying reporting process. Additionally, Maryland's Model Policy to Address Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation encourages schools to adopt a restorative approach that focuses on relationships, equity, healing, and opportunities for students to develop the social and emotional competencies needed to help them contribute to a positive school climate and their own social and emotional development.
- MSDE continues to engage with each LEA with monthly meetings, one-on-one check-ins, data sharing, targeted technical assistance, and guidance as a means of increasing awareness and increasing the efficacy of school staff to address situations of bullying, harassment, or intimidation in Maryland schools.

It is essential that each LEA continues to educate staff, students, and families about bullying, harassment, or intimidation, provide resources for bullying prevention, encourage targeted students to report incidents when they occur, notify families immediately when incidents occur, follow up with prompt and effective investigations, and take the steps necessary to reduce the number of bullying situations in their schools. MSDE will continue to ensure appropriate time, attention, and resources are allocated toward this initiative.