



# H O R A C E M A N N S C H O O L

Bronx, New York 10471  
718-432-4000

August 6, 2012

Dear Friends,

Horace Mann School has a long and rich tradition of preparing a diverse community of students to lead great and giving lives. As our mission states, we strive to maintain a safe, secure, and caring environment in which mutual respect, responsible behavior, and the life of the mind can thrive.

As Horace Mann School parents, alumni, and concerned community members, we as trustees are appalled and saddened by reports of abuse of children by certain past faculty members. The relationship between teachers and students is a sacred trust, and allegations that teachers abused their positions of authority to harm any student are hurtful to all of us. We feel pain and regret for anyone who reports to have been harmed while a student at Horace Mann School.

The gravity of these allegations weighs heavily on each of us as we determine what steps to take to address these reports. "Doing the right thing" about the past has vastly different meanings to different members of our community. As we wrestled with this complex issue, we recognize that the Board's desire to act judiciously and deliberately has resulted in a lack of an immediate action plan that many have found frustrating. To understand and develop an appropriate response, we have listened, processed, and analyzed information from many sources. Together with the administration, we have heard from many members of the community, including those who have identified, and refer to themselves, as "survivors." We also consulted with fellow educators whose institutions have faced similar challenges, child abuse professionals, attorneys with expertise in not-for-profit institutions, law enforcement officials, and many others. While we recognize that the process of listening and learning is far from over, we want to share with you our current thoughts.

## ***Board of Trustees Responsibility to Horace Mann School***

As the Board of Trustees of a not-for-profit educational institution, it is clear that our primary fiduciary responsibilities and legal obligations are to the school today and to its 1,800 current students. We are charged with ensuring that our policies, procedures, and practices promote the safety, education, and well-being of our students; maintain the financial strength and integrity of our institution; and honor the intent of the commitments that have been made by our donors. The parents of children at Horace Mann School today can be assured that the administration led by our Head of School Dr. Tom Kelly, the faculty and staff, and the Board remain focused and determined to fulfill this mission.

The voting members of the Board engaged in a fulsome debate and dialogue over our response, and what follows are the current steps that were adopted.

## ***Partnership with The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC)***

While we believe our child abuse prevention and reporting programs are already robust and meet or exceed all applicable laws and regulations, we have entered into an alliance with the oldest and one of the most respected organizations in this field to help us set the bar even higher. Our goal is that Horace Mann School will be the standard in New York on this vitally important issue.

To that end, NYSPCC will work closely with trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff members to reaffirm that no current student has been subject to abuse, and to ensure that best practices in child protection are utilized throughout the school community. Specifically, the NYSPCC will help us:

1. *Audit current administrative procedures and policies that encompass child protection issues and provide recommendations on their implementation.*
2. *Provide developmentally appropriate programs for all students that address both the prevention and reporting of child abuse in New York State.*
3. *Provide training and support services for all employees.* While all school employees have attended lectures on the requirements of the New York State mandated reporter laws and their legal responsibilities, in the fall each employee will be required to successfully complete a specialized course of instruction on child abuse identification and reporting under New York law.
4. *Conduct training and lectures for parents and alumni with school-age children not attending Horace Mann School.* Day and evening training sessions and lectures will also be offered to supplement and complement the training provided to students and employees.
5. *Lead training and discussions with the Board of Trustees.* We plan to have the NYSPCC speak at a Board meeting in the fall. In addition, I will meet with the organization this summer to underscore our commitment to the entire partnership.

Dr. Kelly will share additional information about the programs listed above at the start of the school year and as each initiative gets under way.

### ***Student Safety***

Although there have been no allegations of child abuse involving current students or current Horace Mann School employees, the school will nevertheless implement additional programs and procedures to ensure the safety of today's students. We believe that these additional measures will further minimize the possibility of child abuse and maltreatment in the future and will address an issue quickly and appropriately should it arise. We expect that our comprehensive training and communications programs through which we will speak with each and every student and adult in the school will further empower individuals to report any case of abuse or maltreatment.

By the start of the 2012-2013 school year, all school employees will have undergone a comprehensive background check. One of the school's professional development themes for the year will be student safety, relating not just to suspected child abuse and maltreatment, but also training with respect to blood borne pathogens, allergies and use of an EpiPen, concussion management, and the responsible use of social networking tools. Dr. Kelly will send a separate letter with details of all the programs we have planned for the school year.

### ***Meetings with Survivors, Other Alumni Groups***

To be sure that the Board and the administration understand the concerns of our community, we have had numerous informal individual conversations. In addition, we have received and reviewed hundreds of emails, letters, and calls. We have heard the suggestions, concerns, and criticisms.

To continue the dialogue and to ensure all voices are heard, in the next month Dr. Kelly and I plan to:

- *Meet with the Survivors' Group* – There is a group of self-described alumni “survivors” who report that they were abused by teachers who are no longer at the school. While the school’s counsel has already met with their attorney, Dr. Kelly and I plan to meet this summer with representatives of this group to hear their particular concerns and questions. We expect this meeting to be followed by a meeting of Survivors with a broader group of the Board. Recognizing that no group speaks with one voice, we will endeavor to speak with anyone who wants to speak to us.
- *Meet with Alumni* – Dr. Kelly and I will also meet with the Alumni Council and with the representatives from past graduating classes who have expressed a desire to do so. Our aim is to better understand their issues and concerns, and we will share our thinking and explain the consequences of various proposed actions.

We are hopeful that the meetings with these groups will both expand our understanding and inform our alumni directly about our plans and the principles behind them.

### ***Independent Investigations of the Past by Law Enforcement Authorities/Support Prosecutions***

To address what occurred in Horace Mann School’s history, we are cooperating fully and actively with independent investigations by the Bronx District Attorney and the New York City Police Department. Given their broad investigatory powers, they are in the best position to gather information, interview individuals, and question potential witnesses, as they believe necessary and appropriate. We believe these investigations are important, and have encouraged individuals with relevant information to contact law enforcement. We have met with both of those agencies and will continue to keep the lines of communication open. We have published the DA’s hotline on our website and encouraged anyone with relevant information to call 1-718-838-7382.

Horace Mann School fully supports and will cooperate with the criminal prosecution of any individual responsible for hurting children. The Board and administration feel strongly that those who can be held accountable must face the consequences of their actions.

### ***Looking Ahead***

We have been encouraged by the many alumni and others in our community who have expressed a desire to provide counseling and other support to members of the Survivors’ Group. A group of these volunteers is exploring the establishment of one or more independent, not-for-profit entities to provide funds for therapy and other assistance. While these entities will not be affiliated with the school and will have independent boards and legal counsel, Horace Mann School applauds the establishment of such entities. As such, the school will help disseminate information about how to make contributions or

request help. We sincerely hope members of the Survivors' Group and these volunteers work collaboratively to ensure these new entities address the Survivors' needs and concerns.

As developments occur, we will communicate further with you and provide updates as appropriate. Given the nature of the allegations and that the issue of child sexual abuse is on the national stage, we expect continued coverage of the subject for some time to come. On a case-by-case basis, we will respond to media requests for information and comment.

We will continue to look for ways that we can help all members of our community move forward and will consider additional actions as warranted. We are all doing the best we can in these unprecedented circumstances. We face this issue together as a community, and we must share the same sense of humanity and the same desire to preserve Horace Mann School for the future. Together, we will find the way to heal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven M. Friedman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven M. Friedman '72, P '03, '04, '08  
Chair, Board of Trustees