

Information about:

Bullying & Harassment

Revised 2015



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Introduction

Information About Bullying and Harassment is part of a series of information packets developed by the Vermont Family Network (VFN). Designed to provide basic information, the packet includes fact sheets, articles, advocacy tips, and resources for families of children with special needs and for the professionals working with them.

After reading the packet, we hope that you'll have a greater understanding of bullying and harassment and the ways in which parents and professionals can support children at home, in school, and in the community. We've selected information from a variety of sources, and many articles are on the Internet.

Thank you to BEST (Building Effective Strategies for Teaching), Vermont Department of Education, for making this publication possible. Thanks also go to the organizations and authors who gave us permission to use their articles and fact sheets. Use of any specific articles in this packet is meant for information purposes only and doesn't indicate any endorsement on the part of VFN of the views and opinions of the authors.

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Bullying Definition

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated*, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once*.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Types of Bullying

There are three types of bullying:

1. Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
 - Teasing
 - Name-calling
 - Inappropriate sexual comments
 - Taunting
 - Threatening to cause harm
2. Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
 - Leaving someone out on purpose
 - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
 - Spreading rumors about someone
 - Embarrassing someone in public
3. Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
 - Hitting/kicking/pinching
 - Spitting
 - Tripping/pushing
 - Taking or breaking someone's things
 - Making mean or rude hand gestures

Where and When Bullying Happens

Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like on the playground or the bus. It can also happen travelling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or on the Internet.

Bullying Definition (continued)

Frequency of Bullying

There are two sources of federally collected data on youth bullying:

1. The 2011 [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that, nationwide, 20% of students in grades 9-12 experienced bullying.
2. The 2008-2009 [School Crime Supplement](#) (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that, nationwide, 28% of students in grades 6-12 experienced bullying

Source: <http://www.stopbullying.gov> - A federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

**Note: According to Vermont State Law and the model bullying policy issued by the VT Agency of Education, a school is not obligated to investigate a complaint of bullying unless it involves allegations of repeated behavior. However, the school would have to respond to a report of misconduct, which is what a one-time incident might constitute.*

Bullying

No. 80; March 2011

[Click here to download and print a PDF version of this document.](#)

Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis.

Bullying behavior can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victims. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target. Bullying has even been reported in online chat rooms, through e-mail and on social networking sites.

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to endure such harassment and punishment.

Children and adolescents who bully thrive on controlling or dominating others. They have often been the victims of physical abuse or bullying themselves. Bullies may also be depressed, angry or upset about events at school or at home. Children targeted by bullies also tend to fit a particular profile. Bullies often choose children who are passive, easily intimidated, or have few friends. Victims may also be smaller or younger, and have a harder time defending themselves.

If you suspect your child is bullying others, it's important to seek help for him or her as soon as possible. Without intervention, bullying can lead to serious academic, social, emotional and legal difficulties. Talk to your child's pediatrician, teacher, principal, school counselor, or family physician. If the bullying continues, a comprehensive evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional should be arranged. The evaluation can help you and your child understand what is causing the bullying, and help you develop a plan to stop the destructive behavior.

If you suspect your child may be the victim of bullying ask him or her to tell you what's going on. You can help by providing lots of opportunities to talk with you in an open and honest way.

It's also important to respond in a positive and accepting manner. Let your child know it's not his or her fault, and that he or she did the right thing by telling you. Other specific suggestions include the following:

- Ask your child what he or she thinks should be done. What's already been tried? What worked and what didn't?
- Seek help from your child's teacher or the school guidance counselor. Most bullying occurs on playgrounds, in lunchrooms, and bathrooms, on school buses or in unsupervised halls.

Bullying (continued)

- Ask the school administrators to find out about programs other schools and communities have used to help combat bullying, such as peer mediation, conflict resolution, and anger management training, and increased adult supervision.
- Don't encourage your child to fight back. Instead, suggest that he or she try walking away to avoid the bully, or that they seek help from a teacher, coach, or other adult.
- Help your child practice what to say to the bully so he or she will be prepared the next time.
- Help your child practice being assertive. The simple act of insisting that the bully leave him alone may have a surprising effect. Explain to your child that the bully's true goal is to get a response.
- Encourage your child to be with friends when traveling back and forth from school, during shopping trips, or on other outings. Bullies are less likely to pick on a child in a group.

If your child becomes withdrawn, depressed or reluctant to go to school, or if you see a decline in school performance, additional consultation or intervention may be required. A child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional can help your child and family and the school develop a strategy to deal with the bullying. Seeking professional assistance earlier can lessen the risk of lasting emotional consequences for your child.

For more information see *Facts for Families*:

[#33: Conduct Disorder](#)

[#55: Understanding Violent Behavior in Children](#)

[#65: Children's Threats](#)

[#66: Helping Teenagers with Stress](#)

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) represents over 8,500 child and adolescent psychiatrists who are physicians with at least five years of additional training beyond medical school in general (adult) and child and adolescent psychiatry.

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If you need immediate assistance, please dial 911.

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Continuum of Behaviors



Generic bullying and harassment



Rude, disrespectful behavior

- Single incidents of:
- Ignoring someone
 - Talking down to someone
 - Making faces at someone
 - Rolling your eyes at someone
 - Sneering at someone
 - Laughing at someone
 - Calling someone a derogatory name (not related to a protected category)

Bullying (legal definition)

Student to student ONLY

For **ANY** reason:

- Weight
- Clothes
- Where you live
- Height
- Age
- Hair
- Socioeconomic status

Happens over a period of time and is repeated

Need to look at the **intent** of the alleged bully

Includes off-campus cyberbullying as of May 2011

HOWEVER, if there is **overt** reference to a student's protected category status, treat the incident as possible harassment

Harassment (legal definition)

Student to student AND between students and adults

Based on **ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED** student's or student's family member's membership in a protected category:

- Race
- Creed (religion)
- Color
- National Origin
- Marital Status
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability
- Gender Identity

Includes off-campus cyberharassment as of May 2011

Happens over a period of time and is repeated OR a single severe incident

Need to also look at **impact** of alleged conduct on the target

Criminal behavior

- Can include:
- Physical/sexual assault
 - Hate crimes
 - Disorderly conduct via electronic communications
 - Cyberstalking
- A school can contact the police or advise parents to contact the police but the school should also do its own investigation of bullying or harassment complaints that may have a criminal element.
- Defer to police and/or DCF investigations (legitimate reasons for delaying start of a harassment investigation)

Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children

Children who are teased on a school bus, in class, or during recess often don't want to go to school. Unfortunately, teasing can occur anywhere, and it is difficult to prevent—despite the best efforts of parents, teachers, and school administrators to create a more cooperative atmosphere (Ross, 1996). Most young children become upset automatically if they are called a name or ridiculed in any way. Parents cannot always protect children from these hurtful situations, but they can teach their children useful strategies to help them deal with teasing. Young children who learn these coping skills at an early age may be better prepared for more significant social challenges and conflicts in their preteen and teen years. This Digest discusses different types of teasing, why children tease other children, and strategies for both parents and children to help them deal with teasing.

Types of Teasing

Not all teasing is harmful—playful teasing can be fun and constructive. Teasing and being the target of teasing can help young children develop social skills that they will need in adolescence and adulthood (Ross, 1996).

Playful or good-humored teasing occurs when it causes everyone to smile or laugh, including the person who is being teased. In contrast, hurtful teasing includes ridicule, name-calling, put-downs, and saying or doing annoying things. Unlike playful teasing, hurtful teasing may cause the person being teased to feel sad, hurt, or angry. More hostile teasing, which may include tormenting or harassing, may require ongoing intervention by a parent, caregiver, teacher, or school administrator.

Why Children Tease

Children tease for a number of different reasons:

- **Attention.** Teasing is a good way of receiving negative attention, and, unfortunately, for many children, negative attention is better than no attention.
- **Imitation.** Some children model or mimic what is happening to them at home by acting the same way to others at school or in the neighborhood. These teasers are children who may be teased by siblings or who experience aggressive or harsh parenting.
- **Feelings of superiority or power.** Many teasers feel superior when they put others down, or they may feel powerful when teasing upsets others (Olweus, 1993).
- **Peer acceptance.** It is not uncommon to see children engage in teasing behavior because they may perceive it as being the "cool" thing to do. It may help them feel part of a group. The need to belong may be so strong that a child may tease others to be accepted by the "popular" children.

Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children (continued)

- **Misunderstanding differences.** A lack of understanding of "differences" may be the underlying factor in some teasing. Many children are not familiar with or do not understand cultural or ethnic differences. In some instances, a child with a physical or a learning disability may be the target of teasing because she is different. Some children criticize anyone who is different instead of trying to learn or understand what makes others special.
- **Media influence.** One cannot discuss the reasons children tease without acknowledging the powerful influence of the media. Our children are frequently exposed to teasing, put-downs, sarcasm, and a lack of respect in many of the television programs geared toward children.

How Parents Can Help

Strategies for Parents

When your child experiences teasing, it is important to see the problem from the child's point of view. Sit down and listen attentively to your child in a nonjudgmental way. Ask your child to describe the teasing. Where is it happening? Who is the teaser? Understand and validate your child's feelings. It might be helpful to relate your experience of teasing as a child. The following strategies may also help:

- Do not overreact. A parent's overreaction can result in a child overreacting.
- Convey the message, "You can handle it."
- Encourage children to be with children who make them feel good, not bad.
- Review your own behavior. Do you model the behavior of a "victim," or do you tease your children inappropriately?
- Teach or review and practice the strategies discussed below.

Strategies Parents Can Teach Children

Teasing cannot be prevented, and children cannot control what others say; however, they can learn to control their own reactions. Parents can teach their children the simple strategies listed below that will empower them and reduce feelings of helplessness. When children realize that there are effective strategies that they can use in teasing situations, their coping skills are strengthened.

- **Self-talk.** Encourage children to think about what they can say to themselves when they are in a teasing situation (Bloch, 1993). A child could say to himself, "Even though I don't like this teasing, I can handle it." A child should ask himself, "Is the tease true?" Often it is not. Another important question is, "Whose opinion is more important . . . the teaser's or mine?" It is also helpful for the teased child to think about her positive qualities to counteract the negative remarks.

Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children (continued)

Strategies Parents Can Teach Children (continued)

- **Ignore.** Displays of anger or tears often invite more teasing; therefore, it is often effective for children to ignore the teaser. The child who is being teased should not look at or respond to the teaser. Children should try to pretend that the teaser is invisible and act as if nothing has happened. If possible, walking away from the teaser is encouraged. Parents can role play "ignoring" with their children and praise children for their excellent "acting." It should be noted that ignoring may not be effective in prolonged teasing situations.
- **The I message.** The "I message" is an assertive way for children to effectively express their feelings. The child expresses how he feels, what has caused him to feel that way, and what he would like others to do differently. For example, a child could say, "I feel upset when you make fun of my glasses. I would like you to stop." This strategy generally works better when expressed in a more structured or supervised situation, such as a classroom. When used in other situations, such as recess or on the school bus, it may lead to more teasing when the teaser perceives the child being teased is upset. Nevertheless, it is an easy skill to teach children to help them deal with many situations. The child should learn to make eye contact, speak clearly, and use a polite tone of voice.
- **Visualization.** Many young children respond well to visualizing words "bouncing off" of them. It provides them with the image of not having to accept or believe what is said. This image can be created by showing how Nerf balls bounce off a person. Another effective visualization is for a child to pretend he has a shield around him that helps the teases and bad words bounce off. Again, this technique gives children the message that they can refuse these put-downs.
- **Reframing.** Reframing is changing one's perception about the negative comment; it is turning the teasing into a compliment. For example, a child teases another about her glasses, "Four eyes, four eyes, you have four eyes." The child being teased could politely respond, "Thanks for noticing my glasses!" The teaser is usually confused, especially when there is not a reaction of anger or frustration. Another child might respond to a tease by saying, "That is a *great* put-down."
- **Agree with the facts.** Agreeing with the facts can be one of the easiest ways to handle an insult or tease (Cohen-Posey, 1995). The teaser says, "You have so many freckles." The teased child responds, "Yes, I have a lot of freckles." The teaser taunts, "You are such a cry baby. . . ." The teased child can answer, "I do cry easily." Agreeing with facts usually eliminates the feeling of wanting to hide the freckles or the tears.

Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children (continued)

Strategies Parents Can Teach Children (continued)

- **"So?"** The response of "so?" to the teaser conveys an indifference that the tease doesn't matter. Children find this response simple yet quite effective. This strategy is humorously addressed in Bill Cosby's book *The Meanest Thing to Say*.
- **Respond to the tease with a compliment.** When a child is teased, it is often effective to respond with a compliment. For example, if a child is teased about the way he runs, he can answer, "You are a fast runner."
- **Use humor.** Humor shows that little importance is placed on the put-downs or mean remarks. Laughing can often turn a hurtful situation into a funny one.
- **Ask for help.** At times, it is necessary for a child to seek adult assistance or intervention if the teaser is persistent.

When Teasing Becomes Harassment

Most types of teasing can be dealt with effectively by the children involved, sometimes with the assistance of parents, caregivers, teachers, social workers, or counselors. Teasing becomes harassment, however, if it is repeated or prolonged, threatens or results in violence, or involves inappropriate touching or physical contact. Adults should be alert to the possibility of harassment and intervene as needed if harassment is suspected or anticipated. In such cases, it may be necessary to involve administrators and parents in determining the appropriate course of action to end the harassment.

Conclusion

You can help your children understand that teasing cannot be prevented, and they cannot control what others say. However, they can learn to control their own responses and reactions, which will "ease the tease."

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Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students

Website: [VT Agency of Education: Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students](#)

I. Statement of Policy

The [INSERT] School District¹ (hereinafter “District”) is committed to providing all of its students with a safe and supportive school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with respect.

It is the policy of the District to prohibit the unlawful harassment of students based on race, color, religion, creed, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Harassment may also constitute a violation of Vermont’s Public Accommodations Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and/or Title IX of the federal Education Amendments Act of 1972.

It is also the policy of the District to prohibit the unlawful hazing and bullying of students. Conduct which constitutes hazing may be subject to civil penalties.

The District shall address all complaints of harassment, hazing and bullying according to the procedures accompanying this policy, and shall take appropriate action against any person - subject to the jurisdiction of the board - who violates this policy. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit punishment of a student for conduct which, although it does not rise to the level of harassment, bullying, or hazing as defined herein, otherwise violates one or more of the board’s disciplinary policies or the school’s code of conduct.

The Model Procedures are expressly incorporated by reference as though fully included within this Model Policy. The Model Procedures are separated from the policy for ease of use as may be required.

II. Implementation

The superintendent or his/her designee shall:

1. Adopt a procedure directing staff, parents and guardians how to report violations of this policy and file complaints under this policy. (See Model Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students)

¹Throughout this model policy and the related procedures, “District” shall apply to Independent Schools and should be substituted as appropriate. References to the Superintendent shall equate to “Head of School” or “Headmaster” as appropriate, with regard to Independent Schools. Where language suggests a “District” will take action, it shall be the Superintendent, the Head of School, the Headmaster or his/her designee.

Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students (continued)

2. Annually, select two or more designated employees to receive complaints of hazing, bullying and/or harassment at each school campus and publicize their availability in any publication of the District that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for the school.
3. Designate an Equity Coordinator to oversee all aspects of the implementation of this policy as it relates to obligations imposed by federal law regarding discrimination. This role may be also be assigned to one or both of the Designated Employees.
4. Respond to notifications of possible violations of this policy in order to promptly and effectively address all complaints of hazing, harassment, and/or bullying.
5. Take action on substantiated complaints. In cases where hazing, harassment and/or bullying is substantiated, the District shall take prompt and appropriate remedial action reasonably calculated to stop the hazing, harassment and/or bullying; prevent its recurrence; and to remedy the impact of the offending conduct on the victim(s), where appropriate. Such action may include a wide range of responses from education to serious discipline.

Serious discipline may include termination for employees and, for students, expulsion or removal from school property. It may also involve penalties or sanctions for both organizations and individuals who engage in hazing. Revocation or suspension of an organization's permission to operate or exist within the District's purview may also be considered if that organization knowingly permits, authorizes or condones hazing.

III. Constitutionally Protected Speech

It is the intent of the District to apply and enforce this policy in a manner that is consistent with student rights to free expression under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The purpose of this policy is to (1) prohibit conduct or communication that is directed at a person's protected characteristics as defined below and that has the purpose or effect of substantially disrupting the educational learning process and/or access to educational resources or creates a hostile learning environment; (2) prohibit conduct intended to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate students in a manner as defined under this policy.

IV. Definitions. For the purposes of this policy and the accompanying procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. **"Bullying"** means any overt act or combination of acts, including an act conducted by electronic means, directed against a student by another student or group of students and which:

Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students (continued)

- a. Is repeated over time;
 - b. Is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and
 - c. (i) occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity, or before or after the school day on a school bus or at a school sponsored activity; or (ii) does not occur during the school day on school property, on a school bus or at a school sponsored activity and can be shown to pose a clear and substantial interference with another student's right to access educational programs.
- B. **"Complaint"** means an oral or written report information provided by a student or any person to an employee alleging that a student has been subjected to conduct that may rise to the level of hazing, harassment or bullying.
- C. **"Complainant"** means a student who has provided oral or written information about conduct that may rise to the level of hazing, harassment or bullying, or a student who is the target of alleged hazing, harassment or bullying.
- D. **"Designated employee"** means an employee who has been designated by the school to receive complaints of hazing, harassment and bullying pursuant to subdivision 16 V.S.A. 570a(a)(7). The designated employees for each school building are identified in Appendix A of this policy.
- E. **"Employee"** includes any person employed directly by or retained through a contract with the District, an agent of the school, a school board member, a student teacher, an intern or a school volunteer. For purposes of this policy, "agent of the school" includes supervisory union staff.
- F. **"Equity Coordinator"** is the person responsible for implementation of Title IX (regarding sex-based discrimination) and Title VI (regarding racebased discrimination) for the District and for coordinating the District's compliance with Title IX and Title VI in all areas covered by the implementing regulations. The Equity Coordinator is also responsible for overseeing implementation of the District's *Preventing and Responding to Harassment of Students and Harassment of Employees* policies. This role may also be assigned to Designated Employees.
- G. **"Harassment"** means an incident or incidents of verbal, written, visual, or physical conduct, including any incident conducted by electronic means, based on or motivated by a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived race, creed, color, national origin, marital status disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, that has the purpose or effect of objectively and substantially undermining and

Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students (continued)

detracting from or interfering with a student's educational performance or access to school resources or creating an objectively intimidating hostile, or offensive environment.

Harassment includes conduct as defined above and may also constitute one or more of the following:

(1) Sexual harassment, which means unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, that includes sexual violence/sexual assault, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, and includes situations when one or both of the following occur:

- i. Submission to that conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a student's education, academic status, or progress; or
- ii. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a student is used as a component of the basis for decisions affecting that student.

Sexual harassment may also include student-on-student conduct or conduct of a non-employee third party that creates a hostile environment. A hostile environment exists where the harassing conduct is severe, persistent or pervasive so as to deny or limit the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational program on the basis of sex.

(2) Racial harassment, which means conduct directed at the characteristics of a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived race or color, and includes the use of epithets, stereotypes, racial slurs, comments, insults, derogatory remarks, gestures, threats, graffiti, display, or circulation of written or visual material, and taunts on manner of speech and negative references to cultural customs.

(3) Harassment of members of other protected categories, means conduct directed at the characteristics of a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived creed, national origin, marital status, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and includes the use of epithets, stereotypes, slurs, comments, insults, derogatory remarks, gestures, threats, graffiti, display, or circulation of written or visual material, taunts on manner of speech, and negative references to customs related to any of these protected categories.

H. **"Hazing"** means any intentional, knowing or reckless act committed by a student, whether individually or in concert with others, against another student: In connection with pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization which is affiliated with the educational institution; and

Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students (continued)

(1) Which is intended to have the effect of, or should reasonably be expected to have the effect of, endangering the mental or physical health of the student.

Hazing shall not include any activity or conduct that furthers legitimate curricular, extra-curricular, or military training program goals, provided that:

- (1) The goals are approved by the educational institution; and
- (2) The activity or conduct furthers the goals in a manner that is appropriate, contemplated by the educational institution, and normal and customary for similar programs at other educational institutions.

With respect to Hazing, “**Student**” means any person who:

- (A) is registered in or in attendance at an educational institution;
- (B) has been accepted for admission at the educational institution where the hazing incident occurs; or
- (C) intends to attend an educational institution during any of its regular sessions after an official academic break.

- I. “**Notice**” means a written complaint or oral information that hazing, harassment or bullying may have occurred which has been provided to a designated employee from another employee, the student allegedly subjected to the hazing, harassment or bullying, another student, a parent or guardian, or any other individual who has reasonable cause to believe the alleged conduct may have occurred. If the school learns of possible hazing, harassment or bullying through other means, for example, if information about hazing, harassment or bullying is received from a third party (such as from a witness to an incident or an anonymous letter or telephone call), different factors will affect the school’s response. These factors include the source and nature of the information; the seriousness of the alleged incident; the specificity of the information; the objectivity and credibility of the source of the report; whether any individuals can be identified who were subjected to the alleged harassment; and whether those individuals want to pursue the matter. In addition, for purposes of violations of federal anti-discrimination laws, notice may occur when an employee of the district, including any individual who a student could reasonably believe has this authority or responsibility, knows or in the exercise of reasonable care should have known about potential unlawful harassment or bullying.
- J. “**Organization**” means a fraternity, sorority, athletic team, association, corporation, order, society, corps, cooperative, club, or other similar group, whose members primarily are students at an educational institution, and which is affiliated with the educational institution.

Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students (continued)

- K. **“Pledging”** means any action or activity related to becoming a member of an organization.

- L. **“Retaliation”** is any adverse action by any person against a person who has filed a complaint of harassment, hazing or bullying or against a person who assists or participates in an investigation, proceeding or hearing related to the harassment complaint. Such adverse action may include conduct by a school employee directed at a student in the form of intimidation or reprisal such as diminishment of grades, suspension, expulsion, change in educational conditions, loss of privileges or benefits, or other unwarranted disciplinary action. Retaliation may also include conduct by a student directed at another student in the form of further harassment, intimidation, and reprisal.

- M. **“School administrator”** means a superintendent, principal or his/her designee assistant principal//technical center director or his/her designee and/or the District’s Equity Coordinator.

- N. **“Student Conduct Form”** is a form used by students, staff, or parents, to provide, in written form, information about inappropriate student behaviors that may constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying.

**Policy on the Prevention of Harassment,
Hazing and Bullying of Students (continued)**

APPENDIX A

Designated Employees:

The following employees of the _____ School have been designated by the District to receive complaints of bullying and/or harassment pursuant to this policy and 16 V.S.A. § 570a(a)(7) and 16 V.S.A. §570c(7) and under federal anti-discrimination laws;

Name: _____

Title: _____

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Contact Information: _____

Help Your Child Recognize the Signs of Bullying

Children may not always realize that they are being bullied. They might think it is bullying only if they are being physically hurt; they might believe the other child is joking; or they may not understand the subtle social norms and cues. Children can benefit from a definition of the differences between friendly behavior and bullying behavior. **The basic rule: Let children know if the behavior hurts or harms them, either emotionally or physically, it is bullying.**

Parents can prepare themselves to talk with their children by considering how they are going to respond to their child's questions and emotions. They can also decide what information they would like to give their child about bullying.

Parents should be ready to:

- **Listen.** It is the child's story; let him or her tell it. They may be in emotional pain about the way they are being treated.
- **Believe.** The knowledge that a child is being bullied can raise many emotions. To be an effective advocate, parents need to react in a way that encourages the child to trust.
- **Be supportive.** Tell the child it is not his fault and that he does not deserve to be bullied. Empower the child by telling her how terrific she is. Avoid judgmental comments about the child or the child who bullies. The child may already be feeling isolated. Hearing negative statements from parents may only further isolate him or her.
- **Be patient.** Children may not be ready to open up right away. Talking about the bullying can be difficult because children may fear retaliation from the bully or think that, even if they tell an adult, nothing will change. The child might be feeling insecure, withdrawn, frightened, or ashamed.
- **Provide information.** Parents should educate their child about bullying by providing information at a level that the child can understand.
- **Explore options for intervention strategies.** Parents can discuss options with their child to deal with bullying behavior.

Questions to Ask Your Child about Bullying

Open-ended questions will help the child talk about his or her situation. Begin with questions that address the child's environment. For example, "How was your bus ride today?" or "Have you ever seen anyone being mean to someone else on the bus?" Then move on to questions that directly affect the child such as, "Are you ever scared to get on the bus?" or "Has anyone ever been mean to you on the bus?"

Help Your Child Recognize the Signs of Bullying (continued)

If the child is talking about the situation, parents can help their child recognize bullying behavior by asking more questions such as:

- Did the child hurt you on purpose?
- Was it done more than once?
- Did it make you feel bad or angry? How do you feel about the behavior?
- Did the child know you were being hurt?
- Is the other child more powerful (i.e. bigger, scarier) than you in some way?

For the child who is reluctant to talk about the situation, questions may include:

- How was gym class today?
- Who did you sit by at lunch?
- You seem to be feeling sick a lot and want to stay home. Please tell me about that.
- Are kids making fun of you?
- Are there a lot of cliques at school? What do you think about them?
- Has anyone ever touched you in a way that did not feel right?

Reactions to Avoid

When children choose to tell their parents about bullying, parents might have one of three responses.

1. Tell their child to stand up to the bully
2. Tell their child to ignore and avoid the bully
3. Take matters into their own hands

While these reactions express **genuine caring, concern, and good intentions** and often reflect what parents were told by their own parents or other adults they are likely to be ineffective. Parents may feel better for having taken action, but these reactions can have harmful consequences. Here's why these responses will likely be unsuccessful:

1. Tell your child to stand up to the bully - This can imply that it is your child's responsibility to handle the situation. While there is a ring of truth to this statement (being assertive is often a good response) sending your child back into the situation without further information will probably cause more harm. A more effective response is to brainstorm options with your child about what you can do as a team to respond to the situation.
2. Tell your child to ignore the bully - This is easier said than done. Your child has probably tried ignoring the situation, which is a typical response for children. If that method had been effective, however, there wouldn't be a need for the child to seek your help. It is difficult to ignore someone who is sitting behind you on the bus or next to you in class.

Help Your Child Recognize the Signs of Bullying (continued)

3. In addition, if the student who is bullying realizes that their target is purposefully “ignoring” them, it can actually ignite further bullying, since that response provides the sense of power and control the student seeks.
4. Take matters into your own hands - A normal gut response from parents is to try to fix the situation and remove their child from harm. For example, a parent might call the parents of the student who is bullying, or directly confront the bully. Remember, when children tell a parent about bullying, they are looking for the parent to guide them to a solution that makes them feel empowered. Involve them in the process of determining next steps. Typically, calling the other parent or directly confronting the bullying student is ineffective. It is best to work through the school and implement steps to respond.

It is important to Help Your Child Know That They Are Not Alone

- **You are not alone.** Many children feel that they are the only ones who are bullied and that no one cares. Let them know that there are people who do care.
- **It is not up to you to stop the bullying.** It is never the responsibility of the child to change what is happening to them.
- **Bullying happens to a lot of kids but that NEVER makes it right.** Let your child know that bullying happens in small schools, large schools, rural schools, and city schools. It can happen in preschool, high school, and every school in between. It happens in Australia, Argentina, and all around the globe. Certain people will say that some kids deserve to be bullied because of the way the child looks or acts, but this is simply not true.
- **No one deserves to be bullied.** Everyone deserves respect. All students have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter what.
- **We all need to work together.** Everyone is responsible for addressing bullying. The community, schools, parents, and students all play a role.

PACER Resources

- **Student Action Plan** ([pacer.org/bullying/pdf/StudentActionPlan.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/bullying/pdf/StudentActionPlan.pdf)) Are you an educator working with a student being bullied, a parent looking for ways to help your child change their behavior, or a student who wants to take action against bullying but you aren't sure what to do? As a student, bullying is something that impacts you, your peers, and your school - whether you're the target of bullying, a witness, or the person who bullies. Bullying can end, but that won't happen unless students, parents, and educators work together and take action.

Help Your Child Recognize the Signs of Bullying (continued)

PACER Resources (continued)

- **Student Action Plan (continued)** The first step is to create a plan that works for you and your situation. This student action plan is an opportunity for you - either on your own or with parents and teachers - to develop a strategy to change what's happening to you or someone else. It's your chance to make a difference.
- **Advice Gone Wrong** (pacerteensagainstbullying.org/#/listen/advice-gone-wrong) An interactive teen perspective (written by teens for adults) on unhelpful advice from parents and educators.
- **Inside Story** (pacerteensagainstbullying.org/#/listen/inside-story) An interactive look, from a teen perspective, at some of the reasons students don't talk about bullying. Meet Pete. He is a dude with a lot going on inside, and he has zeroed in on some of the reasons that students don't tell an adult about bullying.
- **We Need To Talk - Video** (pacerteensagainstbullying.org/#/listen/we-need-to-talk-video.html) Teens have their turn talking about what is helpful and what they want parents to know.

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Drama: Is It Happening to You? ***Advice for Teens Who Are Experiencing Bullying***

Drama. Bullying. Teasing. Harassment. No matter what you call it, it hurts. If you're pushed, hit, or your things are ripped off or trashed, it can hurt physically. If you're ignored by friends or cruel things are posted about you online, it can hurt emotionally. If it happens to you, you've probably asked yourself, "Why me?" You know how painful it is to be treated this way.

So seriously, what can you do? A lot!

You can take back control, but you don't have to do it on your own. Remember, bullying is never your fault and you have the right to make it stop. Begin taking back control by talking to your parent or an adult you can trust. Then check out these three steps for handling the situation at school.

1. Know That You Are Not Alone

"When I walk into the classroom, all the girls start whispering with each other and laughing." -Jenny, 7th grade

Ever feel like this only happens to you? It doesn't. Unfortunately, bullying happens to a lot of kids. It happens in small schools, large schools, rural schools, and city schools. It can happen in preschool, high school, and every school in between. It happens in Australia, Argentina, and all around the globe.

Sometimes people say that bullying is just part of growing up or that you should just "deal with it" and it will go away. This is NOT true. Even though bullying happens to a lot of kids, that doesn't ever make it right. No one deserves to be bullied, everyone deserves respect, and everyone has a right to feel safe at school.

2. Be a Self-advocate

"Self-Advocate? Seriously, what does that even mean?" -Nick, 6th grade

Being a "self-advocate" means speaking up for yourself, telling people what you need, and taking action. Bullying can be stopped, but you need a plan. First, think about what you can do to change your situation, and then make an action plan. You can download a copy of PACER's Student Action Plan from PACER.org/Bullying. In the plan:

- Write down what is happening to you, when and where it takes place, and who is involved.
- Include what you would like to change, how things could be changed, and what would help you gain control over the situation.
- List your role in this action plan, who else should be involved, and what they could do. Share this information with your parents and an adult you trust at school.

Drama: Is It Happening to You? ***Advice for Teens Who Are Experiencing Bullying (continued)***

3. Assert Your Rights

“We are told over and over again to tell an adult. I tried that at my school and was told that’s just how kids in middle school act.” -Jack, 8th grade student with Aspergers

Every student has the right to feel safe at school. If one adult isn’t able to help you, don’t give up! It is your right to talk with another adult, such as a parent. When you do speak to a teacher, an administrator, or a person you trust at school:

- Share all of the information in your action plan.
- Ask: “What can be done so I feel safe and other kids do, too?”
- Tell adults that there are laws outlining the school’s responsibility in handling bullying situations. You may have additional protections under federal law when the bullying is about:
 - Race, color, or national origin
 - Sex
 - Religion
 - Disability

State and local laws may provide additional protections on other bases, including sexual orientation.

Some adults may not know this, so clue them in and keep talking until someone understands. Visit www.Olweus.org for an interactive map leading to each state law.

No matter what you call it, bullying is painful. But you don’t have go through it alone! There are people who will help you, and it is your right to be safe.

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Use Positive Strategies to Protect Your Child with Disabilities from Bullying

Jane has a severe learning disability and delayed social skills. Taking advantage of this, a group of popular girls invited her to join them on “clash day,” when they said they would all wear outlandish clothes. On “clash day,” Jane was the only one to dress in this manner. The stares, laughter, and name calling from classmates humiliated her.

School staff thought Jane was deliberately disrupting classes and suspended her for the day. She was too embarrassed and hurt to explain. After this experience, Jane never raised her hand in class, did not attend extracurricular activities, and her grades plummeted.

While any child can be a target of bullying, children with disabilities like Jane can be especially vulnerable. Although few studies exist concerning children with disabilities and bullying in the United States, the studies available indicate an increased risk for children with special needs.

Like other children, a child with disabilities who is bullied may grow angry, resentful, frightened, or apathetic at school, and is at risk for low self-esteem, school avoidance, depression, lower grades, and increased violence.

Parents can help protect their children with disabilities from bullying and its devastating effects if they promote effective strategies such as PACER’s Peer Advocacy Program, use the Individualized Education Program (IEP) as a tool, work with the school, and know their child’s rights under the law.

Promote Peer Advocacy

Before Julie Hertzog became the director of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center, she was a concerned parent. Because her son David was born with Down syndrome, was nonverbal, and had a Pacemaker and a feeding tube, she was worried that he would be vulnerable to bullying.

As she advocated for her son with school staff, she realized how much student interaction happens outside the view of adults. Recognizing that David’s classmates could be powerful allies for her son in bullying situations, Hertzog worked with the school to create a unique support for him while he was in sixth grade.

A group of his classmates received training on how to prevent bullying and speak out on David’s behalf. They called these students peer advocates. If they see bullying they intervene, ask the bully to stop, or report the situation to an adult.

The idea worked for David. Now what started with four children in sixth grade has evolved to a school-wide project. More than 40 students volunteer to become peer advocates so they can help David and other students who are different. It’s a strategy that any parent can explore and discuss with school staff.

Use Positive Strategies to Protect Your Child with Disabilities from Bullying (continued)

For more information about the peer advocacy program or how to start one, visit PACER.org/bullying/resources/peer-advocacy.asp.

Use the IEP

Students with disabilities who are eligible for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will have an IEP. The IEP can be a helpful tool in a bullying prevention plan. Every child receiving special education is entitled to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE), and bullying can sometimes become an obstacle to receiving that education.

The IEP team, which includes the parent, can identify strategies that can be written into the IEP to help stop the bullying. It may be helpful to involve the child, when appropriated, in the decision-making process. Such strategies include:

- Identifying an adult in the school whom the child can report to or go to for assistance
- Determining how school staff will document and report incidents
- Allowing the child to leave class early to avoid hallway incidents
- Holding separate in-services for school staff and classroom peers to help them understand a child's disability
- Educating peers about school district policies on bullying behavior
- Reassurance from the school staff to the student that he or she has a right to be safe and that the bullying is not his or her fault
- Shadowing by school staff of the student who has been bullied; shadowing can be done in hallways, classrooms, and playgrounds

Work with the School

It's important for parents to believe their child if he or she tells them about a bullying situation. Parents should communicate support to their child, explain that being bullied is not his or her fault, and that no one deserves to be treated this way.

Once parents have reassured their child in this way, they can meet with the principal and share what they know, explain how the situation is affecting their child, and ask the principal what the school can do to keep their child safe at school and on the bus. It's also a good idea to ask if the school has a written policy on bullying and harassment. If it does, request a written copy. Keep a written record of what happened at this meeting, including names and dates.

If a bullying situation is not resolved after meeting with the principal, parents should send a brief, factual letter or e-mail to the district superintendent requesting a meeting to discuss the situation. Copies of this letter can also be sent to the principal, special education director, and chair of the school board.

Use Positive Strategies to Protect Your Child with Disabilities from Bullying (continued)

Parents should make sure to keep a copy. A sample letter pertaining to children with disabilities is available at PACER.org/bullying.

Families may also wish to contact a parent center or advocacy organization for assistance. To find a local one, visit www.ParentCenterNetwork.org or call 888-248-0822.

“Remember, you are your child’s best advocate,” says Julie Hertzog, Director of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center. “If your child does not feel safe, you may decide to change schools. Your child’s safety and well-being are of the utmost importance.”

Know the Law

If bullying is based on a child’s disability, it may violate that child’s federal legal rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In a Letter to Colleagues issued on October 26, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) informed all U.S. public schools that bullying and harassment, including harassment of one student by another, can be a form of prohibited discrimination.

Federal law prohibits discrimination, including harassment, in education programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, or disability. Read the OCR letter at PACER.org/link/ocr-letter-oct-2010.asp.

According to the OCR and Department of Justice, however, not all bullying constitutes “harassment,” and the specific conduct must be examined to determine if civil rights were violated. Read the definition of “disability harassment” as stated by the OCR and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at: PACER.org/link/ocr-letter-july-2010.asp.

Although children with disabilities face a higher risk of being bullied, parents can take proactive steps to ensure their child’s safety. Promoting innovative ideas such as PACER’s Peer Advocacy Program, using the IEP as a bullying prevention tool, working with the school, and knowing the law can help parents protect children with disabilities from bullying. Learn more at PACER.org/bullying.

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Record Keeping and Bullying

Billy, a 12-year-old diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, had been a target of bullying since the first day in his new school. He told his parents about the behavior right away. Billy's dad bought a journal and has recorded each of Billy's conversations about the bullying incidents. Billy's father started a second section of the journal after he began having conversations with Billy's teachers and other school personnel. When the parents decided to write the school a letter, they were able to easily refer to the journal for an accurate and thorough account of the events.

When a child is a target of bullying, parents need to document the events and develop a record (or history) of what is happening to their child. This record is useful when talking with school educators, law enforcement personnel, or other individuals who may need to assist parents in intervening against bullying.

Parents, as the most invested party, should do their best to keep track of events. In this way, emotions alone do not drive the discussion. Records can help parents keep a concise, accurate timeline of events. Parents may think they are going to remember the events, but it is easier to use a written record when referring to events versus trying to recreate them afterward. The record can also help in determining if the bullying behavior has increased or decreased in frequency or duration. The record should be factual and based on actual events. Do not add opinions or emotional statements. Data is important. Remember—if it is not in writing, it does not exist.

Content should include:

- written information about the bullying incidents
- the date of the event,
- the persons involved,
- and the child's account of the event.

Also include:

- all communication with professionals (teachers, administrators, etc.)
- the date of the communication
- discussion (summary) of the event
- the responses of the professional
- the action taken
- reports filed by the school in accordance with the school district policy

Other methods for recording events may include pictures taken of the child after a bullying incident to document any physical evidence, health care records that indicate bullying, or a tape recording of the child talking about the bullying.

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Bullying-Notifying School Administrators of Harassment Concerns

The following are 10 suggested steps to follow when parents choose to formally notify school administrators about their concern of harassment based on the child's disability.

1. In writing, address the notification to a specific person and date the letter.
2. Write the letter to a person who has the authority to investigate and the authority to correct the wrong.
3. Note that the school district is a recipient of federal financial assistance.
4. State the past or continuing discriminatory activity against your child.
5. State that the school district has control over both the site of the discrimination and over any school personnel involved.
6. Explain that the discrimination was not a single act but was severe and pervasive.
7. Tell how the discrimination excluded your child from continued participation in school or denied your child the benefits to which other students in school have access.
8. Explain, as well as you can, what you would like the school to do to stop the discrimination or to remediate the harm the discrimination has done to your child.
9. Ask for a copy of a school district grievance procedure under Section 504 (even if your child has an IEP under IDEA). Not having this information may result in continued discrimination.
10. State that if the person receiving this letter does not investigate or does not take effective corrective action, that you may claim that the district showed deliberate indifference to the discrimination. *You may also want to add a date you expect to hear back from the district in regards to your letter.*

These steps are adapted from attorney Reed Martin's "10 steps to making a successful complaint". This information is educational and not intended to be legal advice. Reed Martin is an attorney with over 34 years experience in special education law and recognized as one of the nation's leading experts. He can be reached through email at connie@reedmartin.com or www.reedmartin.com

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What if Your Child IS the Bully?

The word “bullying” often conjures up an image of a schoolyard scene, with a big, intimidating student towering over a small, cowering child. That’s just one face of bullying—and of children who bully.

Another face of a bully might be...that of your child. Surprised? Many parents are. Often they have no idea that their child is harassing other children. Yet knowing the facts—and acting to change the situation—is vitally important in making the future safer for your child and all children.

Here’s why. Children who bully suffer as much as those they target. They are significantly more likely than others to lead lives marked by school failure, depression, violence, crime, and other problems, according to experts. The message is clear:

Bullying is too important to ignore.

Could your child be bullying others? Would you know? Once you found out, would you know what to do? Here is some information that can help.

What is bullying?

Bullying is different from the routine conflicts of childhood. It is intentional behavior that is meant to hurt and dominate another person. Characterized by an imbalance of power between the child who bullies and the target, bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional (social), or sexual. It includes harassment via e-mail and instant messaging.

Who does it?

Children who bully come in a variety of packages—the waif-like second grader, the big sixth-grade boy, the child with a disability, the popular girl, the loner. They can come from any background, race, income level, family situation, gender, or religion. Research has shown that despite their differences children who bully typically have one or more of the following traits. They may:

- be quick to blame others and unwilling to accept responsibility for their actions
- lack empathy, compassion, and understanding for others’ feelings
- be bullied themselves
- have immature social and interpersonal skills
- want to be in control
- be frustrated and anxious
- come from families where parents or siblings bully
- find themselves trying to fit in with a peer group that encourages bullying
- have parents who are unable to set limits, are inconsistent with discipline, do not provide supervision, or do not take an interest in their child’s life.

What if Your Child IS the Bully? (continued)

If you see these traits in your child or hear from others that your child is bullying, you may want to look into the issue. If your child is bullying, take heart. There's a lot you can do to help correct the problem.

Remember, bullying is a learned behavior—and it can be “unlearned.” By talking with your child and seeking help, you can teach your child more appropriate ways of handling feelings, peer pressure, and conflicts. Here are some ideas.

Help your child to stop bullying

- 1. Talk with your child.** Find out why he or she is bullying others. You might explore how your child is feeling about himself or herself, ask if he or she is being bullied by someone else, and invite discussion about bullying. Find out if your child's friends are also bullying. Ask how you can help. *By Marcia Kelly*
- 2. Confirm that your child's behavior is bullying and not the result of a disability.** Sometimes, children with disabilities bully other children. Other times, children with certain behavioral disorders or limited social skills may act in ways that are mistaken for bullying. Whether the behavior is intentional bullying or is due to a disability, it still needs to be addressed. If your child with a disability is bullying, you may want to include bullying prevention goals in his or her Individual Education Program (IEP).
- 3. Teach empathy, respect, and compassion.** Children who bully often lack awareness of how others feel. Try to understand your child's feelings, and help your child appreciate how others feel when they are bullied. Let your child know that everyone has feelings and that feelings matter.
- 4. Make your expectations clear.** Let your child know that bullying is not okay under any circumstances and that you will not tolerate it. Take immediate action if you learn that he or she is involved in a bullying incident.
- 5. Provide clear, consistent consequences for bullying.** Be specific about what will happen if the bullying continues. Try to find meaningful consequences, such as loss of privileges or a face-to-face meeting with the child being bullied.
- 6. Teach by example.** Model nonviolent behavior and encourage cooperative, noncompetitive play. Help your child learn different ways to resolve conflict and deal with feelings such as anger, insecurity, or frustration. Teach and reward appropriate behavior.
- 7. Role play.** Help your child practice different ways of handling situations. You can take turns playing the part of the child who does the bullying and the one who is bullied. Doing so will help your child understand what it's like to be in the other person's shoes.

What if Your Child IS the Bully? (continued)

8. **Provide positive feedback.** When your child handles conflict well, shows compassion for others, or finds a positive way to deal with feelings, provide praise and recognition. Positive reinforcement goes a long way toward improving behavior. It is more effective than punishment.
9. **Be realistic.** It takes time to change behavior. Be patient as your child learns new ways of handling feelings and conflict. Keep your love and support visible.
10. **Seek help.** Your child's doctor, teacher, school principal, school social worker, or a psychologist can help you and your child learn how to understand and deal with bullying behavior. Ask if your school offers a bullying prevention program. Bullying hurts everyone. Parents can play a significant role in stopping the behavior, and the rewards will be immeasurable for all.

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Cyber Bullying Quick Reference Guide for Parents

By Patti Agatston, Ph.D. <http://www.cyberbullyhelp.com>

What is cyber bullying?

Cyber Bullying (sometime referred to as Internet Bullying) is using the Internet or other digital devices to send or post negative messages, images, or video clips about others.

Forms of cyber bullying:

Cyber Bullying can take many forms, including posting or sending mean or embarrassing comments and or images on chat rooms, message boards, websites, social networking sites, online gaming sites, cell phones, instant messages or email.

Why is cyber bullying a problem?

Cyber Bullying is a form of emotional bullying (sometimes referred to as relational aggression) that causes feelings of fear, isolation, and humiliation among its targets. Research over the last decade confirms that traditional bullying can seriously affect the mental and physical health of children and their academic work. Children who are bullied are more likely than non-bullied children to be anxious, depressed, and to suffer from low self-esteem¹. They also are more likely than other children to think about taking their own lives². Preliminary research suggests that children who experience cyber bullying may have a similar experience and this may be intensified since cyber bullying can occur 24/7³.

Prevention of cyber bullying:

Parents need to discuss cyber bullying with their children as part of their regular discussions about Internet Safety and appropriate use of technologies. Parents can make it clear that using the Internet or cellular phones to embarrass or hurt others' feelings is not part of their family values. Discussing the golden rule as it applies to internet and technology use can be very helpful. Parents should discuss bystander behavior as well, encouraging children to speak out against cyber bullying they witness and to report it to the appropriate person. In addition, parents need to set up guidelines for appropriate use for each new piece of technology that is brought into the home.

Prevention tips from students:

- Set age appropriate guidelines.
- Teach us how to deal with conflict.
- Monitor our use of the internet.
- Supervision, not snoopervision.
- Watch for warning signs.
- Don't blame the victim.

(Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2007)

Cyber Bullying Quick Reference Guide for Parents (continued)

By Patti Agatston, Ph.D. <http://www.cyberbullyhelp.com>

Warning signs of cyber bullying:

- Child is visibly upset or angry during or after internet use or cell phone use.
- Withdrawal from friends or activities.
- Drop in academic performance.
- School avoidance.
- Child is a target of traditional bullying at school.
- Child appears depressed or sad.

(Kowalski, et.al. 2007, Willard, 2006)

Intervention tips for responding to cyber bullying:

- Save the evidence. Print copies of messages and websites. Use the save feature on instant messages.
- First Offense (if minor in nature) - ignore, delete, or block the sender. Instant message programs, email, and cell phones usually have blocking features.
- If a fake or offensive profile targeting your child is set up on a social networking site, report it to the site. The link for reporting cyber bullying and fake profiles can be found under the help sections of many websites. MySpace has a help center on its site that provides a link for reporting offensive profiles. Make sure to copy the link (the website address) to the site for reporting purposes.
- Investigate your child's online presence. Set up an alert on Google, or search your child's name occasionally through a variety of search engines.
- If the perpetrator is another student, share evidence with the school counselor. Check to see if any bullying may be occurring at school.
- If perpetrator is known and cyber bullying is continuing or severe contact the perpetrator's parents and share your evidence (if you are comfortable doing so.) Ask that they ensure that the cyber bullying stops and any posted material be removed.
- If parent of perpetrator is unresponsive and behavior continues, parent of target may contact an attorney or send a certified letter outlining possible civil/legal options if the behavior does not stop or material is not removed.
- Report the cyber bullying to the police or cyber crime unit in your area if the cyber bullying contains threats, intimidation or sexual exploitation.
- If your child expresses emotional distress or thoughts of self harm seek help immediately. (Kowalski, et.al. 2007)

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¹ Hawker, D. S. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A metaanalytic review of cross sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41, 441-455; Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, DC.

²Rigby, K. (1996). *Bullying in schools: And what to do about it*. Briston, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

³Ybarra et al (2006). Examining characteristics and associated distress related to internet harassment: findings from the second youth internet safety survey.' *Pediatrics* Vol. 118, no.4, pp. 1169-1177.

Kowalski, R., Limber, S. & Agatston, P (2007). *Cyber Bullying: Bullying in the Digital Age*. Malden, MA.

Blackwell Publishers. Willard, N. (2006). *A Parents Guide to Cyber Bullying*, Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use.

Parenting Suggestions Regarding Technology

Become involved in your child's cyberspace. Sit at the computer and let them teach you how they use the Internet:

- Ask them to take you places they frequently visit and show you what they do. Three types of sites children commonly utilize are:
- Instant messaging services (e.g. Yahoo, AOL IM and Messenger)
- Social networking sites (e.g. Face Book and MySpace)
- Video Posting (e.g. You Tube, AOL Video)
- Open up your own accounts where they have accounts. Have your child guide you through the process.
- If your child is under 13, you do have the option to have these accounts deleted since most of these services have an age and/or parental consent requirement.
- Have them share with you all their user account names and passwords. If this is creating a trust issue, perhaps a good compromise is to have your child write down all the user account names and passwords on a sheet of paper and place this in a sealed envelope to only be opened by the parent in case of an emergency.
- Make certain they have never and will never share their passwords with anyone, even a friend. Explain the risk of someone impersonating them and ruining their reputation.
- Have them show you what they have in their profiles/pages. How do they describe themselves? Is it all accurate and appropriate? Does it show too much detail about your child? Are they protecting and sustaining a positive reputation?
- Scrutinize their friend lists on these accounts. It is very important to recognize the identity of each person. If they don't know the real name of an on-line friend, then consider that person a stranger. Request they delete and block that person.
- Ask your child if they have ever been ridiculed, intimidated and/or humiliated on the Internet (cyber bullied). Encourage them to come to you for support if they are being bullied. Both of you should learn how to use the print screen option to save evidence of the cyber bullying.
- Ask whether they have bullied anyone. It's important for them to appreciate how much emotional pain can be inflicted by unkind words or images, and that the reach of the Internet makes it far more destructive. Also explain that this is a particularly difficult emotional period for many children and what may seem to be harmless teasing, can be devastating to the person being teased.
- Share with them that the Internet is a public forum so anything can be shared with other people without their knowledge or consent. They should be very discreet in what they say and do on-line. They need to always be vigilant in protecting their reputations. Things said and done on the internet can come back to bite them many years later.

Parenting Suggestions Regarding Technology (continued)

- Have a very pointed conversation about “sexting”, the risky practice of sending sexually explicit photos and/or messages which can easily be forwarded on to others and damage their reputation.

Establish clear and enforceable guidelines:

- Establish your own family policy for acceptable computer use. List what may or may not be allowed including clear rules about time limits.
- Be upfront with your child, that this policy will be enforced and monitored. Try to set a policy that respects your child’s privacy while also considering their age, maturity level and inclination towards risky behavior.
- Purchase monitoring / time control software to help enforce your family's policy.
- Search “parental control software reviews” to find the latest products, features, and reviews.
- Do not allow a computer to be in a child's bedroom. Keep it in a public area such as the kitchen or den.

How much technology and access does your child really need?

- Does a middle school child or younger possess the maturity, judgment, and social skills to use instant/text messaging and social websites responsibly? Do their peers?
- Does your child really need a cell phone, particularly with text messaging and/or photo/video features? Are they mature enough to handle these options responsibly?
- When does too much technology begin to hurt a child? You need to find the right balance with other activities.
- Is it healthy for them to come home and plug right back into their social network versus having some quiet, reflective and regenerative time with their family?

Please visit <http://www.RyanPatrickHalligan.org> for more information about these topics and to also learn more about bullying and teen suicide prevention.

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Resources

This list is provided by the Vermont Human Rights Commission. Please check their website www.hrc.vermont.gov for periodic updates.

Books on Bullying, Harassment, and Cyberbullying:

Coloroso, Barbara. The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.

Garbarino, James. Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them. New York: Anchor Books, 1999, and See Jane Hit: Why Girls Are Growing More Violent and What We Can Do About It. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

Hinduja, Sameer & Justin Patchin. Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009. See also Sameer and Justin's website for more resources at: <http://www.cyberbullying.us>

Jacobs, Tom. Teen Cyberbullying Investigated: What Do Your Rights End and Consequences Begin? Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010.

Lane, Fred. Cybertraps for the Young. Chicago: NTI Upstream, 2011.

Olweus, Dan. Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993.

Shariff, Shaheen. Confronting Cyber-bullying: What Schools Need to Know to Control Misconduct and Avoid Legal Consequences. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Wilhelm, Doug. The Revealers and True Shoes, two books about bullying/harassment (The Revealers) and cyberbullying (True Shoes) for middle school students. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2003 and Weybridge, VT: Long Stride Books, 2011. Books are available at a discounted price for schools; also see Doug's website for more resources at: <http://dougwilhelm.com>

Willard, Nancy. Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: Responding to the Challenge of Online Social Aggression, Threats, and Distress Champaign, IL: Research Press, 2007. Also see Nancy's website for many more helpful resources at: <http://www.embracecivility.org>

Wiseman, Rosalind. Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009. Also see Rosalind's website for more resources at: <http://rosalindwiseman.com>

Resources (continued)

Videos/Movies:

“Let’s Get Real”: An excellent video with only interviews with youth (middle school age) about being a target of bullying/harassment, being a bully/harasser, being a bystander, and being an ally for someone else who is being bullied/harassed. The video comes with a free discussion/teaching guide. More information and purchasing information can be found at:

http://www.groundspark.org/press/letsgetreal_kit/lgr_media_kit.html
or <http://www.respectforall.org>

“It’s Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in Schools”: An excellent film that takes a frank look at LGBTQ issues and safe schools through dialogue with elementary school children about LGBTQ issues. The video comes with a free discussion/teaching guide. More information and purchasing information can be found at: <http://groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/elementary>

“Bully”: New (spring 2012), highly acclaimed documentary about bullying in schools made in conjunction with Facing History and Ourselves (which provides many other valuable resources to educators on addressing prejudice and discrimination in society). The viewing guide can be downloaded for free at: <http://www.facinghistory.org>. For more information about the film, go to: <http://thebullyproject.com/indexflash.html>.

Resource guides and websites:

Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. Order materials at website <http://www.wcwoonline.org> or call 1-781-283-2510, \$19.95/each

- Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher’s Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6 through 12)
- Bullyproof: A Teacher’s Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use in 4th - 5th Grades
- Quit It!: A Teacher’s Guide on Teasing and Bullying for use with Students in Grades K-3

American Association of University Women. Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment in Schools. The report, issued in 2011, can be downloaded at: <http://www.aauw.org/learn/research/crossingtheline.cfm>

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. The 2011 National School Climate Survey: Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation’s Schools. GLSEN also offers materials for educators to use in the classroom (<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/educator/index.html>). The report, issued in 2009, can be downloaded at: <http://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2011%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20Full%20Report.pdf>

Resources (continued)

National Education Association. A Report on the Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People in Education. The report, issued in 2009, can be downloaded at: <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/glbstatus09.pdf>

Websites with student oriented materials/information/format (as well as information for adults):

<http://www.tolerance.org>

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp?area=main>

<http://www.mindohfoundation.org/bullying.htm>

Websites with information and resources for school staff and parents:

<http://www.stopbullyingworld.com/resources.htm#Materials%20for%20bullying%20prevention%20programs>

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.com>

<http://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-hhb-model-policy.pdf>

Websites with information about cyberbullying/harassment:

<http://www.embracecivility.org>

<http://www.cyberbullying.us/index.php>

Websites with curriculum materials (free or for purchase) about cyberbullying/harassment:

<http://cyberbullying.seadesk.seattleschools.org/public.aspx>

http://www.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections/cyberbullying/

http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpltmDspRte.jsp?item=12188