

WAEPA GUIDE

Prevent Bullying Guide



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2018 Prevent Bullying Guide

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The 2018 Prevent Bullying Guide is presented by:



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Introduction

Bullying is Widespread

In recent nationwide surveys, 20 percent of high school students reported being bullied on school property – and 16 percent of high school students reported being bullied electronically – in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Bullying can result in physical injury, social and emotional distress, and even death. Victimized youth are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and poor school adjustment. Youth who bully others are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and violence later in adolescence and adulthood. Compared to youth who only bully, or who are only victims, bully-victims suffer the most serious consequences and are at greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems.

Bullying is a form of youth violence – defined as any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm – or distress – on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.

Bullying can include aggression that is physical (hitting, tripping), verbal (name calling, teasing), or relational/ social (spreading rumors, leaving out of group). A young person can be a perpetrator, a victim, or both (also known as “bully/victim”).

Bullying can also occur through technology and is called electronic aggression or cyber-bullying. Electronic aggression is bullying that occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website, text messaging, or videos or pictures posted on websites or sent through cell phones.

How Can we Prevent Bullying?

The key is to stop bullying before it starts. That’s why information is so important – and why we thought it required a special WAEPA Guide that would help our members understand this important issue in greater detail.

We hope that you – and your loved ones – find the **2018 WAEPA Prevent Bullying Guide** helpful.

– *The WAEPA Staff*

What is Bullying?

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 traveling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or on the Internet.

Frequency of Bullying

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

1. The School Crime Supplement – National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics (nces.ed.gov) indicates that, nationwide, about 22 percent of students ages 12-18 experienced bullying.
2. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov) indicates that, nationwide, 20 percent% of students in grades 9–12 experienced bullying.

Research on cyberbullying is growing. However, because kids' technology use changes rapidly, it is difficult to design surveys that accurately capture trends.

The Roles Kids Play

There are many roles that kids can play. Kids can bully others, they can be bullied, or they may witness bullying. When kids are involved in bullying, they often play more than one role. Sometimes kids may both be bullied and bully others or they may witness other kids being bullied. It is important to understand the multiple roles kids play in order to effectively prevent and respond to bullying.

Importance of Not Labeling Kids

When referring to a bullying situation, it is easy to call the kids who bully others "bullies" and those who are targeted "victims," but this may have unintended consequences. When children are labeled as "bullies" or "victims" it may:

- Send the message that the child's behavior cannot change
- Fail to recognize the multiple roles children might play in different bullying situations
- Disregard other factors contributing to the behavior such as peer influence or school climate

Instead of labeling the children involved, focus on the behavior. For instance:

- Instead of calling a child a "bully," refer to them as "the child who bullied"
- Instead of calling a child a "victim," refer to them as "the child who was bullied"
- Instead of calling a child a "bully/victim," refer to them as "the child who was both bullied and bullied others."

Kids Involved in Bullying

The roles kids play in bullying are not limited to those who bully others and those who are bullied. Some researchers talk about the "circle of bullying" to define both those directly involved in bullying and those who actively or passively assist the behavior or defend against it. Direct roles include:

- Kids who Bully: These children engage in bullying behavior towards their peers. There are many risk factors that may contribute to the child's involvement in the behavior. Often, these students require support to change their behavior and address any other challenges that may be influencing their behavior.
- Kids who are Bullied: These children are the targets of bullying behavior. Some factors put children at more risk of being bullied, but not all children with these characteristics will be bullied. Sometimes, these children may need help learning how to respond to bullying.

Even if a child is not directly involved in bullying, they may be contributing to the behavior. Witnessing the behavior may also affect the child, so it is important for them to learn what they should do when they see bullying happen.

Roles kids play when they witness bullying include:

- Kids who Assist: These children may not start the bullying or lead in the bullying behavior, but serve as an "assistant" to children who are bullying. These children may encourage the bullying behavior and occasionally join in.
- Kids who Reinforce: These children are not directly involved in the bullying behavior but they give the bullying an audience. They will often laugh or provide support for the children who are engaging in bullying. This may encourage the bullying to continue.
- Outsiders: These children remain separate from the bullying situation. They neither reinforce the bullying behavior nor defend the child being bullied. Some may watch what is going on but do not provide feedback about the situation to show they are on anyone's side. Even so, providing an audience may encourage the bullying behavior.
 - These kids often want to help, but don't know how. Learn how to be "more than a bystander."
- Kids who Defend: These children actively comfort the child being bullied and may come to the child's defense when bullying occurs.

Most kids play more than one role in bullying over time. In some cases, they may be directly involved in bullying as the one bullying others or being bullied and in others they may witness bullying and play an assisting or defending role. Every situation is different. Some kids are both bullied and bully others. It is important to note the multiple roles kids play, because:

- Those who are both bullied and bully others may be at more risk for negative outcomes, such as depression or suicidal ideation.

It highlights the need to engage all kids in prevention efforts, not just those who are known to be directly involved.

Related Topics

There are many other types of aggressive behavior that don't fit the definition of bullying. This does not mean that they are any less serious or require less attention than bullying. Rather, these behaviors require different prevention and response strategies.

Peer Conflict

It is not bullying when two kids with no perceived power imbalance fight, have an argument, or disagree. Conflict resolution or peer mediation may be appropriate for these situations.

Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence is intimate partner violence that occurs between two young people who are, or once were, in a relationship.

Hazing

Hazing <http://www.hhs.gov/Disclaimer.html> is the use of embarrassing and often dangerous or illegal activities by a group to initiate new members.

Gang Violence

There are specialized approaches to addressing violence and aggression within or between gangs.

Harassment

Although bullying and harassment sometimes overlap, not all bullying is harassment and not all harassment is bullying. Under federal civil rights laws, harassment is unwelcome conduct based on a protected class (race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability, religion) that is severe, pervasive, or persistent and creates a hostile environment.

Stalking

Stalking is repeated harassing or threatening behavior such as following a person, damaging a person's property, or making harassing phone calls.

Workplace Bullying

The term bullying is typically used to refer to behavior that occurs between school-aged kids. However, adults can be repeatedly aggressive and use power over each other, too. Adults in the workplace have a number of different laws that apply to them that do not apply to kids.

Early Childhood

Young children may be aggressive and act out when they are angry or don't get what they want, but this is not bullying.

Young Adults

Behaviors that are traditionally considered bullying among school-aged youth require special attention and different strategies in young adults and college students.

Early Childhood

Early childhood often marks the first opportunity for young children to interact with each other. Between the ages of 3 and 5, kids are learning how to get along with each other, cooperate, share, and understand their feelings. Young children may be aggressive and act out when they are angry or don't get what they want, but this is not bullying. Still, there are ways to help children.

Helping Young Children Get Along with Others

Parents, school staff, and other adults can help young children develop skills for getting along with others in age-appropriate ways.

- Model positive ways for young children to make friends. For example, practice pleasant ways that children can ask to join others in play and take turns in games. Coach older children to help reinforce these behaviors as well. Praise children for appropriate behavior. Help young children understand what behaviors are friendly.
- Help young children learn the consequences of certain actions in terms they can understand. For example, say “if you don't share, other children may not want to play with you.” Encourage young children to tell an adult if they are treated in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, upset or unhappy, or if they witness other children being harmed.
- Set clear rules for behavior and monitor children's interactions carefully. Step in quickly to stop aggressive behavior or redirect it before it occurs.
- Use age-appropriate consequences for aggressive behavior. Young children should be encouraged to say "I'm sorry" whenever they hurt a peer, even accidentally. The apology should also be paired with an action. For example, young children could help rebuild a knocked over block structure or replace a torn paper or crayons with new ones.

Young Adults and College Students

Behaviors that are traditionally considered bullying among school-aged youth often require new attention and strategies in young adults and college students. Many of these behaviors are considered crimes under state and federal law and may trigger serious consequences after the age of 18.

Is it Bullying?

Although media reports often call unwanted, aggressive behavior among young adults “bullying,” this is not exactly accurate. Many state and federal laws address bullying-like behaviors in this age group under very serious terms, such as hazing, harassment, and stalking. Additionally, most young adults are uncomfortable with the term bullying—they associate it with school-aged children.

How Young Adults Can Get Help

- Encourage young adults to talk to someone they trust.
- Determine if the behavior violates campus policies or laws. Review student codes of conduct, state criminal laws, and civil rights laws.
- Report criminal acts to campus or community law enforcement.
- Consult the college's Title IX coordinator to help determine if the behavior is sexual harassment.

- Many college campuses also have an ombudsperson or similar person who handles a variety of concerns and complaints. He or she can help direct the young adult to appropriate campus resources.
- Young adults may be reluctant to seek help for cyberbullying, although they do recognize it as a serious issue for their age group. Encourage young adults to report cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

Why Cyberbullying is Different

Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior.

- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

Effects of Cyberbullying

Cell phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting kids with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment. But these tools can also be used to hurt other people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar.

Kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to:

- Use alcohol and drugs
- Skip school
- Experience in-person bullying
- Be unwilling to attend school
- Receive poor grades
- Have lower self-esteem
- Have more health problems

Frequency of Cyberbullying

The School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that 7 percent of students in grades 6–12 experienced cyberbullying. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey finds that 15 percent of high school students (grades 9-12) were electronically bullied in the past year. Research on cyberbullying is growing. However, because kids' technology use changes rapidly, it is difficult to design surveys that accurately capture trends.

Prevent Cyber bullying

Parents and kids can prevent cyberbullying. Together, they can explore safe ways to use technology.

Be Aware of What Your Kids are Doing Online

- Talk with your kids about cyberbullying and other online issues regularly.
- Know the sites your kids visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.
- Tell your kids that as a responsible parent you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern. Installing parental control filtering software or monitoring programs are one option for monitoring your child's online behavior, but do not rely solely on these tools.
- Have a sense of what they do online and in texts. Learn about the sites they like. Try out the devices they use.
- Ask for their passwords, but tell them you'll only use them in case of emergency.
- Ask to "friend" or "follow" your kids on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.
- Encourage your kids to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, are being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cell phones if they confide in you about a problem they are having.

Establish Rules about Technology Use

Establish rules about appropriate use of computers, cell phones, and other technology. For example, be clear about what sites they can visit and what they are permitted to do when they're online. Show them how to be safe online. Help them be smart about what they post or say. Tell them not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass themselves or others. Once something is posted, it is out of their control whether someone else will forward it.

Encourage kids to think about who they want to see the information and pictures they post online. Should complete strangers see it? Real friends only? Friends of friends? Think about how people who aren't friends could use it.

Tell kids to keep their passwords safe and not share them with friends. Sharing passwords can compromise their control over their online identities and activities.

Understand School Rules

Some schools have developed policies on uses of technology that may affect the child's online behavior in and out of the classroom. Ask the school if they have developed a policy.

Report Cyberbullying

When cyberbullying happens, it is important to document and report the behavior so it can be addressed.

Steps to Take Immediately

- Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying.

Report Cyberbullying to Online Service Providers

Cyberbullying often violates the terms of service established by social media sites and internet service providers.

- Review their terms and conditions or rights and responsibilities sections. These describe content that is or is not appropriate.
- Visit social media safety centers to learn how to block users and change settings to control who can contact you.
- Report cyberbullying to the social media site so they can take action against users abusing the terms of service.

Report Cyberbullying to Law Enforcement

When cyberbullying involves these activities it is considered a crime and should be reported to law enforcement:

- Threats of violence
- Child pornography or sending sexually explicit messages or photos
- Taking a photo or video of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy
- Stalking and hate crimes

Some states consider other forms of cyberbullying criminal. Consult your state's laws and law enforcement for additional guidance.

Report Cyberbullying to Schools

- Cyberbullying can create a disruptive environment at school and is often related to in-person bullying. The school can use the information to help inform prevention and response strategies.
- In many states, schools are required to address cyberbullying in their anti-bullying policy. Some state laws also cover off-campus behavior that creates a hostile school environment.

Who is at Risk

Risk Factors

No single factor puts a child at risk of being bullied or bullying others. Bullying can happen anywhere—cities, suburbs, or rural towns. Depending on the environment, some groups—such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT) youth, youth with disabilities, and socially isolated youth—may be at an increased risk of being bullied.

Children at Risk of Being Bullied

Generally, children who are bullied have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to a school, or being unable to afford what kids consider “cool”
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self esteem
- Are less popular than others and have few friends
- Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention

However, even if a child has these risk factors, it doesn’t mean that they will be bullied.

Children More Likely to Bully Others

There are two types of kids who are more likely to bully others:

1. Some are well connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
2. Others are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious, have low self esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

Children who have these factors are also more likely to bully others:

- Are aggressive or easily frustrated
- Have less parental involvement or having issues at home
- Think badly of others
- Have difficulty following rules
- View violence in a positive way
- Have friends who bully others

Remember, those who bully others do not need to be stronger or bigger than those they bully. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources—popularity, strength, cognitive ability—and children who bully may have more than one of these characteristics.

Warning Signs

There are many warning signs that may indicate that someone is affected by bullying—either being bullied or bullying others. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Not all children who are bullied or are bullying others ask for help.

It is important to talk with children who show signs of being bullied or bullying others. These warning signs can also point to other issues or problems, such as depression or substance abuse. Talking to the child can help identify the root of the problem.

- Signs a Child is Being Bullied
- Signs a Child is Bullying Others
- Why don't kids ask for help?

Signs a Child is Being Bullied

Look for changes in the child. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs. Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

If you know someone in serious distress or danger, don't ignore the problem. Get help right away.

Signs a Child is Bullying Others

Kids may be bullying others if they:

- Get into physical or verbal fights

- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity

Why don't kids ask for help?

Statistics from the 2012 Indicators of School Crime and Safety show that an adult was notified in less than half (40%) of bullying incidents. Kids don't tell adults for many reasons:

- Bullying can make a child feel helpless. Kids may want to handle it on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a tattletale.
- Kids may fear backlash from the kid who bullied them.
- Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Kids may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.
- Kids who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand.
- Kids may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends can help protect kids from bullying, and kids can fear losing this support.

Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect everyone—those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying. Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide. It is important to talk to kids to determine whether bullying—or something else—is a concern.

Kids Who are Bullied

Kids who are bullied can experience negative physical, school, and mental health issues. Kids who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement—GPA and standardized test scores—and school participation. They are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.
- A very small number of bullied children might retaliate through extremely violent measures.

Kids Who Bully Others

Kids who bully others can also engage in violent and other risky behaviors into adulthood. Kids who bully are more likely to:

- Abuse alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults
- Get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school
- Engage in early sexual activity
- Have criminal convictions and traffic citations as adults
- Be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses, or children as adults

Bystanders

Kids who witness bullying are more likely to:

- Have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs
- Have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Miss or skip school

The Relationship between Bullying and Suicide

Media reports often link bullying with suicide. However, most youth who are bullied do not have thoughts of suicide or engage in suicidal behaviors.

Although kids who are bullied are at risk of suicide, bullying alone is not the cause. Many issues contribute to suicide risk, including depression, problems at home, and trauma history. Additionally, specific groups have an increased risk of suicide, including American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian American, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. This risk can be increased further when these kids are not supported by parents, peers, and schools. Bullying can make an unsupportive situation worse.

Considerations for Specific Groups

Schools and communities that respect diversity can help protect children against bullying behavior. However, when children perceived as different are not in supportive environments, they may be at a higher risk of being bullied. When working with kids from different groups—including lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) youth and youth with disabilities or special health care needs—there are specific things you can do to prevent and address bullying.

Race, Ethnicity, and National Origin

It is not clear how often kids get bullied because of their race, ethnicity, or national origin. It is also unclear how often kids of the same group bully each other. Research is still growing. We do know, however, that Black and Hispanic youth who are bullied are more likely to suffer academically than their white peers.

Although no specialized interventions have yet been developed or identified, some federal partners have developed campaign materials for specific racial and ethnic minority groups. For example, the Indian Health Service within the

Department of Health and Human Services has developed a series of materials for American Indian and Alaskan Native youth called “Stand Up, Stand Strong.”

When bullying based on race or ethnicity is severe, pervasive, or persistent it may be considered harassment, which is covered under federal civil rights laws.

Religion and Faith

Very little research has explored bullying based on religious differences. Bullying in these situations may have less to do with a person’s beliefs and more to do with misinformation or negative perceptions about how someone expresses that belief.

For example, Muslim girls who wear hijabs (head scarves), Sikh boys who wear patka or dastar (turbans), and Jewish boys who wear yarmulkes report being targeted because of these visible symbols of their religions. These items are sometimes used as tools to bully Muslim, Sikh, and Jewish youth when they are forcefully removed by others. Several reports also indicate a rise in anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh bullying over the past decade that may have roots in a perceived association of their religious heritage and terrorism.

When bullying based on religion is severe, pervasive, or persistent, the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division may be able to intervene under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act.

Often religious harassment is not based on the religion itself but on shared ethnic characteristics. When harassment is based on shared ethnic characteristics, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights may be able to intervene under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Bullying and LGBT Youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) youth and those perceived as LGBT are at an increased risk of being bullied. There are important and unique considerations for strategies to prevent and address bullying of LGBT youth.

Creating a Safe Environment for LGBT Youth

It is important to build a safe environment for all youth, whether they are straight or LGBT. All youth can thrive when they feel supported. Parents, schools, and communities can all play a role in helping LGBT youth feel physically and emotionally safe:

- Build strong connections and keep the lines of communication open. Some LGBT youth often feel rejected. It is important for them to know that their families, friends, schools, and communities support them.
- Establish a safe environment at school. Schools can send a message that no one should be treated differently because they are, or are perceived to be, LGBT. Sexual orientation and gender identity protection can be added to school policies.
- Create gay-straight alliances (GSAs). GSAs help create safer schools. Schools must allow these groups if they have other “non-curricular” clubs or groups. Learn more about the right to form a GSA under the Equal Access Act.
- Protect privacy. Be careful not to disclose or discuss issues around being LGBT with parents or anyone else.

Federal Civil Rights Laws and Sexual Orientation

Federal civil rights laws do not cover harassment based on sexual orientation. Often, bullying towards LGBT youth targets their non-conformity to gender norms. This may be sexual harassment covered under Title IX. Read more about federal civil rights laws.

Many states protect against bullying because of sexual orientation in their state laws.

Bullying and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Needs

Children with disabilities—such as physical, developmental, intellectual, emotional, and sensory disabilities—are at an increased risk of being bullied. Any number of factors— physical vulnerability, social skill challenges, or intolerant environments—may increase the risk. Research suggests that some children with disabilities may bully others as well.

Kids with special health needs, such as epilepsy or food allergies, also may be at higher risk of being bullied. Bullying can include making fun of kids because of their allergies or exposing them to the things they are allergic to. In these cases, bullying is not just serious – it can mean life or death.

Creating a Safe Environment for Youth with Disabilities

Special considerations are needed when addressing bullying in youth with disabilities. There are resources to help kids with disabilities who are bullied or who bully others. Youth with disabilities often have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans that can be useful in crafting specialized approaches for preventing and responding to bullying. These plans can provide additional services that may be necessary. Additionally, civil rights laws protect students with disabilities against harassment.

Creating a Safe Environment for Youth with Special Health Needs

Youth with special health needs—such as diabetes requiring insulin regulation, food allergies, or youth with epilepsy— may require accommodations at school. In these cases they do not require an Individualized Education Program or Section 504 plan. However, schools can protect students with special health needs from bullying and related dangers. If a child with special health needs has a medical reaction, teachers should address the medical situation first before responding to the bullying. Educating kids and teachers about students’ special health needs and the dangers associated with certain actions and exposures can help keep kids safe.

Federal Civil Rights Laws and Youth with Disabilities

When bullying is directed at a child because of his or her established disability and it creates a hostile environment at school, bullying behavior may cross the line and become “disability harassment.” Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the school must address the harassment. Read more about federal civil rights laws.

How to Prevent Bullying

How to Talk About Bullying

Parents, school staff, and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing bullying. They can:

- Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

Help Kids Understand Bullying

Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

- Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.
- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying “stop” directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away.
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.
- Watch the short episodes and discuss them with kids.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Research tells us that children really do look to parents and caregivers for advice and help on tough decisions. Sometimes spending 15 minutes a day talking can reassure kids that they can talk to their parents if they have a problem. Start conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like these:

- What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?
- What is lunchtime like at your school? Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- What is it like to ride the school bus?
- What are you good at? What would do you like best about yourself?

Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting kids. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage kids to answer them honestly. Assure kids that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise. Start conversations about bullying with questions like these:

- What does “bullying” mean to you?
- Describe what kids who bully are like. Why do you think people bully?
- Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying?
- Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it?
- What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?
- Have you or your friends left other kids out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not?
- What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?
- Do you ever see kids at your school being bullied by other kids? How does it make you feel?
- Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

Get more ideas for talking with children about life and about bullying. If concerns come up, be sure to respond.

There are simple ways that parents and caregivers can keep up-to-date with kids’ lives:

- Read class newsletters and school flyers. Talk about them at home.
- Check the school website
- Go to school events
- Greet the bus driver
- Meet teachers and counselors at “Back to School” night or reach out by email
- Share phone numbers with other kids’ parents

Teachers and school staff also have a role to play.

Encourage Kids to Do What They Love

Help kids take part in activities, interests, and hobbies they like. Kids can volunteer, play sports, sing in a chorus, or join a youth group or school club. These activities give kids a chance to have fun and meet others with the same interests. They can build confidence and friendships that help protect kids from bullying.

Model How to Treat Others with Kindness and Respect

Kids learn from adults' actions. By treating others with kindness and respect, adults show the kids in their lives that there is no place for bullying. Even if it seems like they are not paying attention, kids are watching how adults manage stress and conflict, as well as how they treat their friends, colleagues, and families.

Prevention at School

Bullying can threaten students' physical and emotional safety at school and can negatively impact their ability to learn. The best way to address bullying is to stop it before it starts. There are a number of things school staff can do to make schools safer and prevent bullying.

Getting Started

Assess school prevention and intervention efforts around student behavior, including substance use and violence. You may be able to build upon them or integrate bullying prevention strategies. Many programs help address the same protective and risk factors that bullying programs do.

Assess Bullying

Assessments—such as surveys—can help schools determine the frequency and locations of bullying behavior. They can also gauge the effectiveness of current prevention and intervention efforts. Knowing what's going on can help school staff select appropriate prevention and response strategies.

Assessments involve asking school or community members—including students—about their experiences and thoughts related to bullying. An assessment is planned, purposeful, and uses research tools.

- What an Assessment Can Do
- Develop and Implement an Assessment

What an Assessment Can Do

Assess to:

- Know what's going on. Adults underestimate the rates of bullying because kids rarely report it and it often happens when adults aren't around. Assessing bullying through anonymous surveys can provide a clear picture of what is going on.
- Target efforts. Understanding trends and types of bullying in your school can help you plan bullying prevention and intervention efforts.
- Measure results. The only way to know if your prevention and intervention efforts are working is to measure them over time.

An assessment can explore specific bullying topics, such as:

- Frequency and types
- Adult and peer response
- Locations, including "hot spots"

- Staff perceptions and attitudes about bullying
- Aspects of the school or community that may support or help stop it
- Student perception of safety
- School climate

Develop and Implement an Assessment

Schools may choose to use school-wide surveys to assess bullying. There are several steps involved:

- Choose a survey. There are many free, reliable, and validated assessment tools available. Choose a set of measures that covers the questions you want answered, are age appropriate, and can be answered in a reasonable amount of time.
- Obtain parental consent, as your district requires. Some allow passive consent, others require active consent.

According to federal guidelines, at a minimum, each year the Local Education Agency (LEA), must notify parents about the survey and when it will be conducted. Parents have the right to opt their child out of the survey. Parents also have the right to inspect and review the surveys before they are given.

- Administer the survey. School staff are best equipped to judge how to carry out a survey at school, but these tips can help:
- Administer surveys early in the school year. Schedules surveys after students are settled in a routine but there is still time to use the findings in the school year's prevention efforts.
- Assess at least once every school year. Some schools like to survey students at the start and end of the school year to track progress and plan activities for the following year.
- Decide which students will be surveyed to ensure statistically significant results. Schools may choose school-wide surveys or surveys of specific grades.
- Plan to administer the survey when all students can take it at once. This will reduce the chance that they will discuss it and affect each other's answers.
- Protect student privacy. Many surveys are subject to the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Assure students that their responses will be kept confidential and that their answers can't be tracked back to them.
- Analyze and distribute findings.
- Make sure you continue to protect students' privacy by ensuring that no personally identifiable information is accessible.
- Consider how the survey results will be shared with teachers, parents, and students.
- Make sure that you are prepared to respond to the results of the survey. Have a clear plan for prevention and intervention in place or in development.

Engage Parents & Youth

School staff can do a great deal to prevent bullying and protect students, but they can't do it alone. Parents and youth also have a role to play in preventing bullying at school. One mechanism for engaging parents and youth, a school safety committee, can bring the community together to keep bullying prevention at school active and focused.

Benefits of Parent and Youth Engagement

Research shows that school administrators, such as principals, can play a powerful role in bullying prevention. They can inspire others and maintain a climate of respect and inclusion. But a principal cannot do it alone. When parents and youth are involved in the solutions:

- Students feel safer and can focus on learning.
- Parents worry less.
- Teachers and staff can focus on their work.
- Schools can develop more responsive solutions because students are more likely to see or hear about bullying than adults.
- School climate improves because students are engaged in taking action to stop bullying.
- Parents can support schools' messages about bullying at home. They are also more likely to recognize signs that a child has been bullied or is bullying others.

How Parents and Youth Can Contribute

Schools can set the stage for meaningful parent and youth involvement, but it doesn't happen overnight. Parents and youth need to feel valued and be given opportunities to contribute their expertise. To sustain parent and youth involvement, schools need to provide meaningful roles for them. For example:

- Students can contribute their views and experiences with bullying. They can take leadership roles in school to promote respect and inclusion, communicate about bullying prevention with their peers, and help develop rules and policies.
- Parents can contribute to a positive school climate through the parent teacher association, volunteering, and school improvement events.
- School staff can keep parents informed, make them feel welcome, and treat them as partners. Schools can consider identifying a school coordinator to support parent and youth engagement strategies. Schools can set meeting times that are convenient for parents and youth and may consider additional incentives such as providing dinner or child care.

School Safety Committees

A school safety committee—a small group of people focused on school safety concerns—is one strategy to engage parents and youth, as well as others, in bullying prevention. The following people can make positive contributions to a school safety committee:

- Administrators can answer questions about budget, training, curriculum, and federal and state laws such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- Inventive, respected teachers with strong classroom and “people” skills can give insights.
- Other school staff, such as school psychologists, counselors, school nurses, librarians, and bus drivers, bring diverse perspectives on bullying.
- Parents can share the family viewpoint and keep other parents in the loop on committee work.
- Students can bring fresh views and help identify real-life challenges to prevention.
- Other community stakeholders, such as police officers, clergy members, elected officials, and health care providers can provide a broader perspective.

The primary activities of the school safety committee could be to:

- Plan bullying prevention and intervention programs. Set measurable and achievable goals.
- Implement a bullying prevention effort. Meet often enough to keep momentum and address barriers.
- Develop, communicate, and enforce bullying prevention policies and rules.
- Educate the school community about bullying to ensure everyone understands the problem and their role in stopping it.
- Conduct school-wide bullying assessments and review other data, such as incident reports.
- Evaluate bullying prevention efforts and refine the plan if necessary.
- Advocate for the school’s work in bullying prevention to the entire school community.
- Sustain the effort over time.

The committee is not a forum for discussing individual student behaviors. Doing so is a violation of student privacy under FERPA. There are also FERPA considerations for assessments, particularly if personally identifiable information is collected.

Set Policies & Rules

School staff can help prevent bullying by establishing and enforcing school rules and policies that clearly describe how students are expected to treat each other. Consequences for violations of the rules should be clearly defined as well.

- Types of Rules and Policies
- Integrating Rules and Policies into a School’s Culture
- Establish a Reporting System

Types of Rules and Policies

There are several types of policies and rules that work to prevent bullying. Each serves a different purpose. For example:

- A school mission statement establishes the vision for the school. Everyone should know how he or she personally helps the school achieve this shared goal. Sample Mission Statement - [Name of School] is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our school works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.
- A code of conduct describes the positive behaviors expected of the school community. The code of conduct applies to all, sets standards for behavior, and covers a focused set of expected positive behaviors. State laws sometimes specify what must be included in a school's code of conduct.
- A student bill of rights includes positive things students can expect at school. Keep it short and easy to remember, so it is useful in day-to-day school life.

Sample Student Bill of Rights:

- Each student at [school] has a right to:
- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

Integrating Rules and Policies into a School's Culture

As you develop or update school rules and policies, have a plan for keeping them relevant and meaningful for students and school staff.

- Make sure school rules and policies are consistent with state laws and the school district rules and policies.
- Include school staff, parents, and students when developing rules and policies. Giving students a role can help them set their own climate of respect and responsibility. Parental involvement can reinforce these messages at home.
- Train school staff on enforcing school rules and policies. Give them the tools to respond to bullying consistently and appropriately.
- Incorporate rules and policies in day-to-day school interactions. Teachers and students can discuss the rules in class. Students can hold each other accountable. The principal can give an annual "state of the school" speech that reports on the mission.

Establish a Reporting System

Schools can establish clear procedures for reporting rule violations so that reasonable consequences can be given to students when rules are broken. Reporting systems help track individual incidents and responses as well as trends over time.

Some tips for establishing a reporting system:

- Make it easy. People are more likely to report when it's easy to do.
- Maintain reports in a way that shows emerging problems and patterns over time.

- Keep reports confidential and private. School staff and students should be encouraged to report violations without fear of retaliation.

Build a Safe Environment

A safe and supportive school climate can help prevent bullying. Safety starts in the classroom. Students should also feel and be safe everywhere on campus—in the cafeteria, in the library, in the rest rooms, on the bus, and on the playground. Everyone at school can work together to create a climate where bullying is not acceptable.

Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

In general, schools can:

- Establish a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students. Reward students when they show thoughtfulness and respect for peers, adults, and the school. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Technical Assistance Center <http://www.hhs.gov/Disclaimer.html> can help.
- Make sure students interact safely. Monitor bullying “hot spots” in and around the building. Students may be at higher risk of bullying in settings where there is little or no adult monitoring or supervision, such as bathrooms, playgrounds, and the cafeteria.
- Enlist the help of all school staff. All staff can keep an eye out for bullying. They also help set the tone at school. Teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, office staff, librarians, school nurses, and others see and influence students every day. Messages reach kids best when they come from many different adults who talk about and show respect and inclusion. Train school staff to prevent bullying.
- Set a tone of respect in the classroom. This means managing student behavior in the classroom well. Well-managed classrooms are the least likely to have bullying.

Manage Classrooms to Prevent Bullying

Teachers can consider these ways to promote the respect, positive relations, and order that helps prevent bullying in the classroom:

- Create ground rules.
 - Develop rules with students so they set their own climate of respect and responsibility.
 - Use positive terms, like what to do, rather than what not to do.
 - Support school-wide rules.
- Reinforce the rules.
 - Be a role model and follow the rules yourself. Show students respect and encourage them to be successful.
 - Make expectations clear. Keep your requests simple, direct, and specific.
 - Reward good behavior. Try to affirm good behavior four to five times for every one criticism of bad behavior.
 - Use one-on-one feedback, and do not publicly reprimand.

- Help students correct their behaviors. Help them understand violating the rules results in consequences: “I know you can stop [negative action] and go back to [positive action]. If you choose to continue, then [consequence].”

Classroom Meetings

Classroom meetings provide a forum for students to talk about school-related issues beyond academics. These meetings can help teachers stay informed about what is going on at school and help students feel safe and supported.

These meetings work best in classrooms where a culture of respect is already established. Classroom meetings are typically short and held on a regular schedule. They can be held in a student’s main classroom, homeroom, or advisory period.

Establish ground rules. Kids should feel free to discuss issues without fear. Classroom meetings are not a time to discuss individual conflicts or gossip about others. Reinforce existing classroom rules.

Start the conversation. Focus on specific topics, such as bullying or respectful behaviors. Meetings can identify and address problems affecting the group as a whole. Stories should be broad and lead to solutions that build trust and respect between students.

Use open-ended questions or prompts such as:

- Share an example of a student who helped someone at school this week.
- Without names, share an example of someone who made another student feel bad.
- What did students nearby do? What did you do? Did you want to do something different—why or why not?
- If you could describe the perfect response to the situation what would it be? How hard or easy would it be to do?
- Why?

How can adults help?

- End the meeting with a reminder that it is everyone’s job to make school a positive place to learn. Encourage kids to talk to teachers or other trusted adults if they see bullying or are worried about how someone is being treated.
- Follow-up when necessary. Monitor student body language and reactions. If a topic seems to be affecting a student, follow-up with him or her. Know what resources are available to support students affected by bullying.

Educate About Bullying

Training school staff and students to prevent and address bullying can help sustain bullying prevention efforts over time. There are no federal mandates for bullying curricula or staff training. The following are some examples of options schools can consider.

- Activities to Teach Students About Bullying

- Evidence-Based Programs and Curricula
- Staff Training on Bullying Prevention

Activities to Teach Students About Bullying

Schools don't always need formal programs to help students learn about bullying prevention. Schools can incorporate the topic of bullying prevention in lessons and activities. Examples of activities to teach about bullying include:

- Internet or library research, such as looking up types of bullying, how to prevent it, and how kids should respond
- Presentations, such as a speech or role-play on stopping bullying
- Discussions about topics like reporting bullying
- Creative writing, such as a poem speaking out against bullying or a story or skit teaching bystanders how to help
- Artistic works, such as a collage about respect or the effects of bullying
- Classroom meetings to talk about peer relations

Evidence-Based Programs and Curricula

Schools may choose to implement formal evidence-based programs or curricula. Many evaluated programs that address bullying are designed for use in elementary and middle schools. Fewer programs exist for high schools and non-school settings. There are many considerations in selecting a program, including the school's demographics, capacity, and resources. Also, be sure to avoid Misdirections in Bullying Prevention and Response.

Staff Training on Bullying Prevention

To ensure that bullying prevention efforts are successful, all school staff needs to be trained on what bullying is, what the school's policies and rules are, and how to enforce the rules. Training may take many forms: staff meetings, one-day training sessions, and teaching through modeling preferred behavior. Schools may choose any combination of these training options based on available funding, staff resources, and time.

Training can be successful when staff is engaged in developing messages and content, and when they feel that their voices are heard. Learning should be relevant to their roles and responsibilities to help build buy-in.

Working in the Community

Bullying can be prevented, especially when the power of a community is brought together. Community-wide strategies can help identify and support children who are bullied, redirect the behavior of children who bully, and change the attitudes of adults and youth who tolerate bullying behaviors in peer groups, schools, and communities.

The Benefits of Working Together

Bullying doesn't happen only at school. Community members can use their unique strengths and skills to prevent bullying wherever it occurs. For example, youth sports groups may train coaches to prevent bullying. Local businesses may make t-shirts with bullying prevention slogans for an event. After-care staff may read books about bullying to

kids and discuss them. Hearing anti-bullying messages from the different adults in their lives can reinforce the message for kids that bullying is unacceptable.

Potential Partners

Involve anyone who wants to learn about bullying and reduce its impact in the community. Consider involving businesses, local associations, adults who work directly with kids, parents, and youth.

- Identify partners such as mental health specialists, law enforcement officers, neighborhood associations, service groups, faith-based organizations, and businesses.
- Learn what types of bullying community members see and discuss developing targeted solutions.
- Involve youth. Teens can take leadership roles in bullying prevention among younger kids.

Study community strengths and needs:

- Ask: Who is most affected? Where? What kinds of bullying happen most? How do kids and adults react? What is already being done in our local area to help?
- Think about using opinion surveys, interviews, and focus groups to answer these questions. Learn how schools assess bullying.
- Consider open forums like group discussions with community leaders, businesses, parent groups, and churches.

Develop a comprehensive community strategy:

- Review what you learned from your community study to develop a common understanding of the problem.
- Establish a shared vision about bullying in the community, its impact, and how to stop it.
- Identify audiences to target and tailor messages as appropriate.
- Describe what each partner will do to help prevent and respond to bullying.
- Advocate for bullying prevention policies in schools and throughout the community.
- Raise awareness about your message. Develop and distribute print materials. Encourage local radio, TV, newspapers, and websites to give public service announcements prime space. Introduce bullying prevention to groups that work with kids.
- Track your progress over time. Evaluate to ensure you are refining your approach based on solid data, not anecdotes.

How to Respond to Bullying

Stop Bullying on the Spot

When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. There are simple steps adults can take to stop bullying on the spot and keep kids safe.

Do:

- Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another adult to help.
- Separate the kids involved.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
- Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

Avoid these common mistakes:

- Don't ignore it. Don't think kids can work it out without adult help.
- Don't immediately try to sort out the facts.
- Don't force other kids to say publicly what they saw.
- Don't question the children involved in front of other kids.
- Don't talk to the kids involved together, only separately.
- Don't make the kids involved apologize or patch up relations on the spot.

Get police help or medical attention immediately if:

- A weapon is involved.
- There are threats of serious physical injury.
- There are threats of hate-motivated violence, such as racism or homophobia.
- There is serious bodily harm.
- There is sexual abuse.

- Anyone is accused of an illegal act, such as robbery or extortion—using force to get money, property, or services.

Find Out What Happened

Whether you've just stopped bullying on the spot or a child has reached out to you for help, follow the steps below to determine the best way to proceed.

Get the Facts:

- Keep all the involved children separate.
- Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.

It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple students are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information.

Determine if it's Bullying

There are many behaviors that look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.

Review the definition of bullying. State law and school policy may have additional guidelines for defining bullying behavior.

To determine if this is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:

- What is the history between the kids involved? Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
- Have the kids dated? There are special responses for teen dating violence.
- Are any of the kids involved with a gang? Gang violence has different interventions.
- Remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.

Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support the kids involved.

All kids involved in bullying—whether they are bullied, bully others, or see bullying—can be affected. It is important to support all kids involved to make sure the bullying doesn't continue and effects can be minimized.

Support Kids Who are Bullied

- Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help.
- Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
- Know that kids who are bullied may struggle with talking about it. Consider referring them to a school counselor, psychologist, or other mental health service.
- Give advice about what to do. This may involve role-playing and thinking through how the child might react if the bullying occurs again.
- Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and school or organization may all have valuable input. It may help to:
- Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging classroom or bus seating plans for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching classrooms or bus routes, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
- Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between schools, organizations, and parents. Discuss the steps that are taken and the limitations around what can be done based on policies and laws. Remember, the law does not allow school personnel to discuss discipline, consequences, or services given to other children.
- Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

Avoid these mistakes:

- Never tell the child to ignore the bullying.
- Do not blame the child for being bullied. Even if he or she provoked the bullying, no one deserves to be bullied.
- Do not tell the child to physically fight back against the kid who is bullying. It could get the child hurt, suspended, or expelled.
- Parents should resist the urge to contact the other parents involved. It may make matters worse. School or other officials can act as mediators between parents.
- Follow-up. Show a commitment to making bullying stop. Because bullying is behavior that repeats or has the potential to be repeated, it takes consistent effort to ensure that it stops.

Address Bullying Behavior

Parents, school staff, and organizations all have a role to play.

- Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.

Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied. For example:

- Sometimes children bully to fit in. These kids can benefit from participating in positive activities. Involvement in sports and clubs can enable them to take leadership roles and make friends without feeling the need to bully.
- Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support, such as mental health services.

Use Consequences to Teach

Consequences that involve learning or building empathy can help prevent future bullying. School staff should remember to follow the guidelines in their student code of conduct and other policies in developing consequences and assigning discipline. For example, the child who bullied can:

- Lead a class discussion about how to be a good friend.
- Write a story about the effects of bullying or benefits of teamwork.
- Role-play a scenario or make a presentation about the importance of respecting others, the negative effects of gossip, or how to cooperate.
- Do a project about civil rights and bullying.
- Read a book about bullying.
- Make posters for the school about cyberbullying and being smart online.
- Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:
 - Write a letter apologizing to the student who was bullied.
 - Do a good deed for the person who was bullied or for others in your community.
 - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.

Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:

- Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you’re out” strategies don’t work. Suspending or expelling students who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Students and teachers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or expulsion is the consequence.
- Conflict resolution and peer mediation don’t work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
- Group treatment for students who bully doesn’t work. Group members tend to reinforce bullying behavior in each other.

Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good friend.