

Family Advocacy Center



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HELPFUL HINTS FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

**Bullying is the most
common form of
violence experienced
by young people.**

More than 70% of students have witnessed bullying. Common forms of bullying include teasing, threatening, excluding and fighting. It may involve physical acts (such as pushing, hitting, tripping, stealing or damaging property); verbal statements (such as threats, spreading rumors, shunning) or technology (texts or social media posts).



Bullying creates a hostile environment causing everyone to feel scared and unsafe. It results in physical, emotional and social harm to the entire school community. Pervasive or severe bullying can become unlawful discrimination, if it prevents a child from having an equal opportunity to an education.

TIP: If the school does not respond quickly to a reported concern, file a grievance with the school district.

SIGNS of Bullying

Children who are bullied experience significant depression, fear, guilt, low self-esteem, and trust issues, making it difficult for them to talk about it. This is especially true for special needs kids. So parents need to pay attention to signs of bullying , such as;

- Torn clothing, lost or damaged books, jewelry or electronics
- Bruises, scratches, or other unexplained injuries
- Child is afraid or reluctant to attend school, chooses an illogical route to or from school
- Declining grades or child loses interest in school
- Child is sad, depressed, anxious or socially isolated.
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, muscle aches, feeling sick, or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits or coming home hungry because they didn't eat lunch
- Difficulty sleeping, frequent nightmares, or bed wetting
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork
- Sudden loss of friends or avoiding social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves or talking about suicide



TIP: *Schools have significant problems detecting, investigating and preventing bullying, & kids do not want to talk about it. This creates an opportunity for Parents to talk to their child and school officials.*

HOW to Talk to Your Child

Take bullying seriously, and talk to your child. If they speak-up, this may be your only chance to help. Here are some suggestions on talking to your child:

- Ask your child if any students at school ever cause any problems with bullying, harassment, teasing, etc.
- Tell your child they can always talk to you, a friend or a teacher about any problems they experience.
- If your child is being bullied, tell them it is not their fault, bullying is wrong, and they are not alone. There are many who know how they feel, and help is available

Strategies For Kids Who Are Bullied

Tell your child's teacher and principal about the problem and ask for a meeting. Tell your child that you need some specifics to prepare for this meeting, such as dates and locations of the bullying incidents; names of any witnesses and the bullies; and what took place. Check the school's website for forms used to report bullying and follow the directions.

Next, explain to your child that until the school meeting happens, there are a few strategies for staying safe, such as staying close to friends and supportive adults while in school. For cyber-bullying, delete online accounts or block access for unwelcome peers. Tell them that if bullying does occur again, be sure to tell you right away so you can help.



Bullies often like to see their victims get upset. So a good strategy is to try to stay calm, and pretend you don't care. Over time (days or weeks), bullies often stop on their own.

Tip For Your Child: Practice Staying Calm: *Count to ten while taking deep breaths and imagine something that makes you peaceful and relaxed. At the same time, calmly turn and walk away toward a place of safety (other adults, friends, etc.)*

Strategies For Parents At The School

Parents can advocate to ensure the school conducts a thorough investigation into what occurred. Take notes at the meeting with school officials and ask: who will be conducting the investigation; what are the steps involved in the investigation; how long will the investigation take; and how should you follow-up to learn the results. Victims of bullying are often fearful to talk, but this cannot become an excuse for the school to refuse to take action. School staff has an obligation to supervise the students and should know what's going on in the school.

The School's Safety Plan for Your Child

The school should explain to you in detail their safety plan to protect your child while the bullying investigation is conducted, including how it will supervise your child's safety. The school should also explain how your child is to handle any situations in the future, such as places of sanctuary and protection; speaking with or calling a safe adult; and ways to quickly report bullying situations. The school should designate someone at the school whom your child can go to with any concerns. This person must be someone your child trusts and is comfortable talking to.

With the school's help, teach your child how to deal with situations like walking away or asking for help. Keep in mind that telling your child to "hit back" may be against school policy, and your child could get suspended or expelled. Schools must be an active participant in responding to harassment and minimize any burdens on your child. For example, the school can provide monitors or additional adult supervision in areas where harassment occurs; determine additional consequences and services for harassers including whether discipline is appropriate; limit interactions between harassers and targets; and provide your child with additional support services and opportunities to retake a test/class that was impacted by the bullying.



TIP: *Put your child's safety plan in writing so all can read it and agree to the plan.*

Keep the school advised of any developments, such as continued bullying or harassment. Takes notes of meetings, phone calls or conversations as to what is said. Keep a file of your notes. Ask for an emergency meeting if needed to address important developments and confirm improvements to the safety plan.

If Bullying or Harassment Continues

If the harassment or bullying continues, ask your school how to file a formal grievance with the school district.

If Your Child Engages in Bullying Behavior

If your child bullies another child, the behavior often relates to feeling sad, insecure, being bullied themselves, hanging out with the wrong crowd, being impulsive or hot-tempered, or a lack of empathy. Take it seriously, because kids who bully are more likely to do poorly in school, abuse alcohol and other drugs; get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school; engage in early sexual activity; and as adults engage in criminal conduct and domestic violence.

Take it seriously. Talk to a school counselor, and help your child work through the problem.

Resources For Parents

Call PA's Bullying Consultation Line for parents, students and school staff
1-866-716-0424

Stopbullying.gov

[PA Bullying Prevention Toolkit](#)

[What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied](#)

[What Every Parent should know about Bullying](#)



TIP FOR STUDENTS: Call PA's "Safe to Say" Tip Line to report concerns about classmates dealing with bullying, depression, drug use, suicide or neglect. 1-844-723-2728

SOURCES

CHOP's Violence Prevention Initiative
CrimeSolutions.gov
Education Law Center
National Crime Prevention Council
National Institute of Justice
PA Department of Education
Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
Stopbullying.gov
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division