



RESOURCE GUIDE

How to Address Bullying

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Our mission is to prevent youth suicide through education, cyber safety, and kindness campaigns.

If you are reading this, you or your child may be experiencing bullying. Bullying can be stopped and it must be as it can lead to extremely grave consequences. Most kids are reluctant to tell anyone that they are being bullied. We all need to stop bullying on the spot. Everyone that sees something must say something. Our children's devices MUST be monitored at home and at school and you need to always have your child's passcode.

In 2018, we lost our son Gabriel to suicide to when he was just twelve years old. To say we were shocked by his death is an understatement. Initially, we thought that it was an accident as he showed none of the "usual signs" of depression at home. We were not monitoring his devices.

Weeks later, we received evidence from his search history on a school device that he had been searching suicide and bullying leading up to his death. We were never alerted. The school was not monitoring devices. Additional evidence showed that Gabe was being bullied and felt isolated and alone at school. He felt diminished, not good enough, and hopeless. He spoke of suicide to his classmates. Again, none of these signs were exhibited at home amongst our close family. All of his phone text messages had been deleted.

Our family was shattered by the loss. We are working to put our lives back together and choose to celebrate the way Gabriel lived, not focus on the way he died. In Gabriel's honor, and in honor of all those lost to suicide, we share our journey and work diligently through Gabriel's Light to prevent youth suicide through education, cyber safety, and kindness campaigns. We especially recommend utilizing the Bark app on all of your children's devices as soon as possible. Schools must take responsibility for monitoring devices that they distribute. It is a safety issue like locks on doors, background checks on volunteers, and not allowing strangers inside.

*We have created this resource guide to offer support and advice to others who may be dealing with bullying - at school or online. Please know that **you are not alone and that you must speak up on the spot. See something. Say Something.***

With sympathy,



Carol Hufford Deely

President and Founder, Gabriel's Light

Table of Contents

Common Signs Your Child is Being Bullied	Page 4
Cyberbullying	Page 5
Laws & Regulations	Page 7
When Your Child is Doing the Bullying	Page 8
What Parents Can Do	Page 10
What Kids Can Do	Page 13
What Schools Can Do	Page 15
Final Thoughts for Parents & Additional Resources	Page 17

Stop Bullying on the Spot!

When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior, they send the message that it is not acceptable. Parents, school staff, and other adults in the community can help kids prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy.

Common Signs your 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:

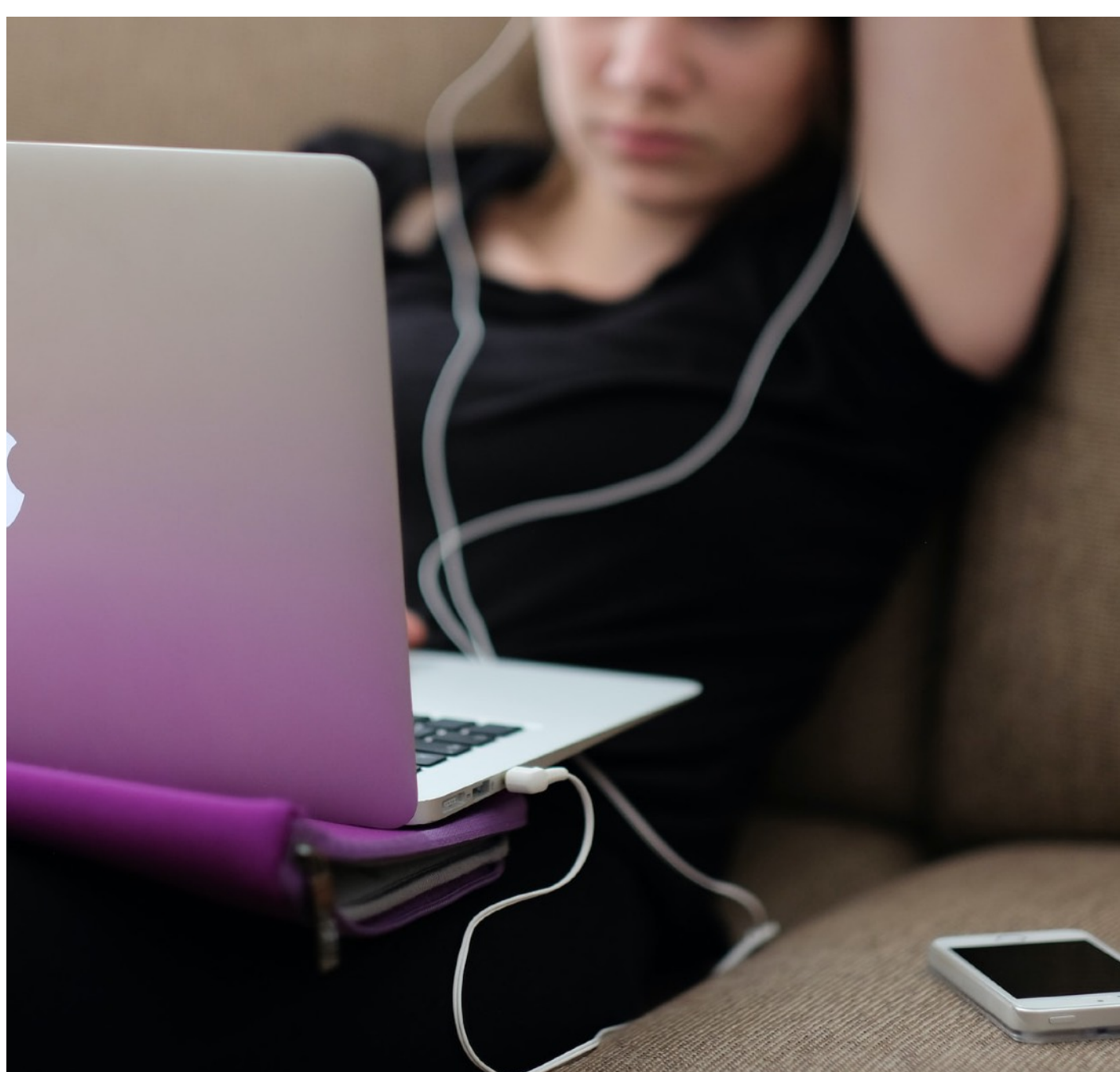
- Depression, loneliness or anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety while on device
- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Missing school, disliking school, or having poorer school performance than previously
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Self-destructive behaviors, such as running away from home or inflicting harm on oneself
- Deactivating online profiles
- Thinking about suicide or attempting to take their own life



20% of students ages 12-18 report having been bullied

While exhibiting one or more of these signs might not necessarily mean that your child is being bullied (or cyberbullied), these are important things to pay attention to if you suspect something is going on.

If you know someone in serious distress or danger, don't ignore the problem. Get help right away. See sections below for what kids, parents, and teachers can do about bullying.



For more on common signs your child is being bullied, check out these articles:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/warning-signs>

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/bullying/conditioninfo/signs/>

Cyberbullying

What is Cyberbullying?

According to the Webster Dictionary, cyberbullying is defined as the electronic posting of mean-spirited messages about a person (such as a student) often done anonymously. The modes of transmission of this type of bullying are through mobile phones or the internet and includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

The Most Common Places Where Cyberbullying Occurs

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices
- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit
- Online gaming communities
- Email

Some Examples of Cyberbullying Include

- Sending threatening or mean messages to someone's phone or email.
- Spreading rumors about another person through the same platforms.
- Posting threats or humiliating messages on a social media profile.
- Using another person's social media account to send cruel or painful messages to another person.
- Taking and sending embarrassing or sexual photos of a person without their consent.

What makes Cyberbullying Different than Other Bullying

According to stopbullying.gov, there are three main concerns that make cyberbullying unique:

Persistent

Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.

Permanent

Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.

Hard to Notice

Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.



Cyberbullying, continued

Signs your Child May Be Cyberbullying Others

Many kids who are cyberbullying may not even realize it. Their intentions may be only to joke or play around and end up hurting someone without realizing it. Kids may be cyberbullying others if they:

- Closes or switches screens when you or someone else comes near
- Has more than one online account
- Has had a history of being bullied or cyberbullied
- Was previously accused of typical bully or a cyber bully

What Can be Done About Cyberbullying?

See later sections in this document for advice on what to do about all types of bullying, including cyberbullying. (Continue reading for sections: “What Parents Can Do”, “What Kids Can Do”, and “What Schools Can Do”)

More Information on Cyberbullying

For more information on cyberbullying, read the links below:

<https://prezzies.com/from-cyberbully-to-thoughtful-parents-guide/>

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>



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Laws & Regulations

Sometimes bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment, which is covered under federal civil rights laws. Learn more about your civil rights.

Federal Laws

Although no federal law directly addresses bullying, in some cases, bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment when it is based on race, national origin, color, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), age, disability, or religion. Federally-funded schools (including colleges and universities) have an obligation to resolve harassment on these bases.

When the situation is not adequately resolved, consider:

- Filing a formal grievance with the school district.
- Contacting the [U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights](#) and the [U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division](#) for help.

Unfortunately, sometimes behaviors can become criminal. For example, when a violent crime or threat to commit such crime is motivated by bias against a person or group with specific characteristics, then it is called a hate crime. According to the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), at the federal level, a hate crime is any crime motivated by bias against race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

For more information about federal laws and bullying:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/federal>

State Laws

For additional information on the common components of state anti-bullying laws, policies and regulations, check out this link:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/key-components>

For a printable chart of state anti-bullying laws and regulations, click here:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/documents/common-components-state-anti-bullying-laws-regulations-by-state.pdf>

LIFETIME IMPACT

Often the effects of bullying can last long after the bullying stops. Some who are bullied never fully recover, and some bullies never stop hurting others. It is important to seek help and take action.



When Your Child Is Doing the Bullying

What if you find out your child is bullying others? Maybe you received a phone call from the school or another parent. Either way, if you think your child is bullying others, it's important to start working with him or her now.

Why Do Kids Bully?

Kids who bully are not necessarily bad kids. According to EmpoweringParents.com, some kids turn to bullying because it solves what they see as their social problems. Essentially, it's easier to bully someone than it is to put the work into solving the problem and managing your own emotions.

Bullying as a Replacement of Social Skills

Often, kids use bullying to replace social skills that they may not have developed yet. As children go through developmental stages, they should be finding ways of working out problems and getting along with other people. This includes learning how to read social situations, make friends, and understand their social environment. Kids who bully use aggression, and some use violence and verbal abuse, to supplant those skills. So in effect, they don't have to learn problem-solving, because they just use brute force or intimidation instead. It becomes their natural response to any situation where they feel socially awkward, insecure, frightened, bored, or embarrassed.

Kids May be Bullying Others When 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



Help! What if my child IS the bully?
What do I do?

Sometimes kids
turn to bullying
to solve what
they see as their
social problems.

When Your Child Is Doing the Bullying, continued

How Can I Work with My Child?

Talking with your child is always the first recommended step. You should make sure they understand what bullying is. Examples of bullying include:

- Forcing other people to do things they don't want to do
- Hitting other people
- Taking or breaking other people's property
- Calling other people names or putting them down

You can set a standard that this kind of behavior is unacceptable and ensure there is a culture of accountability in your home. Teach them what accountability means (even at a young age) and let them know that they are accountable for their actions. Kids who are bullying others at school should also be held accountable at home. It may not be easy for your child, and they may need to have the concept of bullying explained to them multiple times, but they will learn.

Some phrases you can use:

- "We don't do that in our house."
- "You're accountable for that kind of behavior in our house."
- "How should you treat others?"
- "You treat others with respect. If they don't respect you back, walk away. Treating someone with respect means not calling them names, threatening them, or hitting them."
- "Listen to others. Accept others. If they don't want to play with your toys or they don't want to share their things, you have to learn how to accept that."

For the full EmpoweringParents.com article, *What to Do If Your Child Is Bullying Other Kids*:
<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/what-to-do-if-your-child-is-bullying/>



What Parents Can Do

Technology Monitoring

Do you have locks on your front door? An alarm on your home? Do you let strangers in your school? No child should have a device that is not monitored by a parent/guardian and school. It is not a matter of privacy, it is a matter of safety. We recommend Bark Technologies. See below.

Listen to What your Child Has to Say

- Be a good listener.
- Be open and able to hear what they have to say.
- Try to be supportive but neutral when your child is talking. (When you react too strongly to what your child is saying, he might stop talking because he's afraid he's going to upset you).
- The other side of listening is not blaming your child. Don't put the responsibility for the bullying on him or try to find a reason for it; there is no good reason or excuse for what's happening.

One of the best questions you can ask your child is: *“What can I do to be helpful?”*

If You Were Bullied, Try Not to Personalize What is Happening

You may have your own painful memories of being bullied. It's okay to connect with your child about how it feels to be bullied, but don't take the problem on as if it's yours alone. Remember the responses you received from others that were—or weren't—helpful. Use what worked and avoid doing what was unsupportive or hurtful.

Do Not Retaliate Against the Child Doing the Bullying or the Family

It may be tempting to take matters into your own hands, but this is not a good idea. This is where you have to set some examples for your child on how to problem solve. It's very difficult to hear that your child is being bullied. You want to immediately stop the hurt. Remember, retaliating won't help your child solve the problem or feel better about himself. Instead, take a deep breath and think about what you can do to help your child handle what she or he is facing.

Persistent bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.



What Parents Can Do, Continued

Coach your Child on How to React

Kids who bully tend to pick on kids who will give them a reaction. They choose kids who get upset and who take the teasing to heart. They also look for kids who won't stand up for themselves, or who they can overpower. It's important to teach your child how to react.

You can coach your child on how to avoid bullies at school and who to go to if they feel unsafe. You can also role play with your child to practice not reacting to what the bullies say. Even if your child can't make the bullying go away, they can get themselves away from it and find someone to talk to about it.

Find a Teacher or Administrator at Your Child's School Who Will Help

- Remember, it is the school's responsibility to stop bullying and most schools do take it seriously.
- The guidance counselor at your child's school might be a good place to start. Encouraging your child to speak to their guidance counselor on their own might give him or her some agency in taking on the problem. It's a great idea for parents to meet with the guidance counselor as well.
- Ask if there is a safe place your child can go if he or she needs to take a time out or a break to get away. (This may be the guidance counselor's office or another trusted administrator or teacher's office or classroom. This allows your child to have some control over the situation and know that they are not powerless. It shows kids that there are some solutions to the situation and that there is hope).
- Make sure your child keeps talking—whether it's with you, a guidance counselor or a trusted teacher, it's important that they keep communicating about what's going on.

Take Your Child's Side

Make sure to let your child know that you're on his side. Your child needs to understand that you don't blame them and that you will support them. You can let your child know that there is no excuse for what is happening to them. Let your child know that you, as parents, are going to get help and that you love him/her and are going to support him/her.

Teach Your Child to Name What is Happening

For younger kids, it's important to be able to name what's happening as "bullying." For a child who's feeling picked on, it's empowering to be able to really name it.

What Parents Can Do, Continued

Get Support

- Be sure to talk to your spouse or to supportive family or friends. Bullying situations can naturally bring out a lot of emotions from parents. Rely on your support network.
- If parents are married, you may need to talk with your spouse as a couple, without your child around, so that you can be on the same page when communicating with your child.
- If you are a single parent, it is recommended that you reach out to somebody—a family member, friend, or someone at the school—anyone who can help you help your child.
- No matter what your marital status, it may be helpful to reach out to fellow parents - friends and colleagues - and ask how they handled it when it happened to their kids. If nothing else, it may help you feel like you aren't alone and that there wasn't anything wrong with your child.

Find Something Your Child is Really Good at Doing

Help your child feel good about him or herself by finding something they can do well. Choose some activities they're good at and reinforce it verbally. Every time he or she succeeds, it helps them develop better self-esteem, which is the opposite of how bullies make them feel.

Keep a Log of Bullying Situations and All Discussions

When keeping a log, be as specific as possible. Be sure to take screen shots of cyberbullying instances that may be deleted.

- Who was involved and who did you report it to?
- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it occur?
- Agendas and outcomes of meetings
- Your child's reaction to the situation

If a severe threat is ever directed at your child, notify the school and/or contact the police.

If you or your child see a severe threat online directed to someone else, take a screenshot and notify the parent and school immediately.

For the full EmpoweringParents.com article, *Is Your Child Being Bullied? 9 Steps You Can Take as a Parent*: <https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/is-your-child-being-bullied-9-steps-you-can-take-as-a-parent/>



Keep a detailed log of all bullying activity and take screenshots of cyberbullying instances.

What Kids Can Do

Treat Everyone with Respect

No one should be mean to others.

- Stop and think before you say or do something that could hurt someone.
- If you feel like being mean to someone, find something else to do. Play a game, watch TV, or talk to a friend.
- Talk to an adult you trust. They can help you find ways to be nicer to others.
- Keep in mind that everyone is different. Not better or worse. Just different.
- If you think you have bullied someone in the past, apologize. Everyone feels better.

What to Do If You Are Being Bullied

There are things you can do if you are being bullied:

- Look at the kid bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice. You can also try to laugh it off. This works best if joking is easy for you. It could catch the kid bullying you off guard.
- If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away. Don't fight back. Find an adult to stop the bullying on the spot.
- Additional ideas of what to do: <https://www.manateeschools.net/cms/lib/FL02202357/Centricity/Domain/2425/Tip%20Sheet%20for%20Coping%20with%20Any%20Sort%20of%20Bully.pdf>

How to Stay Safe from Bullying

There are things you can do to stay safe in the future, too.

- Talk to an adult you trust. Don't keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone. They can help you make a plan to stop the bullying.
- Stay away from places where bullying happens.
- Stay near adults and other kids. Most bullying happens when adults aren't around.

Protect Yourself from Cyberbullying

Bullying does not always happen in person. Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens online or through text messages or emails. There are things you can do to protect yourself.

- Always think about what you post. You never know what someone will forward. Being kind to others online will help to keep you safe. Do not share anything that could hurt or embarrass anyone.
- Keep your password a secret from other kids. Even kids that seem like friends could give your password away or use it in ways you don't want. Let your parents have your passwords.
- Think about who sees what you post online. Complete strangers? Friends? Friends of friends? Privacy settings let you control who sees what.
- Keep your parents in the loop. Tell them what you're doing online and who you're doing it with. Let them friend or follow you. Listen to what they have to say about what is and isn't okay to do. They care about you and want you to be safe.
- Talk to an adult you trust about any messages you get or things you see online that make you sad or scared. If it is cyberbullying, report it.

What Kids Can Do, continued

Be an Upstander

In a bullying situation, an upstander is someone who sees a problem and takes action. An upstander does not join in when someone is being bullied. Instead an upstander gets help from a trusted adult and supports the child being bullied in walking away. Sometimes they even stand up to the bully themselves. On the other hand, a bystander is someone who knows the bullying is happening, but does nothing to stop it. Bystanders often join in, or laugh at what is happening to avoid peer rejection or getting bullied themselves. Being a bystander can encourage bullying because it shows that a bully's actions are socially acceptable. Be an upstander, not a bystander.

Things an Upstander Can Do

There are many ways to start becoming an upstander and help stop the bullying that is happening in front of us. Below is a list of ways that an upstander can take action.

- An upstander may directly tell a bully to stop his or her actions.
- Some upstanders create groups of people to stand up to bullies.
- An upstander is someone who will connect with the one being bullied, providing a support system, while ignoring the bully's words, threats, and actions.
- Some upstanders can be successful in stopping bullying by diverting the bully's attention to something other than the victim. For example, they may bring up a new movie or a video game and start a new discussion.
- Upstanders can form anti-bullying and support groups for victims of bullying and bring awareness to other people about bullying issues in their community.
- An upstander will know they can always find a trusted adult, even if they feel they can't personally be involved in the issue, to help the person who is being bullied.

Additional Resources

For More On What Kids Can Do: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/kids>

For More On What Teens Can Do: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/teens>

For More On Being an Upstander: <https://www.bark.us/blog/what-is-an-upstander-how-to-be-one/>

Videos for Students:

Feet On the Line <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdC7iBpD8Sk>

Cyberbullying in Online Games <https://whatsyourstory.trendmicro.com/blog/entry/1-9be40/>

UPSTANDER:

A person who speaks or acts in support of another, particularly on behalf of someone who is being attacked or bullied.



What Schools Can Do

The best way to stop any and all types of bullying is to address it before it starts. Bullying can threaten students' physical and emotional safety at school and make it nearly impossible for them to learn. The good news is that training school staff AND students to prevent and address bullying has been successful. Although there are no federal mandates for bullying curricula or staff training, ALL states do have laws requiring schools to respond to bullying. Many states now include cyberbullying in their laws as well. You can learn about the laws and policies in each state, including if they cover cyberbullying, here:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws>

Activities to Teach Students About Bullying

Incorporating the topic of bullying prevention in lessons and activities is a simple way to help students learn about bullying prevention. Schools don't always need a more formal program. Examples of activities include:

- Research project: Internet or library research such as looking up the types of bullying, how to prevent it, and how kids should respond.
- Presentation: Have students write a speech or role-play on stopping bullying.
- Open discussion: Have classroom discussions about topics like reporting bullying.
- Creative writing: Students could write a poem speaking out against bullying, or a story or skit teaching bystanders how to help.
- Art: Artistic works, such as a collage, about respect or the effects of bullying.
- Classroom meetings: These should be a welcoming space 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, linked here: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/2017-10/misdirections-in-prevention.pdf>.

Programs to assist your school.

Cyber Safety Consulting, Liz Repking: <http://cybersafetyconsulting.com>

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: <http://www.clemson.edu/olweus>

The Bully Free Program: <http://bullyfree.com>



What Schools Can Do, continued

Staff Training on Bullying Prevention

To ensure that bullying prevention efforts are successful, all school staff need 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 are 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.

Below are some resources to help with the specific types of training mentioned above:

- What bullying is: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying>
- Guidance for school policy: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/rules>
- How to enforce the rules: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/on-the-spot>

How To Respond to Bullying

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 (robbery or extortion—using force to get money, property, or services.)

More help: Step-by-step for various scenarios: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now>
<https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school> <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>

