



BULLYING PREVENTION: PARENT GUIDE



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated overtime.

TYPES OF BULLYING



Verbal bullying: saying or writing mean things to include teasing, name calling, taunting, threatening to cause harm.



Social bullying: involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships to include leaving someone out on purpose, spreading rumors about someone or embarrassing someone in public.



Physical bullying: involves hurting a person's body or possessions to include hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping/pushing, and taking or breaking someone's things.

WARNING SIGNS OF BULLYING

Not all children show warning signs, but if you notice the following, it might be that they are being bullied:

- Your child has unexplainable injuries
- They "lose" or have destroyed clothing, books, or electronics
- If they have frequent headaches or stomach aches, or often feel sick or fake illness
- If you notice changes in their eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating
- If they have difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- If they have declining grades
- If they have lost interest in schoolwork or don't want to go to school
- If they have sudden loss of friends or avoid social situations
- If they have feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- If they have self-destructive behaviors, such as running away from home, harming themselves or talking about suicide.

WARNING SIGNS OF CYBERBULLYING

Many of the warning signs that your child is experiencing cyberbullying can be seen in how they use their device. Their behavior may change. For instance, you may notice increases or decreases in their device use. Other signs of cyberbullying are that their social media accounts are shut down and new ones appear. Your child may start to avoid social situations. They may become withdrawn or depressed or lose interest in people and activities.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP PREVENT BULLYING

Help your child understand bullying by talking about what it is and how to stand up to it safely. Ask questions about bullying they may have witnessed, experienced, or heard about. Keep the lines of communication open and check in with your child often. Know their friends, ask about school and understand their concerns. Prepare them for what to do if bullying happens to them and know who to contact at the school when bullying happens.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

The digital world is constantly evolving with new social media platforms, apps, and devices and children and teens are often the first to use them. Common types of cyberbullying are posting hateful, mean or derogatory messages or content and participating in negative group conversations. Here are things you can do to prevent cyber bullying and protect your child from harmful digital behavior:

- Monitor a teen's social media sites, apps, and browsing history.
- Review or reset your child's phone location and privacy settings.
- Follow or friend your teen on social media or have another trusted adult do so.
- Stay up to date on the latest apps, social media, and digital slang used by children and teens.
- Know your child's user names and passwords for email and social media.
- Establish rules about appropriate digital behavior, content, and apps.
- Use parental monitoring software to restrict content, block domains, or view your child's online activities without looking at their device every day.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL'S BULLYING PREVENTION POLICIES

State laws, policies and regulations have been put in place to protect children from bullying and cyberbullying. Tennessee has laws regarding school districts adopting a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying as well as procedures for reporting and investigating harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying.

Ask your child's school what their bullying and cyberbullying policies and rules are. Most schools provide this information in the student handbook that is available at the beginning of the school year. Knowing how the school handles bullying will help you take the right action if your child is involved.



ACTIONS TO TAKE IF YOUR CHILD IS EXPERIENCING BULLYING

- Listen and focus on your child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help.
- Assure them that bullying is not their fault.
- Consider referring them to a school counselor, psychologist, or other mental health service since some children who are bullied may struggle with talking about it.
- Give advice about what to do. This may involve role-playing or thinking through how your child might react if bullying occurs again.
- Work together to resolve the situation. Your child, other parents, and the school may have valuable input. It may help to:
 - Ask your child what can be done to make them feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. Your child is not at fault and should not be singled out in school settings.
 - Develop a game plan. Work with the school. 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.
- Keep in mind the following:
 - Never tell the child to ignore bullying.
 - Don't blame your child for being bullied. Even if they provoked the bullying, no one deserves to be bullied.
 - Don't tell your child to physically fight back against the one who is bullying. It could get your child hurt, suspended, or expelled.
 - Don't contact the other parents involved. It may make matters worse. School or other officials may act as mediators between parents.



ACTIONS TO TAKE IF YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

- Talk about it. Make sure your child knows what their problem behavior is, and why and how their behavior is wrong and harms others.
- Show them that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell your child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- Work with your child to understand some of the reasons they bullied. For example:
 - Sometimes children bully to fit in. They could benefit from participating in positive activities such as sports and clubs that enable them to take leadership roles and make friends without feeling the need to bully.
 - Other times, children act out because of something else going on in their lives like issues at home, school, abuse, or stress. They may also have been bullied. Ask a professional if your child needs additional support to help them cope.
- Work with the school to develop appropriate consequences that help your child learn empathy and repair the situation.
- State approval of the victim and validate his or her social status.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Stop Bullying.gov: [StopBullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov)
- Be someone's Hero: [Be Someone's Hero - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- CDC Preventing Bullying: [About Bullying | Youth Violence Prevention | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/...)
- SchoolSafety.gov: [Bullying and Cyberbullying | SchoolSafety.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.gov/...)



Safe and Sound Schools
www.safeandsoundschools.org