

Parent Tips

Protect with Respect

What Parents Should Know About Bullying



What is Bullying?

The Pinellas County Schools Policy against Bullying and Harassment defines bullying as: Systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees.

In bullying situations there are always 3 key elements present:

- Imbalance of Power
- Intent to Harm
- Repeated Behavior

There are 4 different types of bullying.

- **Physical** –Harm to another's person or property
- **Verbal** – Taunting, teasing, extortion or threats
- **Relational Aggression** – Harm to another's self esteem or group acceptance
- **Sexual Harassment** – Inappropriate sexual comments, gestures, or behaviors
- **Cyberbullying** –Using technology to intimidate or harass another person

Important Facts to Know

- Bullying is not normal play
- It will probably not go away by itself, it usually becomes more serious if ignored
- Bullying can leave physical and emotional scars
- Bullying behavior interferes with a child's ability to learn
- Both boys and girls bully
- The number one reason children do not report bullying is that they do not believe that adults will do anything

Consequences of bullying go beyond the schoolroom doors. Not only does bullying jeopardize the physical and emotional safety of children at school, it can have lasting effects on all children involved. Children who bully are at an increased risk of substance abuse, academic problems, and trouble with the law. Children who are bullied may suffer from low self-esteem, social isolation, academic problems, substance abuse, depression, and may resort to violence or suicide.

You can help prevent bullying! Research shows that bullying incidents can be decreased with intervention. By recognizing the warning signs and taking action you can help prevent bullying and help your child stay safe.

Is My Child Bullying Others?

A child who bullies others may exhibit some of the following behaviors:

- Frequent name calling and put downs
- Lack of empathy for others
- Desire to have power over others
- Disrespect for authority and rules
- Easily offended or angered

What Can I Do?


- Stay calm
- Focus on how to help your child learn positive behaviors
- Make it clear to your child that bullying behavior is unacceptable
- Use consistent, respectful discipline; hold your child responsible for hurtful behavior and help your child understand the consequences of his or her actions
- Monitor the amount of aggression your child is exposed to through toys, games, and television shows
- Help your child see other points of view
- Spend quality time with your child and be a positive role model
- Talk with your child's teacher about ways to redirect your child to more positive behaviors and healthy friendships

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• Studies indicate that children who bully may have been
• taught that physical fighting is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts
• harshly disciplined or not disciplined at all
• victims of bullying themselves
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Is My Child Being Bullied?

A victim of bullying may exhibit some of the following behaviors:

- Lonely, withdrawn or isolated
- Lacks social skills
- Has few friends
- Sudden changes in attendance or school performance
- Loss of interest in school
- Does not stand up for or defend himself or herself
- Prefers the company of adults
- Unexplained scratches, bruises, or damage to clothing
- Nervous, anxious, worried, fearful
- Suddenly starts bullying others

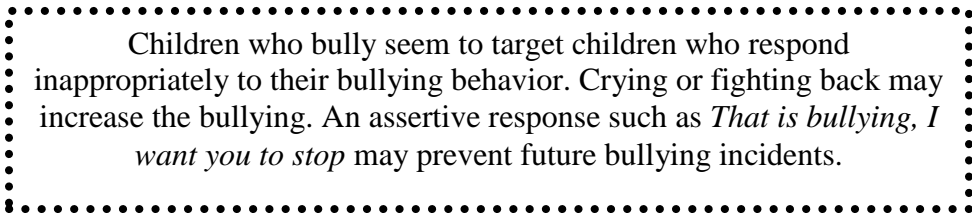


About 1 in 5
children has been
the victim of
bullying

What Can I Do?

Children who are bullied may feel embarrassed, ashamed or afraid. They may also feel that they should be able to solve the problem on their own. Many will not tell an adult about what is happening. If you suspect that your child is being bullied at school, ask your child! If your child does tell you about being bullied, believe your child, investigate patiently, and offer support.

- Let your child know that you are pleased they have told you, that you believe in them, and that it is not their fault
- Reassure your child that you will help him or her
- Investigate the situation by asking questions about what has been happening
- Brainstorm ways to solve the problem
- Role-play assertiveness and friendship skills with your child
- Instruct your child not to fight back
- Avoid confronting the child who is bullying or his/her parents; this could make things worse
- Develop a safety plan with your child that includes trusted adults your child can turn to for help
- Spend quality time with your child and be a positive role model
- Contact the school as soon as possible



Children who bully seem to target children who respond inappropriately to their bullying behavior. Crying or fighting back may increase the bullying. An assertive response such as *That is bullying, I want you to stop* may prevent future bullying incidents.

Tips for meeting with your child's teacher about a bullying situation

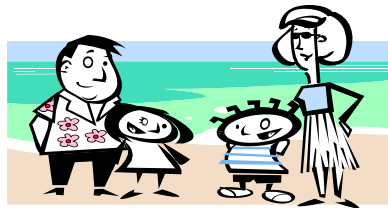
- Bring written records of what your child has told you about the bullying situation
- Ask for the teacher's perspective; remember bullying generally does not occur in front of an adult so the teacher may not be aware of what has been happening
- Ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy
- Ask for the specific actions that will be taken to monitor your child's safety and to stop the bullying behavior
- Seek resources for helping your child develop assertiveness skills for dealing with bullying behavior
- Keep the lines of communication with the school open to monitor progress on the situation

What is Sibling Bullying?

There is a difference between normal sibling conflict and sibling abuse. Interaction between siblings should be considered bullying if

- one child is consistently and intentionally hurting the other
- either sibling feels powerless to stop the interaction
- when the negative interaction persist over a period of time
- one sibling appears to have more control than the other

Playful teasing occurs when both people involved are having fun. This becomes bullying when one person is no longer having fun. Keep in mind - behavior that would be unacceptable between two unrelated children is unacceptable between siblings.



Bullying/Harassment at school can be reported:

- Verbally or in writing to the principal or the principal's designee
- Anonymously using the designated anonymous reporting procedure at each school or by going to <http://bullying.pcsb.org>, or <http://harassment.pcsb.org> or by calling the Campus Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-873-8477 or Text keyword TIP144 plus your message to CRIMES(274637)

For more information about bullying prevention and intervention please contact Joan Reubens, Bullying Prevention Specialist, for Pinellas County Schools at 588-6348 or reubensj@pcsb.org or visit the Prevention Office at www.pcsb.org or the National Stop Bullying Campaign website at www.stopbullying.gov.

