

Good to Know

When Your Child or Youth is Bullied

Kids will be kids. They may pick on one another or play tricks on one another. But there comes a time when it crosses a line; and then it becomes bullying.



What Is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, forceful behavior that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power (Someone has or pretends to have power over someone else):** Kids who bully use their power, such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity, to control or harm others.
- **Repetition (Repeated over and over):** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

3 Types of Bullying

Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. This may include:

- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Sexual comments
- Threatening to cause harm

Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. This may include:

- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Telling other children not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. This may include:

- Hitting/kicking/pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things



Who Gets Bullied?

We know that any child or youth can be bullied. But it is often those children and youth that may seem different from others their age, 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". Some of those bullied are less popular than others and have few friends or do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention.

TENNESSEE BULLYING LAWS & POLICIES

In Tennessee harassment (pestering), intimidation (pressuring) or bullying means **any act** that interferes with a student's education, opportunities or performance; and if the act takes place on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided equipment or transportation or at any official school bus stop. This includes cyber-bullying using electronic devices. Laws and policies are in place to protect the student if the action could:

- Physically harm a student or damage a student's property;
- Place a student or students in reasonable fear of physical harm or do damage to the student's property;
- Cause emotional pain to a student or students; or
- Create an unfriendly educational situation.

These laws and policies are also in effect if the act takes place off school property or outside of a school-sponsored activity and is directed at a student or students and can create a bad school learning setting or create a disturbance to the education of the student or learning process.

All Tennessee school districts are required to adopt a policy banning harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying. District policies must contain, but not limited to:

- Statements banning harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying;
- Definitions of the banned behavior and where and when the policy applies;
- How to report the bullying and how it will be investigated;
- Statements of what will happen for a violation of the policy;
- Statements of how students, their families, and the community will know about the policy; and The process for getting students counseling and support services.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

When adults respond quickly to bullying, they send the message that it is not acceptable. Quick responses can also stop bullying behavior over time. Parents, school staff, students, and other adults in can help kids prevent bullying by talking about it, making schools safe, and sending the message that bullying will not be allowed in the community. They can:

- Help kids understand bullying by talking about what it is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is not allowed. Make sure kids know how to get help if they are bullied.
- Check in with kids often and believe what they say until it is proven otherwise. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage kids to do what they love such as special activities, interests, and hobbies where they can meet others that have similar interests.

Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

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IF YOUR CHILD TELLS YOU THEY ARE BEING BULLIED

Get the Facts

Collect all available information. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple students are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyberbullying.

Listen without blaming. And do not call the act “bullying” while you are trying to understand what happened. 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.

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?

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.



FOR MORE INFORMATION...

StopBullying.gov

StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.

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

Cybersmile

The Cybersmile Foundation is a anti-cyberbullying nonprofit organization committed to tackling all forms of digital abuse, harassment and bullying online. Through education, innovative awareness campaigns and the promotion of positive digital citizenship we reduce incidents of cyberbullying and through our professional help and support services we empower victims and their families to regain control of their lives.

<https://www.cybersmile.org/advice-help/category/who-to-call>

Put A Stop To Bullying

The Bullying Prevention Hub is a resource for teens, parents and educators seeking support and help for issues related to bullying and other conflicts. It offers step-by-step plans, including guidance on how to start some important conversations for people being bullied, parents who have had a child being bullied or accused of bullying, and educators who have had students involved with bullying.

<https://www.facebook.com/safety/bullying>

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