

For Parents and Families: How to Talk with Educators at Your Child's School About Bullying

Parents are often reluctant to report to educators that their child is being bullied. Why?

- Parents may be unsure how best to help their child and may be afraid that they will make the situation worse if they report bullying.
- They may be embarrassed that their child is being bullied.
- Sometimes, children ask parents not to report bullying.
- Parents may fear being seen as overprotective.
- They may believe that it is up to their child to stop the bullying.

Children and youth often need help to stop bullying. Parents should never be afraid to call the school to report that their child is being bullied and ask for help to stop the bullying. Students should not have to tolerate bullying at school any more than adults would tolerate similar treatment at work.

THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY

All children are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment by students and staff at school. Educators have a duty to ensure that students have a safe learning environment. Fortunately, most educators take their responsibilities to stop bullying very seriously. Several states have passed anti-bullying laws and require public schools to have an anti-bullying program in place. Ask for a copy of your school's policy or check the student handbook to see if your school has policies that will help resolve the problem.

WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

If your child tells you that he or she has been bullied or if you suspect that is the case, what can you do?

- Keep a written record of all bullying incidents that your child reports to you. Record the names of the children involved, the date the bullying occurred, and what happened.
- Immediately ask to meet with your child's classroom teacher and explain your concerns in a friendly, non-confrontational way.
- Ask the teacher about his or her observations.
- Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying?
- How is your child getting along with others in class?
- Has he or she noticed that your child is being isolated, excluded from playground or other activities with students?
- Ask the teacher what he or she intends to do to investigate and/or help to stop the bullying.
- If you are concerned about how your child is coping with the stress of being bullied, ask to speak with your child's guidance counselor or other school-based mental health professional.
- Set up a follow-up appointment with the teacher (perhaps in a week) to discuss progress.
- If there is no improvement after reporting bullying to your child's teacher, speak with the school principal.
- Keep notes from your meetings with teachers and administrators.