

# Bullying Abuse: Information for Parents

## What is Bullying Abuse?

- Bullying abuse is a form of aggressive behavior that is intended to cause harm. There is an imbalance of power between the peer (or group of peers) bullying and the target. Bullying usually happens over and over.<sup>1</sup>
- Bullying abuse can take both direct and indirect forms, including:
  - Physical bullying (hitting, kicking, shoving)
  - Verbal bullying (making offensive remarks, name calling, threats)
  - Relational bullying (ganging up, spreading rumors, gossiping)
  - Cyberbullying (harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, electronic means)<sup>2</sup>
- Bullying abuse is not conflict, where two parties have a disagreement or misunderstanding. It is also different from playful teasing or rough-and-tumble play, which is a give-and-take where both people see it as fun and good-natured.

## Who is Impacted by Bullying?

- Bullying impacts people across gender, age, and nationality, although it tends to peak in middle school and when children transition to new schools.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Across grade levels, approximately one in five children and adolescents are victims of bullying. One in three middle and high school students report bullying others or being the victims of bullying.<sup>5</sup>
- Children can be bullied for almost anything that makes them perceived as being different or vulnerable. Examples include physical appearance, ability level, perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, income level, or religion, among other things.
- Individuals who are bullied are more likely to become depressed, anxious, avoid or miss school, and have thoughts of suicide.<sup>2,6</sup>
- People who bully others are more likely to engage in other problem behaviors (alcohol and drug use, aggressive behavior), have criminal difficulties in later life, and have relationship problems.<sup>7</sup>

## What are Some Signs that a Child May be Bullying Others?<sup>1</sup>

- Refers to others negatively (wimp, loser)
- Lacks empathy
- Strong need to get his or her own way
- Hostile/defiant attitude
- Angers easily
- Denies involvement or blames others when behavior is addressed

## What are Some Signs that a Child May be Bullied?<sup>1</sup>

- Change in behavior
  - Not interested in doing things that he/she used to like doing
  - Withdrawn
- Not wanting to go to school or be in social situations
- Unexplained illnesses, cuts, or bruises
- Most children who are bullied tend to be passive and lack assertiveness. A smaller number engage in offensive or irritating behaviors that may make the bullying worse.

## What can Parents do to Prevent Bullying?<sup>8</sup>

- Be a positive role model.
  - Talk with and listen to your child.
  - Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Get involved in school, community, and at home.
- Know the school's policies in terms of bullying prevention and intervention.
- Teach children good habits early and consistently.
  - High expectations for behavior and low tolerance for being mean
- Teach responsible use of technology; supervise and limit electronic activities.
  - For example, have computers in common areas (not bedrooms), know child's password, be their friend on Facebook, and bring cell phones and computers into the parents' room to charge overnight.

## What Parents can do if Their Child is being Bullied<sup>8</sup>

- Listen and empathize (for example, "Tell me what happened, that must have been very scary for you.")
  - Take it seriously.
- Work with child to find out more about situation and problem-solve.
- Work in partnership with school and with outside professionals as needed.

## Local Resources for Families and Students in Crisis

Family Support Centers: (716) 892-2172 | [www.joanamale.org](http://www.joanamale.org)

Prevention Focus/Teen Focus: (716) 884-3256 | [www.pfocus.org](http://www.pfocus.org)

Catholic Charities: (716) 218-1400 | [www.ccwny.org](http://www.ccwny.org)

Buffalo Crisis Services Hotline: 716-834-1144 or 1-800-KIDS-400

## References

[1] [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)

[2] Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. W. (2009). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[3] Espelage, D. L., Bosworth, K., & Simon, T. R. (2000). Examining the social context of bullying behaviors in early adolescence. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78, 326-333.

[4] Eslea, M., & Rees, J. (2001). At what age are children most likely to be bullied at school? *Aggressive Behavior*, 27, 419-429.

[5] Robers, S., Zhang, J., & Truman, J. (2010). *Indicators of school crime and safety*. Jessup, MD: National Center for Education Statistics.

[6] Nickerson, A. B., & Slater, E. D. (2009). School and community violence and victimization as predictors of suicidal behavior for adolescents. *School Psychology Review*, 38, 218-232.

[7] Farrington, D.P. & Ttofi, M.M. (2011). Bullying as a predictor of offending, violence and later life outcomes. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 21, 90 - 98.

[8] Hymel, S., Nickerson, A., & Swearer, S. (2012). *Bullying at school and online*. [www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/](http://www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/)