

What can parents and caregivers do about bullying?

What Should I Do If My Child is Bullying Others?

- To stop bullying, make it clear to your child that you take bullying seriously and that you will not tolerate this behavior.
- Develop clear and consistent rules within your family for your children's behavior. Praise and reinforce your children for following rules, and use non-physical, non-hostile consequences for rule violations.
- Spend more time with your child and carefully supervise and monitor his or her activities. Find out who your child's friends are and how and where they spend free time.
- Build on your child's talents by encouraging him or her to get involved in pro-social activities (such as clubs, music lessons, or non-violent sports).
- Share your concerns with your child's teacher, counselor, or principal. Work together to send clear messages to your child that his or her bullying must stop.
- If you or your child needs additional help, talk with a school counselor or mental health professional.

What Should I Do If I Think My Child is Being Bullied?

First, focus on your child. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying.

- Take them seriously. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.
- Listen carefully to what your child tells you about the bullying. Ask him or her to describe who was involved and how and where each bullying episode happened. Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics used, and when and where the bullying happened. If possible, have your child name others who may have witnessed the bullying.
- Empathize with your child. Tell him or her that bullying is wrong, not his or her fault, and that you are glad he or she had the courage to tell you about it. Ask your child what he or she thinks can be done to help. Assure him or her that you will think about what needs to be done and you will let him or her know what you are going to do.
- Discourage physical retaliation ("Just hit them back") as a solution. Hitting another student is not likely to end the problem, and it could get your child suspended or expelled or escalate the situation.
- Check your emotions. A parent's protective instincts stir strong emotions. Step back and carefully consider the next steps.

Contact your child's teacher or principal.

- Parents are often reluctant to report bullying to school officials, but bullying might not stop without the help of adults. Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child's teacher. He or she will probably be in the best position to understand the relationships between your child and his or her peers at school. Keep your emotions in check. Give factual

information about your child's experience of being bullied, including the who, what, when, where, and how of your concerns.

- Ask the teacher to talk with other adults who interact with your child at school (such as the music teacher, physical education teacher, or bus driver) to see whether they have observed students bullying your child. Emphasize that you want to work with the staff at school to find a solution to stop the bullying, for the sake of your child as well as other students. Schools can develop policies to create a caring environment and employ evidence-based strategies to prevent bullying.
- If you are not comfortable talking with your child's teacher, or if you are not satisfied with the conversation, make an appointment to meet with your child's school counselor or principal to discuss your concerns.
- Make sure that school officials contact the parents of the child or children who did the bullying (if appropriate).
- Commit to making the bullying stop. Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see whether the bullying has stopped. If the bullying persists, contact school authorities again.
- Request a copy of the school district's policy against harassment, intimidation and bullying and review it with the appropriate school administrator to ensure that they are following their policy.

Help your child become more resistant to bullying.

- Help to develop the talents or positive attributes of your child. Suggest and facilitate music, athletics, and art activities. Doing so may help your child be more confident among his or her peers.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in his or her class. Your child's teacher(s) may be able to suggest students with whom your child can make friends, spend time, or collaborate on work. Help your child meet new friends outside of the school environment. A new environment can provide a "fresh start" for a child who has been repeatedly bullied.
- Teach your child safety strategies. Teach him or her how to seek help from an adult when feeling threatened by a bully. Talk about whom he or she should go to for help and role play what he or she should say. Assure your child that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling.
- Consider if your child is being bullied because of a learning difficulty or a lack of social skills. If needed, seek help from a counselor to help your child develop coping and social skills.
- Model "active listening" skills to demonstrate and maintain open lines of communication with your child.

*From [BullyingInfo.org](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov) (in [FindYouthInfo.gov](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov)) –
http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic_bullying_whatCanParentsDo.shtml*