

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Bullying and Bullying Prevention Information for Parents and Caregivers

Definition

Bullying may be physical or verbal. Teasing, ignoring, and intentionally hurting another child are all types of bullying. Harassment and sexual harassment are also considered forms of bullying. Bullies may be large and aggressive, but they also could be small and cunning. Victims of bullying have poor self-confidence and typically react to threats by avoiding the bully. Both bullies and their victims make up a fringe group within schools. Those children who bully want power over others. Both bullies and their victims feel insecure in school. Boys typically bully by using physical intimidation; girls bully in a less obvious manner by using social intimidation to exclude others from peer interactions.

Why do we care?

When compared to their developmental peers:

Bullies:

- Children who bully their peers are more likely to engage in criminal activity as adults.
- Children who bully their peers are less likely to do well in school.

Children who are bullied:

- Children bullied by their peers are more likely to show signs of depression.
- Children bullied by their peers are less likely to be accepted by classmates.
- Children bullied by their peers are more likely to bring a weapon with them to school.

What can we do about it?

- **Know your child's routines and pay attention to any changes to that routine.** Do they arrive home later than usual? Do they take alternate routes to school (in order to avoid confrontation with a bully)? Do they appear more overwhelmed or sad?
- **Maintain close contact with teachers to see if your child avoids certain classes or school settings.** This may also help you to understand bullying.
- **Empower your child by showing them how much you value them.** Spend time talking with them about their own personal self-worth and the importance of sticking up for themselves.
- **Help them understand the difference between aggression and passive communication by showing them different examples of each.** Ask your school psychologist or social worker to explain the difference forms of communication: aggressive (typical of bullying), passive (typical of bullying victims), and assertive (most effective means of communication).
- **Discuss with your child the pitfalls of being a bully.** Mention to them the possibility of retaliation and how it can have serious, life-threatening consequences (i.e., shootings, stabbings, etc.).
- **Become familiar with the bullying prevention curriculum in your child's school.** For example, in Maryland, state law requires that all public schools include a bullying prevention component within their curriculum. See Maryland State Department of Education website for more information:
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/student_services_alt/bullying/

Helpful Forms and Handouts

- AACAP Facts for Families - Bullying: <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/80.htm>.
- Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System – Bullying, Information for Parents and Teachers: <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/bully.htm>.
- Stop Bullying Packet: <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/assets/downloads/ksstopbullying.pdf>.
- Bullying Fact Sheet: <http://www.childline.org.uk/pdfs/info-bullying-parents.pdf>.

Additional Resources

- Cohen, A., & Canter, A. (2003). Bullying: Facts for parents and teachers. *National Association of School Psychologists*. Retrieved February 10, 2006 from NASP website
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying_fs.aspx.
- Levy, B.M. (2004). Name calling and teasing: Strategies for parents and teachers. *National Association of School Psychologists*. Retrieved February 10, 2006 from NASP website
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/name-calling%20template%209_04.pdf.
- Sassu ,K.A., Elinoff, M.J., Bray, M.A., & Kehle, T.J. Bullies and victims: Information for parents. *National Association of School Psychologists*. Retrieved February 8, 2008 from NASP website
http://www.naspcenter.org/pdf/bullying%20template%209_04.pdf.

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