



## BULLYING PREVENTION

Please click on any of the links below to go directly to your specified topic within this document.

[Different Kinds of Bullying](#)

[How Parents Can Help](#)

[Proactive Measures to Prevent Bullying](#)

[Anti-Bullying Program and Acts](#)

[Bullying Facts in Canada](#)

[The Whole School Approach](#)

[The Comprehensive Community Approach](#)

[Legislative Assembly of Ontario - Bill 14, Anti-Bullying Act, 2012](#)



### When the Bullying Cycle Starts

The cycle of bullying often starts between the ages of 4 and 11 when children are forming their own social identities at school and through other community activities. It's very important to teach your children that bullying is not a normal part of growing up. Bullying needs to be dealt with immediately by adults who are willing to recognize there is a problem, and have the initiative to take whatever steps are necessary to stop it from occurring again.

Bullying has had increasingly high profile within the media in recent years as people have come to understand how deeply it can affect children and how tragic the consequences can sometimes be. The recent suicides of several bullied kids have caused parents to be highly concerned about their children. While there is no way to control what other children say or do to your child, there are ways to help your child deal with them. Bullying is defined as "wilful, repeated aggressive behaviour with negative intent used by a child to maintain power over another child." The result is "a victimized child caught in an abusive relationship."

### Different Kinds of Bullying

**Physical:** hitting, kicking, punching, pushing, shoving and stealing

**Psychological – Verbal:** insults, name calling, threats, comments about how someone looks or talks, comments about someone's ethnic background (culture, colour and religion)

**Psychological – Social:** gossiping, spreading rumours, ignoring, not including someone in group activities

## Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is the use of email, cell phones, blogs, text messages, Internet sites and chat rooms to physically threaten, verbally harass or socially exclude an individual or group. Social media technologies often allow bullies to remain anonymous while distributing damaging messages and pictures to a widespread audience. The results from any of the above listed bullying traits can:



- ➡ Hurt a child's body and/or damage their belongings (clothes, toys, etc.)
- ➡ Make a child feel badly about himself/herself
- ➡ Make a child feel inferior to their peers
- ➡ Make a child feel alone and not part of the group



## How Parents Can Help

Bullying is a power struggle that is difficult to resolve without the help of an adult. In most cases, it requires only a few minutes of intervention to stop, especially if adults act immediately and in a consistent manner. If you are present when bullying occurs, talk to the children who are being aggressive and explain the hurt they are causing.

Teaching them the importance of making amends to those who were harmed can break the hurtful cycle.

If your child comes to you for help with a bullying situation, listen carefully and take your children's words seriously even if it seems trivial, such as name-calling. Children usually go to adults with these problems only as a last resort. They may need reassurance as well as practical advice. Use your judgment about the circumstances and get as many details as you can. Here are some recommendations.

1. Stay calm. Try **not to** show that you are upset. Anger can make things worse.
2. Teach your children to set boundaries by placing their hands up in front of them and say in a clear, calm, firm voice, "Stop!" Coach children to hold their bodies tall, look directly at the problem with a calm face, and use a clear voice that is not whiney or aggressive.
3. If you are being bullied, find an adult you trust and tell the adult what happened. It is your right to be safe.
4. If you are afraid to tell an adult then ask a friend to go with you.
5. Stay close to friends or children you know will stick up for you.
6. Stay away from places where you know bullying happens.
7. If bullying continues, walk away and join the other children or ask someone for help.

## If your child sees someone else being bullied:

1. Speak UP! You can help by telling the bully to stop. Nobody deserves to be bullied.
2. If you are afraid to speak up alone, ask a friend or many friends to do it with you.
3. Comfort the person who was hurt and tell them they don't deserve what happened.
4. If you are afraid, or if telling the person to stop bullying doesn't work, find an adult that you trust to help you.
5. Help children who are bullied by inviting them to participate in your school and afterschool activities. This very kind act will help them feel like they are not alone.



## Assurances you can give your children:

- ➡ Tell your children that despite how it seems it is not a hopeless situation. Something will be done to stop the bullying and you will help them through this difficult time.
- ➡ Tell your children there is always someone who they can talk to about bullying, whether it is one or both of the parents or another adult/teacher at school.
- ➡ Teach your children to understand this statement: "If you walk away and get help, you are part of the solution. If you stay and watch, you are part of the problem."

## Don't Wait:

- ➡ Don't wait for your child to come to you, bring up the conversation about bullying if you suspect or see/hear something. Some common signs that your child may be struggling with a cyberbully:
  - changes in habits or personality – increased sadness or depression, low self-esteem
  - recurrent and unexplained physical symptoms such as stomach ache, headache or difficulty sleeping
  - loss of interest in social events
  - increased anxiety towards using electronic devices such as computers and smart phones
  - reluctance to attend school
  - increased absence from school
  - sudden change in grades
  - change in eating habits
  - isolation from friends

- ➔ If presented with the opportunity, confront the child, teen or group guilty of bullying and explain to them the hurt they cause.



- ➔ Talk to the adults who were in charge when the bullying occurred to find ways to remedy the problem and prevent future situations.
- ➔ Stop any bullying behaviour at home. Consistency matters.

## Proactive Measures to Prevent Bullying

- ➔ Establishing a good group of friends will give your children confidence and help keep them from being singled out. Encourage your children to invite friends over after school or on the weekend instead of online communication. This will build their social skills and strengthen their friendships.



- ➔ Make sure you know your children's school policies on bullying. Talk to your children's teachers and find out how bullying is handled in the classroom, and voice any concerns you may have.
- ➔ Teach your children the difference between walking away with confidence, and walking away in fear. Teach your child to disengage from the bully and to walk away with an air of self-respect.
- ➔ The Internet makes cyber bullying anonymous and a modern day threat. To help keep your children from being bullied online, keep all computers in a common area of your home and monitor their Internet usage. Tell your children not to accept any texts, instant messages or requests from people they don't know. If they do receive a harassing message or email, teach them not to reply and to tell you right away. Online services often have a 'block' or 'ban' option to keep certain people from contacting you. Talk to your phone and Internet provider for additional privacy settings.
- ➔ Scrambls is a FREE secure web browser plug-in that, with the flip of a switch, can encode selected content. You choose who may access or read your information by selecting specific individuals or groups. Friends need to add Scrambls to their own browser so that messages will look the same to them as well. Anyone that is **not approved** to read the information will receive scrambled text including the providers of the social media sites. In the future messages won't come back to haunt children and young adults. They can take responsibility to protect their reputation online now. For more information please click on [www.scrambl.com](http://www.scrambl.com)

- ➔ You can make any post private with just one click even if you're publishing to different groups of contacts spread across multiple social networks. Scrambls lets you decide what the privacy policy will be for each post that you share.
- ➔ If your children are afraid of 'tattling', explain to them the difference between telling on someone merely to get them in trouble and telling an adult about a dangerous situation. Don't wait until a situation arises before talking to your children about whom to turn to for help.

## Anti-Bullying Programs and Acts



Canadian children suffer from bullying at school and in their neighbourhoods at rates and frequencies that cannot be ignored. The [National Crime Prevention Centre \(NCPC\)](#) is committed to providing information on school-based anti-bullying programs.

- ➔ In June 2012, the Ontario legislature passed a bill allowing students to form gay-straight alliances and protect them from being bullied by their peers at school after a 13-year-old boy was acquitted of robbing and assaulting Mitchell Wilson, an 11-year-old boy with muscular dystrophy. Mitchell Wilson unable to cope with the strains and anxiety committed suicide last September.
- ➔ Nova Scotia leads the country with a new '*Cyber-safety Act*' wherein people can apply through the Justice of the Peace Centre to obtain a protection order that would not only place restrictions on the cyberbully but also identify him/her. Victims can now sue the cyberbully and parents can be held accountable and liable for damages if the cyberbully is a minor. Amendments to the '*Education Act*' clarify the role for the Principals when acting upon issues that affect their schools. Principals now have the responsibility to take action and report incidences of bullying and cyberbullying even if they occur beyond the school ground or during after school hours.
- ➔ [CyberSCAN](#), the first unit of its kind in Canada has been operational since last September in Nova Scotia and has five investigators who examine all complaints whether the victim is a minor or an adult.
- ➔ "Manitoba schools now have more tools to fight bullying and cyberbullying and are able to create safer, more inclusive schools," said Education Minister Nancy Allan as Bill 18, the '*Safe and Inclusive Schools Act*' was officially proclaimed into law on October 10th.
- ➔ Under Bill 18, '*The Safe and Inclusive School Act*' schools in Manitoba will be required to:
  - report and act on cyberbullying incidents even if they take place outside of school or after-hours;
  - expand policies related to the appropriate use of the Internet in schools to include social media, text messaging and instant messaging;

- accommodate students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that fight all forms of bullying, and accommodate any student-led groups that want to use the name 'gay-straight alliance' or any other name consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all students; and
- establish respect for human diversity policies that are consistent with the principles of the Manitoba Human Rights Code and create a safe and inclusive learning environment that is accepting of all students.

## Anti-Bullying Policies

Leaders of organizations responsible for young people can create anti-bullying policies that clearly set the limits on acceptable behaviour to:

- Include meaningful consequences in the policy to help teach aggressive children healthier ways of interacting.
- Allow time for the policy to be reviewed and agreed upon by everyone involved.
- Ensure the policy is consistently and universally applied by all involved.

## Bullying Facts in Canada

- ➔ The Health of Canada's Young People: A Mental Health Focus conducted a survey in 2009 and 2010 including 26,000 children in 436 schools and found that 22% of children reported being bullied.
- ➔ The World Health Organization together with an international alliance of researchers completed a study and found that 17% of 11-year-old girls in Canada have reported being bullied at least twice during the period from April to June 2012. This data places Canada in 6<sup>th</sup> place out of 38 countries for the highest rate of bullying among girls in this age group.
- ➔ According to the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#), one in three adolescent children admitted to being bullied and nearly 50% of parents stated their child was victimized by bullying.
- ➔ Intervention is a key part of stopping the bullying cycle.
- ➔ Studies have shown that a higher percentage of students engage in bullying behaviours in middle school and high school than in elementary school but the percentages of students victimized gradually decreases with age.



- Elementary school boys report higher levels of bullying but lower levels of victimization than girls. In middle and high schools, boys reported bullying others almost twice as much as girls in the same grades.
- When other children intervene in bullying, more than half of the time it stops within 10 seconds.

## Handling Bullying Situations

Peers and adults who witness bullying behaviour can intervene to help the victim. Canadian studies on peer intervention reveal that only a small number of elementary and middle school students attempted to stop bullying incidents. Adult intervention rates are similarly low - often because they are not present when bullying occurs.

## The Whole School Approach

Successful intervention decreases the amount of bullying in schools by 20 to 70 percent. Interventions work best when anti-bullying policies and anti-bullying initiatives are placed into effect throughout the school.



### Anti-Bullying Policy Structure:

- An 'as per needs' assessment helps determine the parameters and extent of the bullying problem before committing to an action plan.
- Development of the policy should include input from multiple stakeholders to help ensure commitment to, and respect for, the policy.
- The anti-bullying message stated in the policy must be formally introduced, understood and consistently communicated by everyone in the school.
- Periodic reviews, evaluations and revisions of the policy are required for it to remain relevant to the school and students.

### Anti-Bullying Initiatives:

- Should be well planned out and include content development, evaluation framework and a plan for sustainability.
- Involves multiple stakeholders where involvement of community members and organizations increases the level of success.

- Students that take part in program development and delivery, increases the students' sense of commitment to, and ownership of, the initiative.
- Addresses multiple risk and protective factors to reduce multiple risk factors and reinforce protective factors.
- Provides age-appropriate materials, discussions and time limits they are easily understood by and relevant to the students.
- Create a gender-specific approach because bullying and responses to anti-bullying initiatives can differ between boys and girls.
- Intervention occurs at the onset to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviours continuing or escalating as children mature.
- Long-term interventions generally have a stronger, more lasting impact and result in more sustainable initiatives than short-term solutions.

## The Comprehensive Community Approach

Involving the broader community may support and enhance the effectiveness of whole school interventions. Canada's top five successful bully intervention programs share these characteristics:



- Intervened at three levels - the whole school population, students who were just beginning to bully, or be bullied, and students with serious bullying or victimization behaviours.
- Addressed the attitudes, behaviours, and interpersonal and emotional skills of students.
- Involved parents in the initiative.
- Involved the larger community.

## Legislative Assembly of Ontario - Bill 14, Anti-Bullying Act, 2012

This Act was designated for Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Schools and to provide bullying prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools.

Bullying, particularly in schools, has become an increasing problem in Canada. Victims of bullying have suffered mental anguish, bodily injury and even death at the hands of their tormentors.

Bullying can leave a harmful and long-lasting mark on its victims. It can leave children with painful emotional and mental scarring and a lifelong struggle with self-esteem. Bullying can therefore impair the ability of a victim to contribute meaningfully to society and to function normally in the victim's family environment.

Bullies suffer as well, since bullying may be indicative of deeper psychological and emotional problems. Children who bully more frequently experience psychological problems later in life, such as aggressive tendencies and occasional symptoms of depression. Childhood bullies often display the same types of behaviour as adults and are found to be more likely to harass co-workers or commit spousal, child or senior abuse. Studies have shown that bullies are far more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour. According to Public Safety Canada, students who engage in bullying are 37 per cent more likely than those who do not to commit offences as adults.

Bullying also creates a poisoned atmosphere among persons who observe the bullying of others. For example, the occurrence of bullying can intimidate observers, lead observers to excuse, accommodate or even encourage the bully or, worst of all, lead them to try bullying themselves. The negative cost of bullying to society at large is therefore considerable.

A safe and inclusive learning environment in schools is critical for students to achieve academic success. Parents and students must be confident in knowing that the school environment is free from harassment, violence, intolerance and intimidation, all of which are forms of bullying.

In December 2009, the Occupational Health and Safety Act was amended to add Part III.0.1 to provide protective measures against violence and harassment in the workplace. Such harassment can include bullying. It is appropriate to expand that approach to deal with bullying in schools. Bullying in schools is particularly odious since its victims are children who are often less able to defend themselves than adults are.

It is appropriate to designate a week to express our collective opposition to bullying and to take measures to raise awareness and to prevent bullying in all of its many forms in the school environment.

To read more please click on [Bill 14, Anti-Bullying Act, 2012](#)

## **References:**

1. [Public Safety Canada – National Crime Prevention Centre](#)
2. [Healthy Canadians – Kids Health and Safety](#)
3. [Legislative Assembly of Ontario - Bill 14, Anti-Bullying Act, 2012](#)