



# My child is being bullied.

## PARENT CHECK-LIST



### **FIRST, TAKE A DEEP BREATH**

It is normal for emotions to run high when you find out your child is being bullied or cyberbullied. If you find yourself in this situation, it's important to remain calm for your child's sake. They may be upset and scared and will look to you for their place of comfort, support, and stability. Taking a deep breath, calming your thoughts, and keeping a neutral tone of voice gives your child the assurance they need. Remaining calm will also help you think clearly as you support your child.

## ✓ GATHER INFORMATION

Talk to your child about what is going on, thank them for opening up to you about the situation, and then calmly listen. Suggested questions to ask:

- Who is involved?
- What has happened?
- What kind of bullying?
  - Verbal
  - Physical
  - Social/relational
  - Cyberbullying
- What days and times were you bullied (include all incidents)?
- Where did the bullying take place?
- Did you tell a trusted adult in the school? If yes, who?

## ✓ CONFIRM BULLYING IS TAKING PLACE

Bullying is an **aggressive behavior** that involves an **imbalance of power**. Bullying is **repeated over time** and can take many forms, such as hitting, punching, or shoving (physical bullying); teasing, taunting, name-calling, or sexual remarks (verbal bullying); intimidation using gestures, spreading rumors, or social exclusion (psychological or social bullying).

Your child may be experiencing harassment if bullying behaviors are based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion.

## ✓ CREATE A WRITTEN RECORD

Building a timeline that outlines information about the bullying incidents, dates of those events, involved individuals, and your child's account is helpful.

You can also include, if applicable, screenshots/pictures, medical records/reports for treatment of physical injuries, and any psychological assessments from a mental health/police report or tape recordings (depending on the state you live in and your situation).

## ✓ WORK WITH YOUR CHILD

Sometimes children avoid seeking help from adults because they believe it will "make things worse." It is important to validate those concerns or any other feelings your child is experiencing. Listen nonjudgmentally and discuss practical ways to handle these situations when they occur. Talk with your child about what can be done to help make school a safer, more comfortable, learning environment.

## ✓ PROTECT YOURSELF & YOUR CHILD ONLINE

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying by way of electronic means. Most often, cyberbullying happens via messaging or communication tools on social media, chat, text, or email.

If your child is being cyberbullied, shut-down opportunities from the aggressor by putting privacy settings in place and blocking phone numbers, contacts, or users. If the behavior continues, consider changing emails, account/usernames, and phone numbers. Report all abuse to online service providers.

As a parent, refrain from posting about your child's cyberbullying online. You may unknowingly worsen the situation if you share the situation on your own social media.



## **WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL**

If the situation cannot be safely resolved by the child, then you may need to talk to the school. Be sure to include your child in this decision and discuss how much involvement they'd like to have. When meeting with the school, you'll want to follow the chain of command, typically in this order:

1. Child's Teacher
2. Child's School Counselor
3. Assistant or Grade Level Principal
4. Superintendent
5. Board of Education

If your child is experiencing harassment, you can get additional support through the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division

*\*Note: Parochial or private schools do not have the same chain of command as a traditional public school.*

Consider the following steps before, during, and after your meeting at the school:

### **PRIOR TO THE MEETING:**

Contact the appropriate person via email or letter regarding your child's current bullying situation. Outline all efforts your child has followed and assert your child's needs. Request to meet in person.

### **PREPARE FOR THE MEETING:**

Organize all information and pertinent questions you'd like to discuss. Determine who should attend the meeting like a spouse, friend, teacher, and/or counselor.

### **DURING THE MEETING:**

Ask this primary question: What can be done to keep your child safe in school physically and emotionally so he/she can learn?

Explain the impact this is having on your child (I.E. he/she does not want to come to school, stomach aches, or any other new behavior). Discuss any and all work you have done with your child. Depending on the situation and your child, he/she may be able to write a letter sharing some of their feelings.



Share all recorded information including documentation (including your timeline of events), witnesses, doctor's notes, psychological assessments, police reports, cyberbullying online report, etc.

Either bring a copy of the schools written bullying policy or ask for it there.

Bring your state's laws and/or policies.

- Your states laws can be found online at StopBullying. Gov: [www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html](http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html)

Work together, to determine an appropriate plan of action with school staff to ensure your child has support while at school. Your child's opinions and inclusion when making this plan matter!

Keep written records at this meeting including who was present, what was discussed, any decisions, outcomes, plans and solutions to ensure accountability.

### **AFTER THE MEETING:**

Send a follow-up letter or email that summarizes the discussion and any actions resulting actions.

Should the situation not improve or worsen after several weeks (or after the determine amount of time required to put supports in place), you may decide to move up the chain of command (i.e. from the principal to superintendent).

 **WORKING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OR LEGAL AID**



**If your child has been physically assaulted or has been seriously threatened, contact the police immediately.** Be sure to keep a written record of all offenses committed against your child and any time you have contacted the school in case you contact law enforcement officials.

If the problem persists or escalates and school is unable to stop the bullying, you might consider consulting an attorney.

 **WORKING WITH HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**



**If there are any signs that the child is hurting themselves or poses a threat to their own safety, consider counseling for the child.** A child's health is priority.

- Parents can start by asking for a referral from the child's pediatrician or search online
- School and MMF staff can provide parents with community agency information

If you see any warning signs in your child, please take them seriously and seek professional help immediately by calling the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.



**Warning signs that your child might be in psychological crisis, might include the following:**



**VERBAL CUES**

- "Life isn't worth living"
- "I'd be better off dead"
- "I feel there is no way out"
- "My family would be better off without me"
- "Next time I will take enough pills to do the job right"
- "You can take my (prized collection/valuables) - I don't need this stuff anymore"
- "I won't be in your way much longer"

**BEHAVIORAL CUES**

- Getting affairs in order (ex. paying a debt)
- Giving away prized possessions or money
- Signs of planning a suicide (ex. buying a weapon)
- Making funeral plans
- Increase in self-destructive or violent behaviors (ex. drinking alcohol/drug use)
- Social Withdrawal
- Increased impulsivity & taking unnecessary risks

**EMOTIONAL CUES**

- Unrelenting low mood
- Pessimism
- Hopelessness
- Desperation
- Anxiety, psychic pain, and inner tension
- Rage or anger