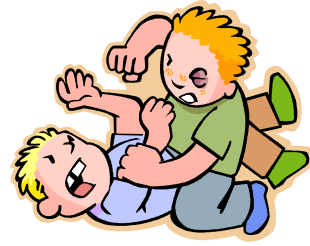


# BULLYING F.A.Q.

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## *What does bullying look like?*

Bullying and harassment can take many forms. Under the anti-bullying policy definition, it can be an electronic, written, verbal, or physical act, and could include any of the following:

- name calling
- saying hurtful things
- embarrassing
- teasing
- pushing
- threatening
- hitting
- pinching
- kicking
- playing tricks on
- taking someone's things
- damaging someone's things
- ignoring or isolating
- making sexual references
- leaving out
- unwelcome or intrusive touching
- spreading rumors
- writing nasty emails or notes

Bullying can be almost anything mean or nasty that's done on purpose to hurt someone, whether it's in person, on the phone, over the internet, spoken, or in writing. What separates "bullying" from incidents of unpleasant behavior between otherwise friendly students is when it is damaging to a student's physical or mental health, when it impedes the student's learning or participation in school activities, or when it puts the student in fear and creates a hostile environment.

## *What Should I Do If I Believe My Child is Being Bullied?*

**1. Evaluate the problem.** Talk to your child about what is happening and ask yourself some questions to help you determine the facts and circumstances:



- Did it go beyond "normal" disagreements for children of this age?
- How was your child affected?
- Have there been other incidents between these children?
- Was it one on one or a group targeting one child?
- Was there a significant difference in the ages or the relative "power" of the children involved?
- Was anyone injured?

Be aware that depending on the particular circumstances and the effect on the child, a single incident between students may not be viewed as “bullying” under a district’s anti-bullying policy. That doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be reported to educators and addressed as inappropriate behavior by the student or students involved.

**2. Document the problem.** Often bullying comes to light only when it becomes a pattern of behavior. If your child shares information with you about interactions with other students that concern you, make a record:

- Write things down as they happen.
- Record dates, times, places, names, witnesses, and specific information about what your child says happened.
- Don’t write down your opinions or conclusions, stick to the facts as you are able to gather them.
- Keep copies of any notes, letters, emails, or other communications you have with educators about the problem.
- If you have phone conversations about it, keep notes on what you said and how the educators responded.
- If there are injuries, take pictures and get copies of health care records.
- If it rises to a level that school or police reports are produced, request copies.

**3. Communicate the problem.** Sharing your concerns with educators will be much easier and more effective if you have evaluated and documented what has happened from your child’s perspective:

- Start at the first sign of a problem.
- Report the problem to the people closest to the situation and move up to those in a broader position of authority if you don’t see results at the informal level (first inform the classroom teacher or a person who is likely to be close by when incidents occur, then the building administrator or principal, and superintendent if the problem persists).
- If you haven’t reviewed your school’s bullying policy, make sure you get a copy and read it.
- Follow any steps the plan identifies for formally reporting the problem and accessing protections for your child.

*What if the harassing or bullying behavior is coming from an adult?*

It's tough enough for a child to experience being bullied by peers, but it may be even more difficult if the student is being harassed by an adult because it is often the child's word against the adult's. It doesn't happen often, but it does happen. Your school's procedures for reporting and investigating incidents of bullying apply to adults as well as students. Use the procedures available to you under the school's anti-bullying policy. Anytime you believe there is a problem with a school employee, it is advisable to report it directly to an administrator who supervises that person. If you are in doubt about who that is, talk to a building principal or the superintendent.

Pursue the process available to you through your school district first. If you are not satisfied that the school district process has resolved the problem, there are also other avenues to report serious harassment by adults. Complaints against educational professionals and para-educators can be filed with the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission enforces Iowa's anti-discrimination law, the Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965. Any Iowan who believes their civil rights under state law have been violated can file a complaint with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.

Complaints about harassment that violates federal civil rights laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 can be filed with the Office for Civil Rights. Each federal agency has an Office for Civil Rights, so you may need to determine which agency is responsible for the program where the discrimination is taking place. Disability advocates at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission or other advocacy agencies may be able to help you determine where and how to file your complaint.

Few instances of bullying, harassment, or discrimination require formal action at these levels. ***Keep in mind that resolving issues of concern through cooperative action at the earliest opportunity usually produces the best outcomes for everyone involved.***



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