

## What Should I Do If My Child Complains About Bullying?

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that happens frequently in schools. It occurs repeatedly and involves a power imbalance (such as in physical strength or social status) between the bully and the victim. Students bully others physically, verbally, socially (such as starting a rumor or leaving them out) or electronically through social media.

### Steps to Help Your Child

1. **Take the bullying complaint seriously, while remaining calm and not reacting emotionally.** Focus on the facts and manage your own personal feelings. This will help others help you and show your child that they can come to you when they are having a problem.
2. **Ask your child questions (like those below) about the bullying and write down the answers.**
  - Can you describe what happened the last time you were bullied or treated poorly?
  - What led up to the bullying?
  - Where did the bullying occur (such as in the hallway at school, walking to school, etc.)?
  - How long has it been going on?
  - How have you tried to deal with it (such as talking with the bully)?
  - Have you shared this with any teachers or other staff at school? If so, how have they tried to help you?
3. **Check in with your child about their day.** Try to set aside five to 10 minutes each night.
  - Encourage your child to develop a set of friends who they can trust will treat them nicely. This may mean helping your child find friends outside of the school setting that he or she feels comfortable with.
  - Practice situations with your child to help them think about how to handle different situations such as making friends or responding to bullying.
  - If the bullying is occurring online, help your child delete accounts, create new ones and block unfriendly peers.
4. **Consider having your child talk with a professional.** A school counselor, psychologist or private therapist has the experience to help your child talk about and cope more successfully with the situation.

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**Did you know?** Almost all states, including Pennsylvania and New Jersey, require schools to have a bullying prevention policy. Check your school's website for information about the policy.

## Steps to Work with School

- 1. Reach out to and work with school administrators to make sure they are aware of the problem.** Do not contact the parents of the bully or others involved in the conflict. It is important for parents who believe their child is being bullied or harassed to report it to the school and help in the school's investigation of the problem.
  - Most schools have forms parents can use to report bullying. Check your school and/or district's website for more information.
  - A verbal report is also acceptable, and some districts have hotlines to report bullying.
  - Provide facts such as the "who, what, where and when" of the situation.
- 2. Work with school administrators to develop a plan to address the issue.** Here is a checklist to follow:
  - Set up a meeting with the principal, vice principal or dean of students to discuss your concerns.
  - Remain calm. Bullying is an emotional issue, but remember that you are your child's strongest supporter when you present facts calmly and try to work with the school to develop a joint plan. If you feel that it will be tough for you to remain calm, take a trusted friend or relative with you to the meeting.
  - Ask school administrators to assign a person for your child to talk to when he or she is having difficulties. This adult should be someone your child trusts and respects.
  - Remind administrators that you do not wish for your child to be viewed as a "snitch" or "tattletale." You need the administrators to use good judgment for how and when to talk with the youth involved in the ongoing conflicts or bullying.
  - Jointly decide how you and the school will monitor progress.
  - Put it in writing. When possible, send an email after your meeting to summarize the conversation and highlight next steps you and school staff will take to solve the problem, as you understand it.
- 3. Ask administrators key questions (like those below) to help support the school's investigation.**
  - Who will be conducting the investigation?
  - What are the steps involved in the investigation?
  - How long will the investigation take?
  - What is the best way to follow up on the investigation?
  - What should I tell my child or have him or her do while the investigation is going on?
  - What will be done to ensure that the other child acts differently toward my child?
  - How will my child and I know this has been addressed?

*The "All About Bullying" fact sheets are brought to you by the Partner for Prevention Program at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Violence Prevention Initiative, a Hospital-wide effort to interrupt the cycle of violence. For more information about bullying, visit [chop.edu/violence](http://chop.edu/violence).*