

OCTOBER

# BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH



## *How to Talk to Your Student About Bullying*

Parents play a key role in preventing and responding to bullying. If you have recently witnessed or suspect an incident involving bullying, speak out and discuss it with school officials and parents immediately.

***Remember: Doing nothing only encourages more bullying.***



### **LEARN THE WARNING SIGNS OF BULLYING**

Recognizing the warning signs for bullying can take some practice, but we hope it will become a habit for educators, parents, and community members.

#### **Signs a student is being bullied:**

- » Unexplainable injuries
- » Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- » Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Students may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch
- » Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- » Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- » Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide (see back of page for suicidal behavior)

#### **Signs a student is bullying others:**

- » Get into physical or verbal fights
- » Have friends who bully others
- » Are increasingly aggressive
- » Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- » Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- » Blame others for their problems
- » Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- » Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity



## How to Ask Questions About Bullying



Less than half of students who are bullied will notify an adult about the incident. The top reasons students don't discuss bullying with adults is because they want to handle it on their own, and that they'll be punished and/or not be taken seriously.

Keeping the lines of communication open between students and parents plays a key role in helping students develop greater trust and be more willing to communication challenges at school. Even just talking with your student for 15 minutes a day can help reassure them that they can talk to you about successes and challenges at school.

Sometimes students will avoid talking about bullying and may need to be approached indirectly. Try to start conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like these:

- » What was something good that happened today? Any bad things?
- » What is lunch time like at your school? Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- » What is it like to ride the school bus? Who do you sit with?
- » What are your favorite subjects? Why?

**If you suspect your student may be involved in bullying, taking a direct approach is a necessary step in addressing the issue. Try asking questions like these (there are no right or wrong answers):**

- » What does "bullying" mean to you?
- » Describe what children who bully are like. Why do you think people bully?
- » Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying?
- » Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it?
- » What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?
- » Have you or your friends left other children out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not?
- » What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?
- » Do you ever see students at your school being bullied by other children? How does it make you feel?
- » Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

## What to Do if Your Student Is Involved in Bullying

**Determine if it's bullying by following these steps:**

- » Keep all the involved children separate
- » Get the story from several sources, both adults and children
- » Listen without blaming
- » Do not call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened

It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if there are multiple students and incidents involved, including cases of cyberbullying. Collect all available information.

Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support the children involved and contact the appropriate school staff. This could be your child's school counselor or social worker.

### SUICIDAL OR SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

Bullying can sometimes be a contributing factor to suicide and self-destructive behavior. The relationship between bullying and suicide is complex, in fact, most young people who are bullied do not become suicidal, and those who do, often already have multiple risk factors involved.

If you have witnessed or suspect suicidal or self-destructive behavior in a student, seek professional help immediately by contacting the appropriate school official.



**National Suicide Prevention Hotline**  
1-800-273-8255