

## Family support crucial to students who experience bullying

Parents and family members can help prevent bullying and cyberbullying in a number of ways, mostly by being engaged, attentive and loving.

### Steps you can take to help the child

- The first step should always be to contact the teacher, principal or counselor at the school with your concerns. If the problem is not addressed, contact a district administrator, the superintendent or a school board member.
- Take your child to a pediatrician or family doctor if:
  - The child reports injury.
  - The child shows signs of not wanting to attend school (hates going to school, scared to go to school, crying excessively about school or events at school, extreme drop in grades or has decided to not go to the bathroom during the school day).
  - The child has trouble sleeping, has an extreme change in eating habits, or stops socializing with friends and peers.

*A doctor may recommend mental health services, or may be able to recommend how to talk about the problem with people at the school.*

- If bullying is occurring at school, learn about what your state requires districts and charter schools to do under [Minnesota's Safe and Supportive Schools Act](#).
- Recognize the [warning signs](#) that your child is involved in bullying. They could be the target of bullying, the one engaging in bullying behavior or witnessing bullying. Although these signs could signal other issues, you should talk to your child if they display any sort of behavioral or emotional changes. Often, [kids won't ask for help](#), so it is important to know what to look for. If your child is at immediate risk of harming himself or others, [get help right away](#).
- Learn [what bullying is](#) and [what it is not](#). Understanding what bullying is can be the first step in working with your child to develop a plan to prevent or respond to the bullying. Many behaviors that look like bullying may be just as serious, but may require different response strategies. Use tips and tools to [talk to your child](#) about bullying. Opening lines of communication before your child is involved in bullying will make it easier for them to tell you when something happens. It is also important to work with a school to help prevent bullying before it starts.

- Support your child's academic work by ensuring that he or she takes time to do the homework, help with the homework if you can, and check to see that the homework is complete.
- Encourage your child to keep a diary about the highs and lows they experience each day. This can help keep track of what is going well and what is not going well and may serve as a measure of frequency or infrequency of harm.
- If your child is experiencing [cyberbullying](#), take a screenshot of the harmful posts or interactions and consider taking down personal electronic media sites and have your child take a break from social applications for a few weeks. For more suggestions on how to respond to cyberbullying, go to [Cyberbullying Research Center](#) or [StopBullying.gov](#).
- Repeat family expectations for honesty, empathy, responsibility and kindness.
- When a child has harmed another person, work with the school to help the child change the behavior and make amends.
- Providing students with the opportunity to help others can build their assets. Providing students with connections to other caring adults such as coaches, youth leaders in faith communities and community organizations.

If you have worked with your child and your school and need additional help, please contact the [School Safety Technical Assistance Center](#) by email, by phone at 651-582-8364 or by mail at School Safety Technical Assistance Center, Minnesota Department of Education, 1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113.

### **Where to turn when a child is maltreated by a school employee**

If you are concerned that a school staff person's behavior or negligence is endangering a child, call the Student Maltreatment Program, Division of Compliance and Assistance, 651-582-8546. This division oversees implementation of the Maltreatment of Minor's Act.

### **Consider use of restorative practices to address harm**

In bullying incidents or cases of suspensions for rule violations, consider a restorative process to address the harm, work with all affected parties to determine a plan for behavior change, making amends, and get help if needed. For recommendations for restorative process facilitators, contact the [Minnesota Restorative Services Coalition](#) at [mrsc@mnmrsc.org](mailto:mrsc@mnmrsc.org) or 612-822-9883.