

Bullying Basics

The State of CT has an anti-bullying law, passed in July 2002 ([General Statutes Section 10-222d](#))
This law requires all public school districts to develop & implement a bullying policy.

All acts of inappropriate and mean-spirited behavior are unacceptable, BUT there is a legal definition of bullying:

- A person is being hurt, harmed, or humiliated with words or behavior
- The behavior is repeated or there's a concern it will be
- The person being hurt has a hard time stopping/preventing
- There is an imbalance of power: The hurtful behavior is being carried out by someone with more power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **CYBERBULLYING:** Bullying through the use of technology: when someone repeatedly and intentionally harasses, mistreats, or makes fun of another person online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices.

(Pacer.org/bullying)

Suggested RESOURCES

- **[Pacer Center: Teens Against Bullying](#)** has a great handout for teens: [Bullying Prevention 101: A quick guide for middle and high school students](#)
- [Family Online Safety Institute \(FOSI\) Cyberbullying Guide: what cyberbullying is, how to detect the signs, and what you can do to help:](#)
- [Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center: Cyberbullying](#)
- [Stopbullying.gov Connecticut](#)

Parents, school staff, and other caring adults have a big role to play in preventing bullying for little and big kids

- Help teens understand bullying. See the definition above- check for understanding. What's the difference between bullying and mean behavior?
- Tell your teen bullying and mean behavior are unacceptable.
- Make sure your teen knows how to get help. Who do they talk to in school when there is a problem? Is this person accessible to them?
- Keep the lines of communication open. Use open ended questions to understand their concerns. "What happened next?" "You seem sad, what's up?"
- Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.
- Help your child learn advocacy skills: *Advocacy:* Helping others get what they need & *Self-advocacy:* Communicating & taking action to get what you need.

Bullying Basics: Responding when you suspect your child is being bullied:

(Greatergood.berkeley.edu)

- **Manage your own feelings first.** Listen, Stay calm, and project assurance that you can handle what they're telling you and help your child be safe.
- **Be empathetic: and validate feelings:** "I hear you, that sounds painful, I'm here with you/for you."
- **Gently elicit the story from your teen,** gather information, and facts. Proceed delicately. Assess the severity, this will help you figure out next steps.
- **Help your child learn the important life skill of self-advocacy,** how to express their wants and needs and to stand up for themselves without aggression. While it's never the responsibility of youth to stop bullying from happening to them, it's important for them to be involved in how the situation is handled. Help your child identify what they would like to happen, and involve them in the decision-making process towards a solution.
- **If cyberbullying is involved, collect data and take screenshots** of all offending screens, and then help your child block the offender. [Report cyberbullying](#) to the media platform.
- **With the school, first approach the adult in charge of the immediate environment** (e.g., the classroom teacher, the after-school teacher), but work your way up the administration if there isn't immediate action.
- **Regulate your feelings when you talk with school personnel.** Your goal is to ensure the emotional and physical safety of your child. If possible, take a collaborative, problem-solving approach that can become a win-win.
- **Spend some extra special time with a teen who has been bullied** or who has witnessed bullying. Surround them with love, affection, and support, and focus on their healing.

