

BULLYING DEFINED

Bullying is defined as when one person uses power in a willful manner with the aim of hurting another individual. This may involve repeated exposure over time to negative actions or an imbalance of power so that the child victimized has trouble defending him/herself. The aggression can be verbal, written, physical or psychological, or characterized by unequal levels of affect, i.e. child bullying feels justified in his or her actions. *Source: Katy ISD code of conduct*

ABOUT BULLYING & AUTISM

Although only 10 studies have been conducted in the United States on bullying and developmental disabilities, all of them found that children with disabilities were **two to three times more likely** to be victims of bullying than their nondisabled peers according to *Disabilities: Insights from across Fields and around the World (2009)*.

RESEARCH ALSO SHOWS:

- **60% of students with disabilities** reported being bullied compared to 25 percent of the general student population. *British Journal of Learning Support (2008)*
- **88% of children with autism** were reported by parents to have been the victims of bullying. *Massachusetts Advocacy for Children (2009)*
- In general, bullying is **most common in grades six through eight**. *JAMA (2001)*

Note: This brochure is designed to provide basic information about bullying & autism and should not be interpreted as medical advice. For all concerns related to your child's health and safety, please seek the advice of your child's healthcare provider.



Join Autism & Safety:
Bullying on facebook



PARENT RESOURCES

National Autism Association

autismsafety.org

Ability Path

abilitypath.org

Stop Bullying

stopbullying.gov

Bully Police (State-by-State Law Listing)

bullypolice.org

Bullying Prevention

bullyingprevention.org

Kids Against Bullying

pacerkidsagainstbullying.org

Stop Bullying Now!

stopbullyingnow.com

Suicide Prevention

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Wrights Law

wrightslaw.com

Awesome Library

awesomelibrary.org/bullying.html

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS THE BULLY

- **Discuss with your child definitions of assault** (elbow in the lunch line, throwing an object, any act perceived as a threat can result in juvenile detention.)
- **Go over the student code of conduct** with your child to help him/her understand the definition of each offense and possible consequences.
- **Instruct your child if they are ever questioned** by police (campus police or local law enforcement) to ask that you be present.
- **Youth are often subject to interrogation they don't wish to participate in or don't fully understand.** Unless they are placed in police custody, they should be free to leave but most don't understand this and may be intimidated into incriminating themselves.
- **Read "Strategies When Children are Arrested for School-Related Behavior Problems"** by Pete Wright Esq. www.wrightslaw.com

AUTISM & SAFETY

NATIONAL AUTISM ASSOCIATION SAFETY INITIATIVE

bullying

prevention & safety information

TYPES OF BULLYING

- ✓ **MANIPULATIVE:** where a child is coerced and controlled
- ✓ **A CONDITIONAL FRIENDSHIP:** friendship alternated with bullying behavior
- ✓ **EXPLOITATIVE:** features of a child's condition are used to bully via technology/social media

BULLYING CAN INCLUDE: Verbal bullying including derogatory comments, name-calling, and taunting; Bullying through social exclusion or isolation; Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting; Bullying through lies and false rumors; Having money or other things taken or damaged; Being threatened or being forced to do things; Racial bullying; Sexual bullying; Cyber bullying (via cell phone or Internet)

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF BULLYING

- ✓ Reluctance to attend school
- ✓ Emotionally sensitive behavior; anxiety
- ✓ Change in daily routines, i.e. diet or sleeping
- ✓ Torn clothing, damaged books or other items
- ✓ Cuts or bruises
- ✓ Decline in academic performance

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS MAY INCLUDE: Anger; Depression; Anxious avoidance of settings in which bullying may occur; Greater incidence of illness; Lower grades than non-bullied peers; Suicidal thoughts and feelings

LONG-TERM EFFECTS MAY INCLUDE: Reduced occupational opportunities; Lingering feelings of anger and bitterness; Difficulty trusting people; Interpersonal difficulties; Increased tendency to be a loner; Self-esteem problems; Increased incidence of continued bullying and victimization. Source: *The Long Term Effects of Bullying*, Mark Dombeck, Ph.D, MentalHelp.net

ADDRESSING BULLYING

What doesn't work:

- ✓ Individual counseling (for bully or victim)
- ✓ Accepting bullying as normal
- ✓ Focusing on only physical aggression
- ✓ Zero tolerance policies
- ✓ Isolated efforts (special auditorium events, lectures)
- ✓ Stigmatizing victims
- ✓ Adults model intimidation, anger, power

What works:

- ✓ School climate change
- ✓ Safe ways to report (safety net programs)
- ✓ Focus on all types of bullying (not just physical aggression)
- ✓ Focus on role of bystanders
- ✓ Peer support networks
- ✓ Adults model supportive relationships
- ✓ Active parent involvement

Source: *What Works, What Doesn't Work in Bullying Prevention Strategies* Michael B. Greene, Ph.D. Director, YCS Center for the Prevention of Violence

WHAT IS SEL?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) assists children in developing fundamental skills to effectively handle school, relationships and personal development

High-quality SEL programs implemented in Illinois led to significant improvements in students' social and emotional skills, in attitudes about self and others, and in classroom behavior. Programs were also associated with substantial decreases in conduct problems and emotional distress such as anxiety and depression—all of which are part of the bullying phenomenon

PARENT TIPS

- ✓ **Visit the school** and observe (volunteer, be there for another purpose)
- ✓ **Talk to your child often:** *Do your friends have special names for you? Who do you sit with at lunch? Which friends do you talk to during the day? What's your least favorite class? Why?*
- ✓ **Keep communication lines open** with teachers, students who might be aware of how things are going for your child, ask them questions, whether your child is verbal or non-verbal.
- ✓ **Talk to administrators**, school board about features of autism and problem of bullying: *What is our districts' SEL? If we don't have one, why not?*
- ✓ **Communicate with teachers** about your child's specific strengths and challenges
- ✓ **Include ancillary personnel** (lunch room monitors, campus security guards, etc.)
- ✓ **Address bullying in your child's IEP**
- ✓ **Use your complaint process**
- ✓ **Include social skills** goals in the IEP
- ✓ **Include self-advocacy** skills goals in the IEP
- ✓ **Write a familiarization plan** (visit school, introduce to teachers, walk thru schedule) into the IEP to assure it happens
- ✓ **Buddy up:** it's best to identify at least one friend who will be with your child during less structured environments (lunch, PE, recess)
- ✓ **If your child does not have** a suitable friend, ask that peer support be written into IEPs
- ✓ **Emphasize your child's strengths**, reassure them bullying is not their fault, many children experience bullying, and bullying is always wrong and must be reported

**For more tips,
visit autismsafety.org**