

Understanding and Responding to Bullying

A Guide for Parents



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Bullying is defined as a repeated assertion of power with intention to do harm. It can take many forms – physical, verbal, social and electronic. The effects of bullying are widespread. It is devastating to a victim, and its impact can last a lifetime. If a bully's harmful treatment of others is not dealt with at a young age, it can progress into adulthood. Bystanders can experience prolonged feelings of helplessness and guilt. Preventative measures, effective interventions, prompt reporting procedures and logical consequences are critical steps to addressing this widespread social problem. Working in partnership with schools, parents can play an important role in making sure that all children feel respected, included and ultimately, safe. With the new school year upon us, it is timely to share the following information.

Children are more likely to talk about bullying when they know parents and educators will respond promptly. With that in mind, here is some information to help you identify and respond to bullying.

1

Is your child being bullied?

Your child could be a victim of bullying if he/she experiences unexplained and prolonged:

- unhappiness, anxiety, anger and /or frustration
- feelings of shame, low self-worth
- withdrawal from friends and activities
- sleep problems, changes in appetite
- stomach and /or head aches
- injuries, damaged or missing possessions
- distress and/or anger when online or using cell phone
- concerns about route to and from school and/ or riding the bus
- reluctance to go to school

2

If your child is being bullied

Listen carefully to the details of the incidents

- assure your child that it is not his/her fault
- let the school deal with the bully's parents
- do not delete records of cyberbullying
- contact the school immediately to share your concerns and arrange support/counselling
- contact the police if your child is threatened, fearful of his/her safety or a victim of online sexual exploitation
- take every opportunity to build your child's self confidence
- encourage friendships through participation in school/community activities
- check in with your child on a regular basis
- keep the lines of communication with the school open



3

Working with the school to address bullying

Working with the school to address bullying...

1. Speak to your child's teacher.
2. If you and the teacher are unable to solve the problem...
3. Arrange a meeting with the principal...
4. If your child continues to be bullied after the principal intervenes...
5. Contact the school division superintendent.
6. Finally, **Dr. Mary Hall, the Director of Schools Manitoba** is available to provide additional support and assistance. She can be contacted via email or telephone.

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If your child is bullying others

If you receive reports that your child is bullying others...

- work closely with the school to determine the nature and extent of his/her involvement
- challenge his/her claims of innocence and victim blaming
- discuss the negative impact of his/her words, actions and online/cell phone communications
- partner with the school to identify root causes of the bullying, determine appropriate consequences and seek counselling
- watch for signs of dominance and control over others
- establish clear expectations for behaviour
- encourage respectful relationships
- model respect, compassion, empathy and inclusion
- continue to work with the school and monitor your child's interactions with others (including online communications)



5

If your child is a bystander

If your child is a bystander...

- acknowledge that children are often reluctant to do something because they are fearful of retaliation
- emphasize the importance of reporting incidents to an adult
- identify adults who will listen and respond
- encourage him/her to save online messages or postings
- share your concerns with the school immediately
- discuss ways to keep your child safe during the investigation
- work with the school to teach safe ways to show disapproval of bullying, stand up to peer pressure, avoid providing an audience for bullying, and support the victim
- model caring, respectful, empathetic and inclusive relationships
- follow up with the school to ensure that your child continues to feel safe

It is essential for all parents to work with the school to ensure the safety of all children and youth.

**For more information, contact: Dr. Mary Hall, Director, Safe Schools Manitoba
Email: mhall@safeschoolsmanitoba.ca Office: 204-233-1595 Cell: 204-770-3521**