

Schools and Cyberbullying

What strategies do schools use to prevent cyberbullying?

Many of the same programs that promote positive school climates and teach social-emotional skills can also be applied to prevent cyberbullying. In addition, there are unique programs that schools undertake specifically to address cyberbullying, including:

- **Curricula about online safety and digital citizenship.** Many schools offer units on cyberbullying prevention, which instruct students in the use of privacy settings, define cyberbullying, and promote the appropriate and responsible use of digital media.
- **Peer education and leadership.** Prevention messages can be most powerful when they come from other teens.
- **Innovative approaches.** Many schools hold unique events like video contests and cyberbullying awareness weeks to increase awareness and educate youth about online safety.

How can parents be helpful to schools?

- Make sure you are aware of your school's anti-bullying policy and how it addresses cyberbullying.
- Find out what sites are used by children during school hours, and the rules that accompany their use, so you can monitor them.
- Ask your children about what they've learned about cyberbullying prevention and digital citizenship in school, and reinforce school-based lessons at home.
- Actively participate in anti-bullying education and outreach programs for parents, and encourage your friends and neighbors to attend as well.
- Be vigilant, and if you see or hear about any bullying or cyberbullying situations, ask the school to investigate.
- Ask school administrators what you can do to help. Offer to help distribute information to parents or organize a workshop or event.

What are the responsibilities of schools to address cyberbullying?

Many states now have anti-bullying legislation addressing the responsibility of schools in bullying prevention and intervention. Whether or not your state's legislation requires schools to intervene in cyberbullying situations, your child's school can be a powerful resource. See <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html> for up-to-date information on state anti-bullying laws and policies.

When should you go to your child's school to report cyberbullying?

If you think your child is a victim of cyberbullying, consider going to the school if:

- The incident involves students from the same school.
- The situation is affecting your child's safety at school and his/her ability to learn.
- The incident has the characteristics of bullying, including repeated actions, intention to harm, and a power imbalance between bully and victim.

How should you prepare for a visit to your child's school to report cyberbullying?

- Review state legislation so you understand the school's legal responsibilities.
- Be prepared with evidence of the cyberbullying incidents, including copies or screenshots. If possible, bring your child's cell phone and other electronic devices with you.
- Have patience as your school conducts an investigation.
- Keep an open mind. Be open to the idea that even if you view your child as a victim, he/she may hold responsibility for some negative interactions.

How can schools respond to parents who report cyberbullying?

- Investigate the situation thoroughly by looking at records of online communications and collecting information from students, their parents, and their teachers.
- Work to create a safer environment for the victim and bully, including taking steps to minimize their contact on school property and increasing supervision.
- Provide support for both victims and bullies, including mental health counseling.
- Provide appropriate discipline, if necessary.
- Work with local law enforcement to continue or expand the investigation, especially if the situation involves a threat to someone's safety.