

Have the conversation early and often

The majority of kids who are bullied do not report it to an adult. The latest statistics show that only two in five bullied students ever notified an adult about the bullying. Kids often report feeling embarrassed or feeling as though adults will be unhelpful or make things worse. Here's how to make sure your children know they can come to you:

- **Set aside a time every day to check in with your children.** Talk about both your day and theirs to help them open up.
- **Be an active and supportive listener.** Make sure your child knows you are always there to listen and will not overreact to the information they tell you. If your child reports something that is bothering or challenging them, ask them how you can help, and follow through.

KnowBullying is a smartphone app that provides guidance for parents to talk to their children about bullying. (<http://1.usa.gov/1D43NPb>)



Follow up and provide support

Even after an incident of bullying is resolved, your child may need support and reassurance that bullying will not happen again. Here's how you can stay involved:

- **Follow up with the school or agency point of contact.** Check in to make sure plans are being followed and no further incidents have been reported.
- **Seek additional resources and support.** Sometimes your child might need support beyond what you or the agency or school can provide. Seek out mental health providers or mentors to help your child build resilience.
- **Get involved in bullying prevention and school climate efforts.** Schools are encouraged to engage parents when they begin planning and implementing bullying prevention efforts. Volunteer to be part of these efforts to help ensure a safe environment for all students.



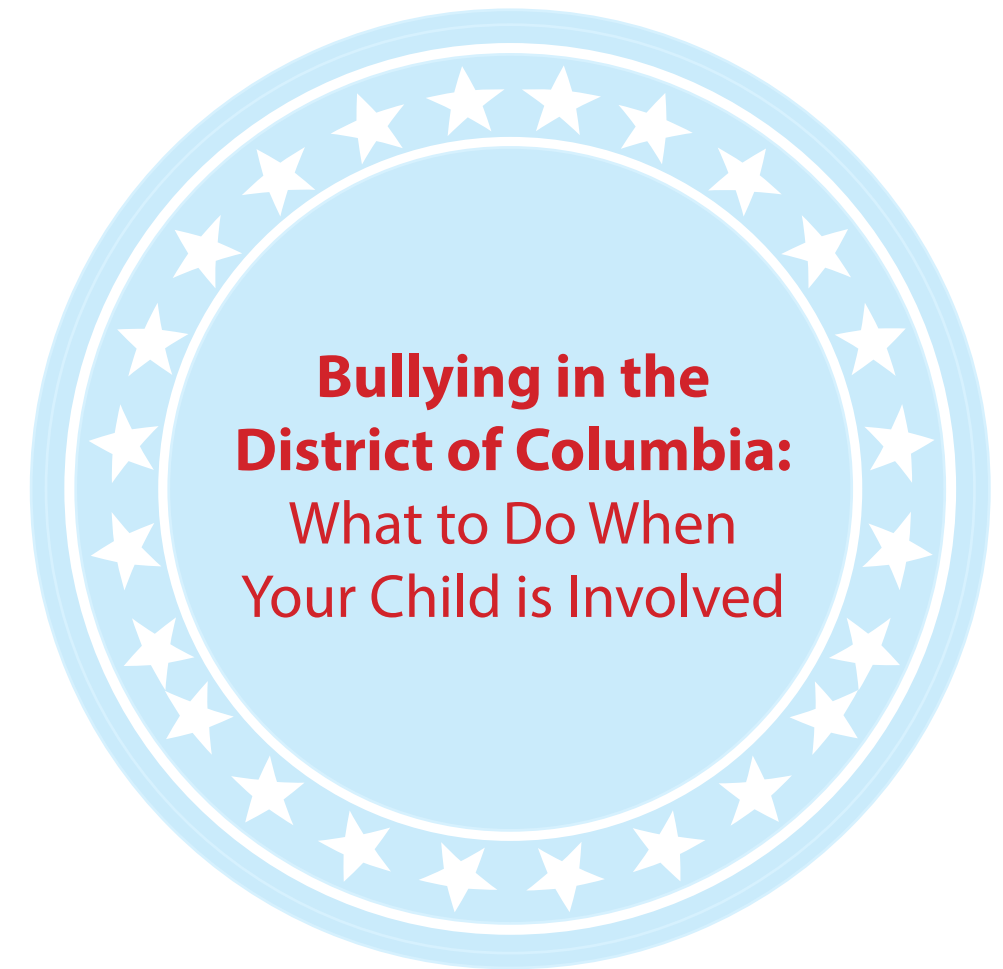
School/agency name: _____

Bullying policy URL: _____

Bullying point of contact (POC): _____

POC contact info: _____

bullyingprevention@dc.gov | 202-519-3333



Parents, guardians, and caregivers play a critical role in preventing and resolving bullying issues for children. This guide can help adults who suspect their child is being bullied or bullying others.

Respond if your child reports bullying

When children or teens tell their parents about being bullied, parents' initial reaction may be to jump into action to protect them. Take a step back, listen to your child, and develop a plan of action together. Here's how:

Gather information

- **Ask your child to share specifics and how he/she reacted and felt.** Remember that your child will take cues from you on how they should feel. Don't overreact until you hear the whole story. Ask the following:
 - What was said or done to make your child upset?
 - Who was involved? Were there other kids who saw what happened?
 - Where did the incident happen? Was it at school? Online?
 - How long has this been going on? Has it happened more than once?
 - What might be underlying what is going on?
 - Be careful not to imply that your child was at fault. Do not blame the victim. For instance, instead of asking, "What did you do to provoke the other student?" ask, "Why do you think the student may have targeted you?"
 - How has the incident affected your child? Is he/she upset or hurt?
- **If your child is able to, ask them to write down what happened** in their own words.
- **Assess whether the incident meets the definition of bullying** in the District of Columbia. Remember that to be considered bullying, the behavior must be **severe, pervasive, or persistent** and cause harm to the extent that a student can't participate or get the benefits of the program they're enrolled in (including school).



Make a plan of action

- **Ask what your child would like to do.** Often, children and teens do not want or need parents to intervene on their behalf. They want to feel they can solve problems on their own. Work with your child to see whether there is solution he or she can try or whether they need help.
- **Role play with your child to prepare them for other incidents.** Is there a safe place your child can go? Is there a trusted adult at the school/program who your child can talk to?
- **Resist the urge to contact the other parents involved.** Think about how you would react if someone told you that your child was a bully. The parents of the other child might become angry or aggressive toward you and your child. It is best to use the school or another third party as mediators to help resolve a situation.

If you and your child agree that school or agency intervention is needed, or if the bullying has continued despite your best efforts, work with the school or agency to resolve the situation.

Report the incident to the school or agency

If you believe your child has been the target of bullying:

- **Contact your school's or agency's designated point of contact.** All youth-serving agencies, including schools, are required to have a point of contact for bullying issues. You can find their name and contact information at <http://ohr.dc.gov/page/knowyourpolicy>.
 - Provide as much detail as possible, including the questions and details listed above.
 - Let the point of contact know steps you and your child have taken to prevent future incidents, and anything the school could do to help your child feel safe.
- **Ask questions.** It's important to feel like you have all the information you need during the process. Ask, for instance, how you and your child will find out the results of the investigation and how similar incidents have been handled in the past.



- **Understand the investigation process.** Under DC's bullying prevention law, investigations must start within two days after receiving a report and can take up to 30 days to complete.
- **Recognize there are always two sides to a story.** We all want to believe our kids, but sometimes their best reports will miss critical details. Listen to the other side, and find a solution that works for all involved.
- **Focus on resolving the situation for your child.** Our tendency is to want to punish the "bad kid." Some form of reprimand or discipline is often appropriate, but sometimes it is not necessary to resolve a situation and may even make a situation worse. Focus on what is going to help prevent further bullying from occurring. This may mean your child getting more adult supervision in the cafeteria, or having sessions with a school counselor, for example.
 - If the other child is disciplined, understand that the school is limited in what they can share regarding actions taken against another student. Federal law prohibits schools from sharing such information with other parents.

In some cases, the school or agency may determine that bullying, as defined under the DC bullying prevention law, has not occurred. This does not mean the situation should not be addressed, but rather that it can be addressed outside the requirements of the law. If this is the case:

- **Ask how the school plans to address the issue.** Also ask how the school is working to teach empathy and develop a better climate for all students.
- **Consider filing an appeal.** All parties who are unsatisfied by the outcome of an investigation may appeal the decision to a higher authority at the school or agency. The appeals procedure is required to be detailed in the agency's policy. You may also contact the DC Office of Human Rights (bullyingprevention@dc.gov or 202-519-3333) for further assistance or to file a complaint.

