

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying takes place using electronic technology such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

It's important to practice safety by:

- Monitoring your child's social network profile to ensure they are not providing personal information (addresses, phone numbers, school names, descriptive photos)
- Setting limits to the amount of "screen time" for your child
- Talking to children about risks
- Keeping computers in public areas of the house
- Research and install monitoring devices

Benefits of Counseling

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing and processing the event can assist children and loved ones clarify what actually occurred.
- Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies—allowing for the continuance of school, play or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from traumatic experiences.

Children and loved ones can utilize traumatic experiences as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and even protective instinct skills.

Who can help?

The Victim Services Unit within the Travis County Sheriff's Office can provide assistance with information about your case status, Crime Victims' Rights, Crime Victim Compensation, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to appropriate community helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.



Resources

www.stopbullying.gov
www.pacer.org/bullying
www.facebook.com/safety
www.bullying.org
www.safeteens.com
www.isafe.org
www.cyberbully.org
www.wiredsafety.org

Bullying

Victim Services Unit

5555 Airport Blvd
Austin, TX 78751
512-854-9709



Name/ID Number:

Direct Number:

Mailing Address:

PO Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

One of the most concerning problems cited by parents of school-aged children is bullying. The use of technology and social networking sites only add to this growing problem. No child should dread going to school because s/he is being harassed or bullied. The Victim Services Unit is available to provide resources and information for parents who believe their child is being bullied.

Is My Child Being Bullied?

A child is being bullied when s/he is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other individuals.

Bullying is perpetrated in a variety of different ways: 1) social isolation or exclusion from groups, 2) overt actions like teasing, taunting, belittling and harassment, or 3) physical violence.

While it may be difficult for parents to know whether their child is being bullied, there are some signs that parents can look for:

- Regularly seen with bruises, torn clothing, or unexplained injuries
- Often having belongings taken or damaged
- Having few or no close friends at school
- Choosing not to participate in school activities
- Choosing to spend school breaks with teachers
- Avoiding restrooms and other isolated areas at school
- Making excuses to stay home from school as much as possible
- Appearing distressed or unhappy
- Having low self-esteem and self-confidence

What Can I Do As A Parent?

- If your child gives you an indication that s/he is being bullied, believe your child and record the information. Document where and when it's happening, who is involved, and the type of bullying that is occurring.
- Take the initiative and talk with your child. Ask for specifics and write them down. If your child does not volunteer information easily, prompt them with statements like "tell me about your day" or "tell me about lunch".
- Contact the school immediately. Share your written log of the bullying incidents with the teacher/administrator. Ask the teacher to discuss a plan to stop the bullying behavior in addition to a safety plan, especially if retaliation is suspected.
- Role-play scenarios to develop resistance skills at home. Concentrate on non-verbal cues such as stance, voice inflections, and eye contact. Practice problem-solving techniques with your child and discuss how humor, ignoring the bully, reacting differently than expected, walking away, avoiding a situation, and reporting the incident might work.
- Teach your children life and social skills, not just knowledge about bullying. Also teach them about the responsible use of technology.
- Encourage your child's school to consider incorporating discussions of sexual harassment and homophobic language as LGBT youth are at special risk of being bullied.
- Encourage schools to implement a confidential reporting system for students and ask about anti-bullying policies.
- Get involved with school committees, the parent-teacher association, and/or volunteer in your child's classroom.

What Can My Child Do?

- Clearly speak up and tell others that you don't like the behavior.
- Don't ignore it. Ignoring it allows it to continue and possibly get worse.
- Walk away from situations that make you uncomfortable.
- Tell a teacher—remember that asking for help is not the same thing as tattling.
- Spend time with people who share your interests.
- Get involved with activities that you think are fun and interesting.
- Talk to your parents or other trusted adults about what is happening.

Effects of Bullying on Long-Term Health

Exposure to bullying can lead to the following effects on long-term health:

- Bullying is associated with more negative perceptions of general health and mental health, as well as higher rates of emotional or behavioral problems.
- Higher rates of eating disorders and alcohol/tobacco/drug use.
- Increased probability of experiencing future violent victimization and homelessness.

Understanding these long-term consequences stresses the importance of responding effectively to prevent negative outcomes.

*Koeppel, Maria and Bouffard, Leana (2012). *The Long-Term Health Consequences of Bullying Victimization*. Crime Victims' Institute. Report No. 2012-01.