When Harmless Becomes Harmful:

What parents and caregivers need to know about bullies and bullying
Objectives

- Define bullying and cyberbullying
- Recognize a bully and bullying tactics
- Understand your and your child’s rights
- Prevent further bullying and protect your children
What is bullying?

- One person is intentionally hurting or harming another with words or behavior, and the behavior is being done on purpose, and the person being hurt has a hard time making it stop.
- The behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated.
- An imbalance of power.
Legal Definition of Bullying

▶ “Bullying” means any severe or persistent physical or verbal act or conduct, including:
  ▶ communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act
  ▶ one or more acts committed by a pupil/pupils directed toward a pupil/pupils that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of:
    ▶ Placing a reasonable pupil or pupils in fear of physical harm.
    ▶ Causing a pupil to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.
    ▶ Causing a pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.

https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/california/index.html
Types of Bullying

**VERBAL**
Saying or writing mean things including:
- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

**PHYSICAL**
Involves hurting a person’s body or possessions including:
- Hitting/kicking/pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone’s things
- Making mean or rude hand gesture

**SOCIAL**
Sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone’s reputation or relationships and also:
- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Telling other children not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public
Where and When Bullying Happens

- During or after school hours
- On the playground
- On the bus
- Traveling to or from school
- In the child/youth’s neighborhood
- On the internet
Percentage of High School Students Who Were Bullied on School Property,* by Sex,† Grade,† and Race/Ethnicity,† 2017

*Ever during the 12 months before the survey
†F > M; 9th > 11th, 9th > 12th, 10th > 12th, 11th > 12th; H > B, W > B, W > H (Based on t-test analysis, p < 0.05.)
All Hispanic students are included in the Hispanic category. All other races are non-Hispanic.
Note: This graph contains weighted results.

National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017
The Bully

Signs (what to look for):

- Academic problems
- Sudden low grades
- Change in character
- Onset of disrespect
- Gets in fights often
- Teacher reports

Effects of being a bully:

- Increased risk for substance use.
- Experiencing violence later in adolescence and adulthood.
- 40% of boys identified as bullies in grades 6 through 9 had three or more arrests by age 30.

Preventing a Bully

- Help your child find healthy ways to stop bullying others
  - Come up with alternate behaviors or ideas to gain leadership and “social status” that don’t involve excluding others or bullying
- Have a conversation with your child’s teachers, counselor etc.
- Praise and reward the kids who follow rules; establish appropriate consequences that are not physical or hostile
- Be a model
  - Model respectful, kind and empathetic communication
  - Avoid aggressive, intimidating and abusive behaviors
- Spend time with your child
- If nothing works, talk to a pediatrician for referral for mental health professional
The Victim

Signs (what to look for):

- Unexplained bruises, damaged clothes etc.
- Frequent complaints of headaches and stomachaches, begs to stay home from school
- Withdrawn from peer groups, moody, likes to be alone more often, or show a change in appetite.
- Mention hurtful things said to them and ask your opinion

Effects of being bullied:

- Often victims of other types of violence
- Often experience extreme stress
- Symptoms of physical illness and a diminished ability to learn.
- One out of every 10 students who drop out of school does so because of repeated incidents of bullying.

Bully/Victim

- May be at more risk for negative outcomes, such as depression or suicidal ideation.
- Suffer the most serious consequences and are at greater risk for mental health and behavioral problems.
- 75% of shooting incidents at schools have been linked to bullying and harassment.

Bystander

- Bystander: a witness to bullying, assists in bullying, intervene in bullying
- When bystanders intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds 57% of the time.
What YOU can do for your child (if bullied)

- Talk/listen to your child.
  - Routine talks with your kids about their day.
  - Be as nonjudgmental as possible.
  - Ask open ended questions about their day and listen to answers.
  - Kids usually won’t ask for help, so it is important to know what to look for.
    - 64% of children who were bullied did not report it.
  - Try to control your emotions.
- Discuss safe and protective ways your child can respond to a bully.
  - Research shows that most bullies stop aggressive behavior within 10 seconds when someone (either a victim or a bystander) tells the perpetrator to stop in a strong and powerful voice.
- Help them find things that make them happy, point out positive qualities.
- Make sure they know people care and love them.
- Build relationships outside of school.
- Address self-respect, and help your kids to appreciate their strengths.
  - Nurture your child's confidence and independence.
- Be supportive!

http://www.thebullyproject.com/parents
Ways to Help Kids Boost Their Confidence

- Encourage a growth mindset
- Encourage independence and risk-taking
- Remind kids of their strengths
- Give chances for every kid to shine
- Give specific positive feedback
- Teach and discuss resilience
- Help kids celebrate their accomplishments
- Teach positive self-talk
- Have kids reflect on growth
Cyberbullying and Internet Safety

- Cyberbullying is bullying using:
  - Cell phones, computers, tablets, communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.
- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone.
- Examples of cyberbullying include:
  - Mean text messages or emails
  - Rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites
  - Embarrassing pictures, videos, or websites
  - Fake social media profiles
- In a recent study of students in grades 6-8
  - Girls were about twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying.
  - 62% said that they had been cyberbullied by another student at school, and 46% had been cyberbullied by a friend.
  - 55% didn’t know who had cyberbullied them.

Percentage of High School Students Who Were Electronically Bullied,* by Sex,† Grade,† and Race/Ethnicity,† 2017

*Counting being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media, ever during the 12 months before the survey
†F > M; 9th > 10th, 9th > 12th; W > B, W > H (Based on t-test analysis, p < 0.05.)
All Hispanic students are included in the Hispanic category. All other races are non-Hispanic.
Note: This graph contains weighted results.
Effects of Cyberbullying

- Most cyberbullying victims exhibit clear signs that they have been victimized. These signs can include:
  - Withdrawing from family and friends
  - Losing interest in activities they were once passionate about
  - Sleeping more
  - A lack of appetite
  - Wanting to harm him or herself
  - Changes in behavior, achievement, contact with friends
  - Anxious and on edge after being online.
  - More alerts and notifications on your kid's device.
  - More irritable and prone to emotional outbursts.
  - Secretive in general and about time online, hiding the screen

https://www.rmccharity.org/content/uploads/Bullying-and-Digital-Drama.pdf
Tips for Parents about Cyberbullying

1) Learn the Internet.

2) Communicate with your kids and teens.
   - Let them know that it’s okay to come to you
   - Tell them you won’t be angry about anything. You just want to help them.
   - Encourage your child to alert you of other victims

3) Keep your home computer(s) out in the open, such as a family room or kitchen.
   - It’s important for you to monitor your child’s computer.
   - It’s important to install parental control filtering software.
   - You want to respect your children’s privacy, but your child’s safety is important.
     - Tell your child that you are not spying on them but you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern.
Prevention

- SAMHSA’s free KnowBullying app will help you boost your children’s confidence, resilience, and build effective strategies for facing bullying.

- Parents, caregivers, and educators can:
  - Start easy, meaningful conversations with your children.
  - Set reminders to talk with your child when the time feels right.
  - Share successful bullying prevention strategies on Facebook, Twitter, email, or text.
  - Recognize if your child is being bullied, is engaging in bullying, or witnessing bullying.
  - Prevent bullying in the classroom and support children who are being bullied.
  - https://youtu.be/x_NkNl3OfXU (short video)

https://store.samhsa.gov/apps/knowbullying
What YOU Can Do!

- **Document EVERYTHING!!!**
- It is crucial that all electronic evidence be preserved.
- Save all emails or conversations.
- If threatening email:
  - local police department may be able to help or lead you to a private investigator with computer skills.
- If the emails are terrorist type threats:
  - report this immediately to the police, who will then report it to the F.B.I.
- The parents of students who are doing the bullying may be liable for the emotional damages caused by their child.
  - If the cyberbullies’ parents know what is going on (or had received a letter of complaint), they have “knowledge and notice” of harmful activity.

Information courtesy of Brenda high [http://www.bullypolice.org/help_for_parents.html](http://www.bullypolice.org/help_for_parents.html)
Get to Know California Laws on Bullying

- Do California anti-bullying laws and regulations:
  - Include protections for specific groups?
    - Yes, including immigration status, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.
    - 64 percent of California LGBT students are bullied. A new bill would train teachers to help
  - Encourage or require districts to implement bullying prevention programs or strategies?
    - Yes. The laws also direct the department of education to develop an online training module to assist all school staff, school administrators, parents, pupils, and community members in increasing their knowledge of bullying and cyberbullying.

Get to Know Cont...

- Do California anti-bullying laws and regulations:
  - Encourage or require districts to provide protection or mental health supports for students involved with bullying?
    - Yes. Schools are encouraged to refer students to a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, child welfare attendance personnel, school nurse, or other school support services personnel for case management, counseling, and participation in a restorative justice program.
  - Involve parents in efforts to address bullying behavior?
    - Yes. California school districts must inform parents or legal guardian when a student is involved in an act of harassment, intimidation, cyber sexual bullying, or bullying, and must make available information on statewide resources
  - Do California anti-bullying laws and regulations cover cyberbullying that occurs off-campus?
    - Yes

https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/california/index.html
What a Bullying Prevention Program Should Look Like

- Raising awareness of bullying.
- Form a bullying prevention committee which represents the entire school community.
- Form a Gay-Straight Alliance.
- Defining bullying and making it clear to all staff and students that it is unacceptable.
- Adapt and implement bullying prevention policies.
- Training all members of the school community in the appropriate responses to observed incidents of bullying.
- Providing counseling for persistent bullies, targets, and their parents/guardians.
  - Treatment should not focus only on the victims of bullying; treatment is equally important for the other groups (bullies and bully-victims).
  - Failure to adequately treat the underlying problems experienced by all three groups of individuals could allow the problems of bullying to continue.
- Regular review of effectiveness of the anti-bullying program.
- School-based bullying prevention programs can decrease bullying by up to 50%.

https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/se/bullyingprev.asp
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3891170/
When the School Does Not Help

1) Write a letter after each incident of harassment and send to:
   a. Principal
   b. Each school Board Member
   c. Superintendent

2) Speak out at School Board meeting.
   a. It is not just your child that you are thinking about, but also all the other children who are harassed and have parents who will not, or do not know how, to speak for them.

3) Write letters to your State Representatives (The State Senate and House Education Committee).
   a. Tell them what is happening in your school and how it is being handled.

4) Write a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper about your schools lack of response for harassed students.

5) Consider going to the television stations.
   a. Bullying can be very dangerous and taxpayers have a RIGHT to know what is going on in their local schools.
   b. Voters also have a right to know what their candidates for the school board believe and if they will support and vote for good common sense anti bullying policies.

KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING!! DOCUMENT EVERYTHING!!

Information courtesy of Brenda high http://www.bullypolice.org/help_for_parents.html
Be an advocate for your child

After getting the story of the bullying from your child:

- Think about how you will approach the school.
  - Discuss approach with your child
  - Go through chain of command i.e. teacher, principal, board
- Find other families within your child's school who are experiencing similar bullying and harassment issues.
  - As a group, you can have even a stronger voice for change and action.
- Do not contact the parents of the bully (or bullies)
- If your child’s civic rights are being violated, contact U.S. Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
- If you need additional assistance beyond the school, contact local law enforcement.
- If you must seek a lawyer, find one who specializes in education law

**Document everything!!!**

Information courtesy of Brenda high [http://www.bullypolice.org/help_for_parents.html](http://www.bullypolice.org/help_for_parents.html)
"I know the kids don't like you and pick on you, but you have to go to school...you're the teacher."
Let your child be the weird kid. Let them be the funny kid, the quiet kid, the smart kid, the athletic kid, the theater kid, the numbers kid, the teacher's pet, the chatter box, the valedictorian, the middle of the pack, the "barely made it" kid.

Just don't let them be the mean kid.
Contact Info

United Parents

- Lori Litel, Executive Director; llitel@unitedparents.org
- Melissa Hannah, OAC Grant Coordinator; mhannah@unitedparents.org
- 805-384-1555
- https://unitedparents.org/
- https://parentscaregivers4wellness.org/
- https://www.facebook.com/ParentsAndCaregiversForWellness/

California Alliance of Caregivers

- Dayna Freier, Program Director; dfreier@cacaregivers.org
- https://www.cacaregivers.org/
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  ▶ questions to ask the school