

Bullying is a serious issue that can affect students' learning, sense of safety and overall well-being. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying; and bullying in any form is never okay.

### **Bullying Prevention and Awareness Week**

Ontario has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to help promote safe schools and a positive learning environment.

During Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week – November 15-21, 2020 – Ontario students, school staff and parents are encouraged to learn more about bullying, including cyberbullying, and its effect on student learning and well-being.

### **What is Cyberbullying?**

Bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying) can take many forms, for example: spreading rumours or hurtful comments using e-mail, text messages and on social media. It can also include:

- Sending mean and sometimes threatening emails or text messages.
- Spreading gossip, secrets or rumours about another person that will damage that person's reputation.
- Breaking into an email account and sending hurtful materials to others under an assumed identity.
- Creating blogs or websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures or jokes ridiculing others.
- Creating polling websites where visitors are asked to rate individuals' attributes in a negative manner.
- Taking an embarrassing photo of someone with a digital camera and emailing that photo to others.
- Engaging someone in instant messaging, tricking them into revealing personal information and then forwarding that information to others.
- Using someone else's password in order to change their profile to reflect sexual, racist and other content that may offend others.
- Posting false or hurtful messages on online bulletin boards or in chat rooms.
- Deliberately excluding others from instant messaging and email contact lists.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SOURCE: PREVnet: <https://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/cyber-bullying>

## What are the Impacts?

Bullying can result in someone being hurt or harmed, either by words or actions, by one person or a group of people. It is meant to cause harm, fear or distress, or create a negative environment for another person, for example at school. Bullying occurs in a situation where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. It can happen anywhere, including while on-line.

Students who are bullied often experience:

- social anxiety
- loneliness
- withdrawal
- physical illnesses
- low self-esteem

They can also develop phobias, take on aggressive behaviour and slide into depression.

Some students miss school, see their marks drop or even leave school altogether because they have been bullied.

Children and youth can be affected by bullying if: they are being bullied, they have watched someone else be bullied, or they are bullying others.

## Signs a Child is Being Bullied

Even if they don't talk about it, you can watch for signs that a child is being bullied.

Children who are being bullied might:

- not want to go to school or may cry or feel sick on school days
- not want to take part in activities or social events with other students
- act differently than they normally do
- suddenly begin to lose money or personal items
- come home with torn clothes or broken possessions and offer explanations that don't make sense

Teens who are bullied and/or harassed may start talking about dropping out of school or skipping activities that involve other students.

## How Can I support my Child's Success?

### Talk About It

When it comes to supporting a child's success, conversations with a trusted adult are key.

Parents/Guardians can find tips and suggestions to help support and encourage these conversations in the following resources.

*Parent Tool Kit: Teen Edition*, developed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) provides tips for parents on various topics that include being a listener, informed, a mentor, a coach, and a learner.

*Parent Tip Sheets*, a multi-lingual resource developed by the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) through the Healthy Relationships project, highlights how to navigate cyberbullying together by promoting open and supportive communication.

### Information to Help You: Cyberbullying

*Building Healthy Relationships* – highlights the role electronic devices can have in building and maintaining relationships in this digital age.

*Kids Help Phone* – including, *Cyberbullying: How to Stay Safe*

*Media Smarts - Cyberbullying Resources* including:

*PREVNet* - Cyberbullying information and resources: including, *What Parents Can Do*

*"The Trap"* is a Human Trafficking Digital Education Tool designed to raise awareness about sex trafficking

### Interactive Resources

*Bullying – we can all help stop it* – A ministry resource for parents, guardians and all caring adults

*We All Belong* and *A Circle of Caring*

Storybooks and Comic books for young children developed by COPA to accompany *We All Belong*

- *Toof and That Blanket*
- *Specs and The Best Part*
- *Bouncy and The Any Kind at All Fish*
- *A Sticky Situation*
- *Caring is the Universal Language*

## More Resources

Roots of Empathy - Resources for parents and families including *Parenting through COVID-19* - A video series about mental health and well-being subtitled in 19 languages, including six Indigenous languages.

School Mental Health Ontario – A website that provides evidence-based information and resources for to students, parents, families and educators.

Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate – A ministry website with information about the government's anti-racism initiatives to build a more inclusive society, and works to identify, address and prevent systemic racism.