

What Parents Should Know About Bullying Secondary Schools

Bullying is generally defined as a purposeful, deliberate and repeated action/activity with the intent to harm, threaten and/or intimidate causing fear. Generally and most often the actions are repetitive suggesting imbalance of power.

Bullying behaviours in teen ranges from aggressive (physical violence) to non-aggressive (social exclusion) acts that are intended, repeated, and have an element of power imbalance. (Source; Mayo Clinic, Teen Bullying)

Often bullying takes place at school or is related to school activities, however bullying also happens outside of school time such as during sporting or youth events.

Forms of Teen Bullying

Verbal Bullying; name calling, hurtful comments, threats, intimidation, insults, racists, sexist or homophobic comments, rumors or slurs

Social Exclusion: not included or invited by peer groups, gossip, spreading of gossip and rumors, group teasing or taunting/mocking, ignoring, damaging friendships

Physical Violence; hitting, pushing, kicking, slapping, damaging personal property, physical aggression or threat of aggression

Cyberbullying; using technology such as; e-mail, cell phone, Facebook, Twitter, blog or web sites, to harass or threaten, spread gossip or rumors;

Dating Aggression; unwanted sexual or physical attention in a dating relationship

Sexual harassment; unwanted comments behaviours, gesture about sex or gender that causes discomfort

Homophobic bullying; name calling, comments, threats or insults based on real or perceived gender or sexual orientation

Tips for parents;

Warning signs your teen could be experiencing any form of bullying;

- unusual changes in character or habits
- loss of interest in activities such as school, sports or clubs
- unexplained bruises or cuts
- become anxious or depressed

Steps to take if you suspect your teen is a victim of bullying;

1. Talk with your teen. Sometimes teens can be fearful of disclosing due to consequences such as loss of use of cell phone. Listen to your teen, offer supports, reinforce your trust and that you teen can confide in you.
2. Contact and report the bullying to the school even if the bullying incident did not take place on school property for example; cyberbullying. Also, if your teen has disclosed they have witnessed an incident of bullying, report anonymously to the school.
3. Document and track everything – record in writing everything that your teen experienced including, incidents, witness, dates, time and actions. Provide this information to the school or the police.
4. If the bullying does not stop contact the police, bullying is a form of harassment, assault and can be considered criminal type behaviour.

Bullying Prevention- Raising Resilient Teens

The emerging trend in bullying prevention is focusing on family supports promoting positive parenting and resiliently. The characteristics of positive parenting include;

- be involved and present in the life of your teen
- communicate realistic expectations and logical consequences
- talk and listen often

Local Resources for Parents

London Anti Bullying Coalition
www.londonabc.ca

Safe Schools – Thames Valley District School Board
<http://www.tvdsb.ca/programs.cfm?subpage=33>

Safe Schools – London District Catholic School Board
<http://www.ldcsb.on.ca/Programs/SafeSchools/Pages/default.aspx>

Source;

Bowes, L., Maughan, B., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T. E., & Arseneault, L. (2010). Families promote emotional and behavioural resilience to bullying: Evidence of an environmental effect. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 51 (7), 809–817.

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