



One of the greatest challenges we face in creating a positive and safe learning environment in our schools is the prevalence of bullying. In fact, it is estimated that more than 5.7 million children across the United States (30% of all students) have been

impacted by bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both.

Why is this significant? In short, we believe that bullying is the root cause of a large percentage of the violence and dysfunction that we see within and outside of our schools.

Children who are being bullied, whether through verbal abuse, cyber bullying, or physical abuse, may suffer in silence and at some point are likely to respond and act out themselves. Bullying creates an unsafe and unhealthy climate in our schools, for the victims of bullying and the bystanders.

We hope that this brochure will help you better identify, prevent, and respond to incidents of bullying. By working together as a community, we hope that we can foster a climate of tolerance and respect by and for all of our children.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined by the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71 Section 37O as “the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: 1) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; 2) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; 3) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; 4) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or 5) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.”

M.G.L. ch. 71 §37O requires that every school create a bullying prevention and intervention plan. The plan prohibits bullying on school grounds and off school grounds if the bullying creates a hostile environment for the victim at school, infringes on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.



Possible Signs of Bullying

- Exhibiting changes in behavior, such as being withdrawn and passive, being overly active and aggressive, or being self-destructive

- Crying or showing other signs of depression or anxiety
- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Showing signs of fear when around or asked about certain situations or people
- Having unexplained injuries, torn or missing clothes or damage to personal property such as toys, games, book bag, etc.
- Demonstrating apparent psychosomatic symptoms such as stomach pains, fatigue and sleep disturbance which may be caused by anxiety or depression

What Parents Can/Should Do

If You Suspect Your Child is Being Bullied

- Talk with your child and gather more information
- Monitor your child’s activities and relationships with others, especially at times when observation is not expected
- Supervise and review electronic communication like the Internet, social networking sites, and cell phones
- Report any suspected acts of bullying or cyber bullying to your school principal pursuant to your school’s bullying prevention and intervention plan
- Do not attempt to mediate the situation on your own by bringing victim and bully together and/or contacting the parents of the suspected bully

If You Suspect Your Child is a Bully

- Address the behaviors openly with your child
- Let your child know bullying is unacceptable
- Develop firm and clear rules for behavior
- Follow up with praise for compliance, and consequences for noncompliance
- Model appropriate behaviors for your child, **LEAD BY EXAMPLE**

The Realities of the Cyber World

Instant communication is at a child's or teen's fingertips, with the use of cell phones and computers. Cell phones, text messaging, instant messaging, social networking pages, and "tweets" have become the prevalent modes of communication.

These technologies are very useful and powerful sources of information and communication. However, the potential for anonymous communication, the rapid transmission of information (including photographic images) and the ability to transform images and data, have contributed to an increase in cyber bullying.

As these technologies continue to evolve, we must educate ourselves and work together to ensure that our children are using these technologies responsibly and safely to avoid instances of cyber bullying.

Bullying itself is not a crime, but it may constitute a criminal act if it meets the criteria of any one of a number of crimes.

Please consult with your local police department if you are unsure.

Some acts of bullying or cyber bullying may also result in investigation and prosecution by the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.



How We Can Help

The Middlesex District Attorney's Office's Family Protection Bureau and Cyber Protection Program, in connection with Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc. is available to help.

The Family Protection Bureau, comprised of the child, elder and disabled and domestic abuse units, investigates and prosecutes crimes in these areas. If there is a cyber component involved, the Middlesex District Attorney's Cyber Protection Program may also assist with the case. If you have questions, please call (781) 897-8400.

To Find Out More

Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc., with the Middlesex District Attorney's Office, provides educational and prevention trainings for school districts and parents throughout Middlesex County on bullying and cyber bullying. To find out more on the scope of services please call (781) 897-6800.



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Visit the following web sites
for more information on these programs

www.middlesexda.com
www.middlesexpartnershipsfor youth.org



STOP the Bullying



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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
MIDDLESEX PARTNERSHIPS FOR YOUTH, INC.

www.middlesexpartnershipsfor youth.org