

## **BULLY PREVENTION 101**

### **A Parent Primer**

As a parent, it is important to be aware of the prevalence of bullying in schools, on-line and in your neighborhood. Simply put, bullying is a pattern of behavior in which one or more children or adolescents single out someone to threaten, harm, embarrass, or frighten. Be aware that your son or daughter might be a victim of a bully or, possibly, the child who is bullying someone else.

Typically, this behavior occurs in the absence of an adult and is likely to go unreported. Examples of bullying include threats and intimidation, getting hit or any other physical attack, teasing, being excluded from a social group, spreading rumors, name calling, cyberbullying, or dating violence. It can include mean-spirited teasing about someone's physical characteristics or ethnic background. The bully thinks the misconduct is amusing, and may even believe the victim enjoys the attention.

#### **If you think that your son or daughter may be a victim of bullying:**

Be alert to changes in behavior and mood (avoidance of school, missing personal belongings, preferring to stay in the house). Listen to your child's concerns without overreacting or asking too many questions. Your son/daughter needs to feel your support, especially if the bullying becomes dangerous. Assure your son/daughter that you are always available to talk about any incident.

By all means involve your son/daughter in the plan to address the bullying behavior, as this is critical to establish their sense of personal control. Part of the solution may be to report the bullying to school authorities.

Reinforce the strengths and goodness of your child. Strengthening their self-confidence and self-esteem will build internal resources for dealing with the bullying and may make your child a less likely target.

#### **If you find out your son or daughter has been bullying others:**

Tell them what you have heard about their behavior and listen to what they have to say. If your suspicions are correct, consult your school psychologist or a community mental health provider for an assessment of your child. Provide consistent expectations and consequences for both their positive and negative behaviors.

School systems across the nation have been on "high alert" for many years to stop bullying, so if you decide to report the bullying to your child's principal, your concerns will likely be taken seriously. However if your principal does not seem responsive, be prepared to contact your school superintendent or school board representative.

The Code of Virginia specifies that "each school board shall include, in its code of student conduct, prohibitions against **bullying** (Code of Virginia 22.1-279.6A). Is this true at your child's school? Does it include cyberbullying?"

### **It's everyone's job to stop bullying.**

#### **Additional Resources**

[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying\\_fs.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying_fs.aspx)