

Understanding Bullying



The problem is widespread. More than 160,000 students miss school each day to avoid harassment and intimidation. Children with disabilities can be especially vulnerable.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. It is often repeated over time. It can take many forms, such as: hitting or punching; teasing or name calling; intimidation using gestures or social exclusion; and, sending insulting messages electronically. Kansas defines bullying as any intentional gesture or any intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical act or threat that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for a student or staff member that a reasonable person, under the circumstances, knows or should know will have the effect of:

- Harming a student or staff member whether physically or mentally;
- Damaging a student's or staff member's property;
- Placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of harm to the student or staff member;
- Placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of damage to the student's or staff member's property;
- cyberbullying; or,
- any other form of intimidation or harassment prohibited by the board of education of the school district.

Bullying can have serious consequences. Children and youth who are bullied are more likely to be depressed, lonely, anxious, have low self-esteem, be absent from school, feel sick, and think about suicide. Sometimes children don't tell their parents because they are embarrassed, ashamed, or frightened. If your child tells you, it has taken courage to do so.

For more information, visit www.familiestogetherinc.org or call the center nearest you:



Topeka	1.800.264.6343 or 785.233.4777
Garden City	1.888.820.6364 or 620.276.6364
Wichita	1.888.815.6364 or 316.945.7747
Kansas City	1.877.499.5369 or 913.287.1970
Spanish	1.800.499.9443

Talking with Your Child about Bullying

Parents should be ready to:

- *Listen.* It's the child's story—let him or her tell it.
- *Believe.* React in a way that encourages your child to trust.
- *Be supportive.* Empower your child and ensure your child understands it is not his or her fault.
- *Be patient.* Your child may not be ready to open up right away.
- *Explore options for intervention strategies.* Discuss with your child the options he or she may have in dealing with bullying.

Record Keeping

Parents need to document the events and develop a record of what is happening to their child. Records help keep a concise and accurate timeline of events and are helpful when talking with educators, law enforcement, or other individuals who may need to assist in intervention.

Content should include:

- Written information about the bullying incident
- The date of the event
- The persons involved
- The child's account of the event
- All communication with professionals (teachers, administrators, etc.)
- The date of the communication
- A discussion summary of the event
- The responses of the professional
- The action taken
- Reports filed by the school in accordance with the district policy.

Other methods for recording events may include pictures taken of the child to document any physical evidence, health care records that indicate bullying, or a tape recording of the child talking about the incident.

Working with Your School

- Review your district's bullying policies.
- Immediately meet with your child's teacher and explain concerns.
- Ask the teacher about his or her observations:
 - Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying?
 - How is your child getting along with others?
 - Has he or she noticed if your child is being isolated or excluded from activities?
 - Has your child complained of being sick more often?
- Ask what he or she intends to do to investigate and help stop the bullying.
- Set up a follow-up appointment to discuss progress.
- Keep notes from your meetings.
- Talk with the school principal if there is no improvement.

For more information about bullying, contact the Families Together Parent Center nearest you.