

10 Tips for Families to Prevent & Address Bullying

Washington State
Governor's Office of the

O Education
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Washington State's Definition of Bullying RCW 28A.300.285 defines bullying and harassment as: "Harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means any intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by any characteristic in RCW 9A.36.080(3), or other distinguishing characteristics, when the intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act:

- a. Physically harms a student or damages the student's property; or
- b. Has the effect of substantially disrupting a student's education; or
- c. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- d. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Nothing in this section requires the affected student to actually possess a characteristic that is a basis for the harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

Visit OEO's "A Parent's Role in Preventing Bullying, Harassment, Intimidation in Public Schools" at www.oeo.wa.gov.

1. Keep the lines of communication open.

Check in with your kids often. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns. Encourage them to share problems and concerns with you.

2. Help kids understand bullying.

Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Share that bullying is not about him/her, but more about the bully. Raise awareness so that victims and witnesses will feel comfortable enough to speak up.

3. Remind kids to stop and think before they say or do something that could hurt someone.

Model compassion and respect. Children learn by imitating parents and adults. Be a good example for your child.

4. Thoroughly investigate the situation.

Take the time to fully understand what happened, who was involved, and how it all started. Getting to the root cause of the behavior will help you develop an appropriate response – whether your child was the target or the bully.

5. Encourage youth to tell the aggressor that this is bullying and it is not appropriate.

Let your child know it's appropriate to walk away to a safer place. Tell them to report the incident to a school staff member who will listen.

6. Learn about your child's school's bullying policies.

Emphasize that the school staff cares about safety and has a process to assist your child. If your child is bullied, schedule a meeting with school staff.

7. Talk to other parents to raise awareness.

Determine the extent to which bullying is occurring among other kids. Alert other parents if your child is being bullied as this will prompt them to ask about their kids own experiences.

8. Find out about your school district's anti-bullying policy and procedures.

Become familiar with what your district's policy says. School district policies are posted on districts' websites on the School Board pages.

9. Make sure your child feels (and is) safe and secure.

Convey unconditional support. Parents must demonstrate to their children through words and actions that they both desire the same end result: that the bullying stop.

10. Watch for emotional distress.

If your child shows signs of emotional distress seek help immediately.