

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is an unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves an imbalance of real or perceived power between individuals with the intent to cause harm. Students who are the targets of bullying behavior and those who exhibit bullying behavior toward others may suffer serious, lasting consequences. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must include:

A **Deliberate Act**: To cause emotional or physical harm to another individual.

An **Imbalance of Power**: Those who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and vary in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

Repetition: Bullying behaviors that display more than one time or have the potential to happen more than once.

Verbal, Social/Psychological/Relational, and Physical are three types of bullying outlined by the federal government and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Verbal Bullying is saying or writing hurtful things. Examples include:

- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

Social Bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves harming someone's reputation or relationships. Examples include:

- Leaving someone out of an activity on purpose
- Influencing others not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public

Physical Bullying involves inflicting harm upon a person's body or damaging their possessions. Examples include:

- Hitting/kicking/pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's possessions
- Making cruel or rude hand gestures

Students can play the role of bully (instigator/perpetrator of bullying behavior), of target (recipient/object of bullying behavior), or of bystander (witness/observer of bullying behavior). Students may play one or more of these roles at different times.

Cyberbullying can involve all three types of bullying and takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets, as well as communication tools including social media sites,

text messages, chat and website. This type of bullying is becoming more prevalent every day. Examples include:

- Demeaning or hateful text messages or emails
- Rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites
- Embarrassing pictures, videos, website, or fake profiles posted online

Why is Cyberbullying Different? Students who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, students who are cyberbullied have a more difficult time escaping the negative behavior.

- Cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a student when he or she is alone and/or when in their own home.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

Common Signs that a Student is a Target of Bullying Include:

- Physical cuts or injuries
- Lost or broken personal items
- Fear of going to school/practice/games
- Loss of interest in school, activities, or friends
- Trouble sleeping or eating
- Anxious/sick/nervous behavior or distracted appearance
- Self-destructiveness or displays of odd behavior
- Decreased self-esteem

Important Fact: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found 20 percent of high school-aged students have experienced some form of bullying on school grounds in their lifetime. It is also alarming to note that more than 160,000 United States students stay home from school each day for fear of being bullied; 8 percent of students miss one day of class per month due to fear of being targeted by a bully; and more than 280,000 students are physically attacked in secondary schools each month.

Adults and bystanders (those who witness incidents) need to step up and help students and classmates who are being bullied. Students are often reluctant to report bullying incidents out of fear of being labeled as a “snitch” or fear that bullying will increase if it is reported. Students should be encouraged to report bullying incidents and be praised when they do so.

Resources

Please visit the federal government’s Stopbullying.gov website at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Please visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website at <https://www.hhs.gov/>

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov–Bullying Training Prevention Center web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/index.html>

Please visit the Eyes on Bullying website at <http://eyesonbullying.org/>

Please visit the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program website at <http://www.violencepreventionworks.org>

Please visit the PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center website at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/>

Please visit the Keenan School Safety Center and receive free training at <https://www.keenan.com/bullying-prevention-2/>

Please visit the National Alliance for Youth Sports and receive free training at <http://www.nays.org/resources/more/free-bullying-prevention-training/>

What Is Cyberbullying and How Can We Address It?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place via electronic communications or digital devices such as cell phones, tablets, or computers. It is deliberate harassing, intimidating, shaming, or otherwise targeting another person via electronic devices. Cyberbullying is a serious act that has lasting consequences.

Cyberbullying commonly occurs on social media as: text messaging through devices; instant messaging through devices; email provider services; social media message features; diary sites; interactive games; online profiles; Apps; and more. With easy access and the prevalence of such media and digital forums, personal content can be viewed by strangers as well as acquaintances. Racism, intolerance, and fear can also play a role.

Cyberbullying has special aspects. It can be persistent, permanent, and/or hard to notice. When it is persistent, it can be difficult for students experiencing it to find relief. When the cyberbullying is posted online, it becomes publicly available and may lead to a negative online reputation impacting college admissions, employment, and other areas of life. Cyberbullying is harder to recognize since educators and parents may not overhear or see it taking place. Similar to acts of bullying, students may be reluctant to report cyberbullying due to humiliation or embarrassment.

Some types of online or electronic conduct are crimes. The underlying challenge to determining criminal acts is that cyberbullying can take many forms and can violate a number of disparate criminal statutes dependent on the underlying content. As examples, but not an exhaustive list, statutory violations can include:

- Identity Theft, Penal Code section 530.5; here the harasser assumes the identity of the victims and creates a social media page or communication that appears to come from the victim. This is also a violation of Penal Code section 529, false personation.
- Unlawful recording, Penal Code section 632; here the harasser records the victim without their knowledge and posts the conversation.

- Cyber exploitation generally. See <https://oag.ca.gov/cyberexploitation>. A list of crimes can be found at <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ce/cyber-exploitation-post.pdf>.

Unfortunately, cyberbullying is not limited to a specified form of conduct. It's only limit is that of the human imagination to cause harm and perpetrators are consistently adopting new technology and innovate techniques to accomplish their goals.

How Can Cyberbullying Be Prevented?

- **Administrators, trusted adults, and parents can advise students**
 - To never share passwords, personal data, or private photos online.
 - To think about what they are doing carefully before posting and by emphasizing that comments cannot be retracted once they are posted.
 - That personal information revealed on social media can be shared with anyone including parents, teachers, administrators, and potential employers. Students should never reveal information that would make them uncomfortable if the world had access to it.
 - To consider how it would feel receiving such comments before making comments about others online.

What Can Be Done about Cyberbullying?

- Targets should be encouraged to tell parents or a trusted adult. Targets should be encouraged to talk to someone at school such as a counselor, teacher, nurse, coach, or principal. Targets should be assured they do not have to deal with cyberbullying alone.
- In order to secure evidence of cyberbullying for reporting purposes, targets should be encouraged to save all communications, including emails, posts, screenshots, and messages, and not to delete them.
- Targets should be encouraged to report to social media sources any harassing comments, inappropriate photos or information, or fake profiles.
- Social media has been a source of bullying and conflicts that can carry over into the school setting and contribute to an emotionally or physically unsafe environment. When this occurs, school administrators are obligated to take action.
- School administrators need to provide assistance to students who are bullied online.
 - By encouraging students not to share, "like," or participate in online bullying.
 - By encouraging students to report the incident(s) to a trusted adult.
 - By encouraging students to reach out to targets of bullying and respond with positive support.

Online behavior through social media channels has been a growing source of bullying and conflicts that carry over into the school setting, which can contribute to an environment that can be emotionally or even physically unsafe. When this occurs school administrators are obligated to take disciplinary action.

Resources

Please see the PACER CENTER's Teens Against Bullying: Cyberbullying—What is Cyberbullying? web page at <https://www.pacerteensagainstabullying.org/experiencing-bullying/cyber-bullying/>

Please see Stopbullying.gov's—Official United States Government Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyberbullying Laws and Policies for California web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/california/index.html>

Please see the California Attorney General's Cyberbullying web page at <https://oag.ca.gov/cybersafety/children/cyberbullying>

Please see the Connect Safely—Tips to Help Stop Cyberbullying web page at <http://www.connectsafely.org/tips-to-help-stop-cyberbullying/>

Please see the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Please visit the End to Cyberbullying Organization at <http://www.endcyberbullying.org/5-different-types-of-cyberbullying/>

What Roles Do Students Play?

There are many roles a student can play when it comes to bullying. For example, they can be both a target of bullying and the instigator of bullying or they may witness bullying and even defend against bullying in some cases. This is important to note as studies have shown cases involving students who are both bullied and who bully others are often at a greater risk of having an unstable mental and physical state in their lifetime.

It is important to understand the difference between the roles of the target, the witness/bystander, and the perpetrator, and how a student can play different roles depending on the circumstances. Understanding these roles will help prevent bullying from occurring and help in reacting properly when it does occur.

Students Directly Involved in Bullying: A student is directly involved in bullying when they are the one who is bullying others or are the target of bullying. These students are often perceived as the only two individuals involved in the bullying situation.

- **Students Who Engage in Bullying Behavior:** These are students engaging in bullying behavior toward their peers. There are many factors that contribute to this behavior, including: parenting styles, domestic violence in homes, siblings or peers who engage in bullying, tolerance in the community, and school climate, among many others. Often, these students require the support of educators to explain the consequences of bullying and to put an end to the inappropriate behavior. Adults should also address other challenges the student may be facing that are influencing their inappropriate behavior.

- **Students Who Are Bullied:** These are students who are the target of bullying behavior. Some factors put students at greater risk of being bullied, such as low self-esteem, not being a member of a strong social group, being perceived as weak or different, and countless other factors. However, not all students with these characteristics are targets of bullying. Sometimes, these students may need a parent, teacher, school counselor, or coach to listen and focus on their needs, or they may need to be assured that bullying is not their fault and learn how to respond to being bullied.

Students Indirectly Involved in Bullying (Bystanders): A student might not be directly involved in bullying but they can often be affected by observing the behavior. Through witnessing bullying, a student may experience an increased likelihood of distress, school absenteeism or truancy, and depression throughout their lifetime. Therefore, it is important for each student to learn what to do when they witness bullying or other forms of abuse. Roles students play when they witness bullying include:

- **Students Who Assist:** These are students who may not initiate the bullying or instigate the action, but serve as an "assistant" to their peers who are bullying others. These students may cheer the bullying behavior to continue and occasionally join in.
- **Students Who Reinforce:** These are students who are not directly involved in the bullying behavior but who give the student who bullies an audience by standing by and watching. Oftentimes they will laugh or provide support for the individuals who are engaging in bullying. As a result, this frequently encourages the inappropriate behavior to continue.
- **Outsiders:** These are students who are bystanders to the bullying but do not support the bullying behavior or in any way protect the student being bullied. They often watch what is going on but do not provide feedback about the situation for fear of taking sides. Nonetheless, by being an outsider and providing an audience to the student who bullies, this frequently encourages the bullying behavior to continue. Outsiders often want to help the individual who is being bullied, but do not know how or are fearful of getting involved because they do not want to experience retaliation.
- **Students Who Defend:** These are students who actively console the student being bullied and may come to the student's defense either through verbal or physical means when bullying occurs.

Administrators should inform students that they have an important and urgent responsibility to alert appropriate adults when they witness bullying. Every situation and student is different. It is important that all students learn the dangerous outcomes that bullying presents and how they can help prevent it from happening in their everyday life.

Try Not to Label Students: When referring to students involved in bullying, do not categorize students as "bullies" or "victims." These terms send the message that a student will be identified by these roles. As previously stated, students play multiple roles in different bullying situations over time. Peer pressure and school environment can also contribute to student behavior. Refer to those individuals involved as "the student who bullied," "the student who was the target of bullying" or "the student who was both bullied and bullied others."

Resources

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov–Bullying Prevention Training Center web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/index.html>

Please visit the PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center web page at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/>

Where Does Bullying Occur?

Bullying can occur anywhere and at any time. It can happen before, during, or after school hours, and before, during, or after events, athletic practices, and games. While most reported bullying occurs in a school building, a significant percentage also occurs on the playground, on the bus, in bathrooms, at school-sponsored dances and events, and during athletic events. It can also occur while travelling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or on social media.

At School: Bullying occurs most often at school, whether it is on the playground, in the classroom, in the bathroom, in the cafeteria, or in hallways. Statistics show that every seven minutes a student is bullied on a playground and 43 percent of students fear harassment in the bathroom at school. Bullying can also occur on the way to school as students of different ages ride the school bus and are forced to be in close contact with one another. Also, many students struggle to be accepted by their peers at school and unfortunately, this setting provides an audience for bullying behavior to occur. School faculty members cannot always be present when bullying incidents occur, so educating students about bullying is a key prevention technique to limit bullying from happening. In addition, during school hours students need to report any type of bullying to a faculty member. It is important to monitor known bullying situations, and pay close attention to any tension that carries over from school to outside venues.

During an Athletic Event: The student who bullies others may try to prove their power by targeting a perceived weaker student through one of the three forms of bullying. The student who bullies, unfortunately, will often gain the support of other students on the team who do not wish to be bullied or perceived as unpopular. Examples of what may instigate bullying include: difference in equipment and clothing, appearance, social skills, and even athletic ability during the activity.

At Home: This type of bullying often includes cyberbullying. In the past, a student could escape being bullied by other students by returning to the security of their home. Today with the range of electronic devices to which students have access, bullying can occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week with no safe haven, not even in one's home. Social media, emails, cell phones, texting, and online profiles have given those students who bully a large audience to whom they express their negative and hurtful comments. It is alarming to note that 19 percent of students admit to saying something hurtful to or about others online. In recent years, this type of bullying has had serious impact, including depression and even suicides in children and young adults. Students should try to limit their exposure to students who bully and report to authorities when bullying does not cease.

Resources:

Please visit the StopBullying.gov—Facts About Bullying web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/media/facts/index.html>

Please visit the Keep Your Child Safe—Bullying Prevention Programs web page at <http://www.keepyourchildsafe.org/bullying/where-bullying-occurs.html>

Please visit the National Alliance for Youth Sports web page at <http://www.nays.org/resources/more/free-bullying-prevention-training/>

How Do We Prevent Bullying?

Include and practice the following bullying prevention strategies to help prevent students from developing bullying behaviors:

Stop Bullying at a Young Age: Some students engage in aggressive behavior at an early age that may be a precursor to bullying. It is important to address and stop this behavior before it becomes an established pattern with the student.

Teach Prevention: Do not assume that only aggressive or vulnerable students are involved in bullying. Most students, regardless of their demeanor, will experience bullying to some degree at some point during their childhood. All students can benefit from learning the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. They should also learn how to advocate for themselves and others, and when to go to an adult for help.

Take Bullying Seriously: Many dismiss bullying as “kids just being kids” or as it being a normal part of growing up, however, bullying needs to be taken seriously. If you notice warning signs that a student is bullying or is the target of bullying, you should discuss the matter with the student immediately. Students must know that bullying in any form will not be tolerated. Regardless if the student is the instigator of the bullying, or is the target of the bullying, it is the adult’s responsibility to address the issue with the student to ensure the behavior stops.

Encourage Compassion: Students should be aware that bullying is hurtful both emotionally and physically. When a student practices compassion and realizes the repercussions of one’s actions, they are more likely to come forward and help a student who is being bullied.

Model Desired Behavior: As a child matures, they learn how to behave by watching and imitating the adults in their lives. By adults demonstrating effective problem-solving, anger management, and self-confidence skills, youth are more likely to behave in a similar manner.

Clarify Media Violence: Students are exposed to many types of violence in video games, movies, and television every day, and without proper adult direction may think aggressive responses are acceptable in real life. Adults need to emphasize to students that this hateful and/or demeaning behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable in our society. If a student begins to act out in a violent or hurtful manner, you need to immediately intervene.

Demonstrate Desired Qualities: Helping students gain confidence is important. Use sample situations to help students learn and practice appropriate behavior. Students with the confidence to stand up to bullying will be less likely to be bullied and they will often come to the defense of others. Students develop confidence through developing techniques and strategies to respond in a non-aggressive way to bullying-type behaviors.

Talk About and Report Bullying: Students should not be afraid to report bullying to an administrator, a school faculty member, a coach, or any significant adult in their life. Students need to feel secure about reporting bullying and feel free from retaliation for reporting. Adults should listen carefully and provide support to students who come forward to report bullying or other similar issues.

Build Strong Relationships with Students: Students will be less likely to bully if they respect and trust the adults in their lives. They will also be more likely to confide in those adults.

Follow School Rules: Parents should be advised of school policies on the use of technology in and out of the classroom and help their children understand and comply with the rules.

Communicate and Implement Bullying Prevention Policies: Parents, students, and all school personnel should know and follow bullying prevention program policies. Policies should be included in Parent/Student Handbooks. California Department of Education recommends that these policies also be included in the Comprehensive School Safety Plan.

Be Aware of Protected Student Groups: All students are allowed to attend public school. It is an inclusive educational environment. Be prepared to educate students to accept all student peers regardless of sexual orientation, gender identification, physical or cognitive disabilities, race, ethnicity, and religion.

Resources

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov–Bullying Training Prevention Center web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/index.html>

Please visit the Eyes on Bullying–Toolkit website at <http://eyesonbullying.org/>

Please visit the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and Resources web page at <http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/index.page>

Please visit the PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center web page at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/>

How Do We Respond to Bullying?

Intervene Immediately: Disregarding bullying will send the message that it is acceptable or even encouraged. By ignoring the problem, or not taking it seriously, students who are being bullied may feel as though the adults in their lives do not understand or care for them. If they find themselves dealing with a dangerous situation in the future, they are less likely to seek help. If there is no adult intervention, a student who witnesses an act of bullying also may not intervene. When adults see bullying occur, it is critical to intervene immediately.

Intervene Even If You Suspect: You may be unsure whether a situation involves bullying or not, but you should not hesitate to act if you sense a problem, even if you are unsure whether or not the situation involves bullying. You should be able to determine if bullying is occurring through observation of student behavior, body language, and facial expressions.

Respond Decisively: If you notice a student exhibiting bullying behavior, remain calm, talk with them privately, and express the seriousness of the situation you have witnessed. Explain why the behavior is unacceptable and point out that they would not like being the target of bullying behavior.

Do not Overreact: Using aggressive behavior or loud tones sends the wrong message to a student and it is not the proper way to solve the problem. Remain calm and in control of your emotions when dealing with bullying individuals. If you cannot remain calm, then move the discussion to the office of another adult who can remain calm, like a school counselor or school administrator.

Avoid Lecturing a Student: Do not lecture a student who bullies in front of their peers. You want to end the behavior, but not demean or shame the student. Discuss the situation with the student in private to resolve it.

Do not Ask the Student to “Work Things Out” for Themselves: For a student, bullying is a serious problem in their life and without help they are not likely to be able to resolve the matter on their own. In these situations they will often feel inferior to the other students involved and will need adult intervention to help resolve the issue.

Give Praise When it is Due: If you notice a student or another bystander helping a bullying victim or stopping unacceptable behavior, praise them for their actions. Far too often, witnesses stand by and do nothing when someone is being bullied.

Coach Students to Advocate for Themselves: Following are some helpful tips to empower students to appropriately respond to bullying:

- Take a deep breath and exhale slowly.
- Stand tall with their head held high.
- Keep hands at their sides and stand slightly sideways to an aggressor. Do not face the aggressor with squared shoulders, as a front-facing stance may be perceived as posturing for a fight.
- Have a relaxed and focused facial expression, not angry or laughing.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Speak with a calm voice but loud enough to be heard by the student who is bullying or those who are witnesses.
- Use non-confrontational words but with a confident tone of voice.
- Avoid name-calling or making threats.
- Avoid finger-pointing or other threatening gestures.
- Be brief and direct with your responses.
- Avoid discussing old grudges.

What Students Should Be Told about Bullying

- Bullying will not be tolerated or accepted.
- Stand up for yourself, walk away, or ask a friend or adult for help if a student bothers you.
- Do not fight back as this will usually make the situation worse and it rarely solves the problem.
- Report bullying when you see it or hear about it.
- Work together and treat others with respect so bullying does not happen.

- Report any cyberbullying to a trusted adult immediately.

What To Tell Students if They Witness Bullying

- Do not stand by and watch—your involvement makes a difference.
- Stand up for those being bullied. Tell the person doing the bullying to stop by using phrases such as “Stop teasing!” “Do not fight!” “Leave them alone!” and “It is not funny!”
- Do not laugh, participate, or watch the bullying occur as this encourages the behavior to continue.
- Help the student being bullied walk away. A student being bullied may be afraid to leave on their own. In addition, someone who bullies will often not harass multiple students.
- Encourage outsiders to help the student being bullied.
- Tell others who are assisting or reinforcing the behavior to stop immediately and not to join in.
- Report or seek immediate help from a school staff member, coach, or trusted adult.
- After an incident, console the student being bullied by expressing your compassion for them and encourage them to talk with an adult; you might accompany them to speak with the adult to lend moral support.
- Report any cyberbullying of which you are aware; do not forward or like online messages that are acts of cyberbullying.

Resources

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov—Respond to Bullying: Stop Bullying on the Spot web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/on-the-spot/index.html>

Please visit the Kids Health—Helping Kids Deal with Bullies web page at <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/bullies.html>

Please visit the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and Resources web page at <http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/index.page>

Please visit the PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center web page at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/>

Bullying and Students with Disabilities

Every student deserves to thrive in a safe school and classroom free from fear, disrespect, violence, and bullying of all kinds. This includes students with disabilities, who are more likely to be bullied and cyberbullied than students without disabilities.

Top 10 Facts that Parents, Educators, and Students Should Know:

1. The definition—Bullying includes repeated hateful acts and a real or perceived imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or psychological/relational. Cyberbullying is a distinct type of bullying in which the victim is targeted online. It can also take the form of sexual harassment.

The Office for Civil Rights and the Department of Justice have stated that bullying may also be considered harassment when it is based on a student's race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion.

Harassing behaviors may include:

- Unwelcome conduct such as verbal abuse, name calling, epithets, or slurs
 - Graphic or written statements
 - Threats
 - Physical assault
 - Other conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating
2. The statistics—Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers.

Although only 10 U.S. studies have been conducted on the connection between bullying and developmental disabilities, all of these studies found that children with disabilities were two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers. (Disabilities: Insights from Across Fields and Around the World; Marshall, Kendall, Baniks and Gover [Eds.], 2009)

3. The impact—Bullying affects a student's ability to learn. When students are bullied, it can directly impact all aspects of their education and social-emotional development.

Bullying is not a harmless rite of childhood that everyone experiences. Research shows that bullying can negatively impact a child's access to education and lead to:

- School avoidance and higher rates of absenteeism
- Decrease in grades
- Inability to concentrate
- Loss of interests in academic achievement
- Increase in dropout rates

Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth are confronted with daunting challenges socially, academically, physiologically, and are highly prone to bullying. Due to language deprivation, they experience cognitive limitations and psycho-social difficulties and are unable to communicate with others without the use of sign language interpreters.

Resources

Please visit the U.S. Department of Education–Disability Bullying and Harassment web page at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/pro-students/issues/dis-issue08.html>

Please visit the California Department of Education Position Statement on Language Access web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/positionstmt.asp>

Please visit the PACER National Bullying Prevention Center–Bullying and Harassment of Students with Disabilities web page at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/students-with-disabilities/>

Please visit the American Society for Deaf Children web page at <http://deafchildren.org/about/>

Please visit the National Association of the Deaf web page at <https://www.nad.org/about-us/>

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov–Keeping Students with Disabilities Safe from Bullying web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/blog/2013/08/23/keeping-students-disabilities-safe-bullying.html>

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov–Keeping Students with Special Needs Safe from Bullying web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/special-needs/index.html>

Bullying and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth (LGBTQ) and those youth perceived as LGBTQ are disproportionately harassed and bullied and continue to experience an increased risk of being bullied and cyberbullied.

California also has two data sources that can further illuminate what LGBTQ face in California’s public school:

1. The California Healthy Kids Survey at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/re/>
2. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/re/>

Additional data specifically related to LGBTQ youth can be found on the Chapman University web page at <https://www.chapman.edu/education/research/health-and-safety.aspx/>

LGBTQ youth experience high rates of substance use, depression, self-harm behavior, and suicide. According to Mental Health America, gay teen in U.S. schools are often subjected to such intense bullying that they are unable to receive an adequate education. LGBTQ youth identify bullying problems as the second most important problem in their lives, after non-accepting families. They experience academic decline, higher absenteeism due to feeling unsafe, and often have nowhere to turn for support.

Strategies to prevent and address bullying of LGBTQ youth require special consideration. It is essential to create a safe environment for all youth.

Creating a Safe Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth

It is important to build a safe environment for all youth, whether they are straight or LGBTQ. All youth can thrive when they feel supported. Parents, schools, and communities can all play a role in helping LGBTQ youth feel physically and emotionally safe:

- Build strong connections and keep the lines of communication open. Some LGBTQ youth often feel rejected. It is important for them to know that their families, friends, schools, and communities support them.
- Establish a safe environment at school. Schools can send a message that no one should be treated differently because they are, or are perceived to be, LGBTQ. Sexual orientation and gender identity protection can be added to school policies.
- Create gay-straight alliances (GSAs). GSAs help create safer schools. Schools must allow these groups if they have other “non-curricular” clubs or groups. Protect privacy. Be careful not to disclose or discuss issues around being LGBTQ with parents or anyone else.

According to Mental Health America, the Following Actions Can Help

- Be alert to signs of distress.
- Work with student councils to have programs on respect, school safety, and anti-bullying.
- Ask school personnel to have a discussion at an assembly or after-school activity about gay prejudice.
- Help start a Gay Lesbian Straight Educational Alliance chapter at your local high school.
- Encourage anyone who is being bullied to tell a teacher, counselor, coach, nurse, or parent or guardian. If the bullying continues, report it yourself.

Resources

Please visit the California Department of Education–Statewide and Natural Sexual Health Resources web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/se/resources.asp>

Please visit the California Department of Education–Legal Advisor regarding application of California’s antidiscrimination statutes to transgender youth in schools web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/eo/legaladvisory.asp>

Please visit the GSA Network (Gay Straight Alliance Network) web page at <https://gsanetwork.org/ca>

Please visit the GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Educator Network) website at <https://www.glsen.org/>

Please visit the Health and Safety of LGBT Youth in California web page at <https://www.chapman.edu/education/research/health-and-safety.aspx>

Please visit the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)–How to be an LGBTQ Ally web page at <https://www.hrc.org/blog/how-to-be-an-lgbt-ally>

Please visit the Los Angeles LGBT Center–Out for Safe Schools web page at <https://lalgbtcenter.org/out-for-safe-schools>

Please visit the Stopbullying.gov–LGBTQ Youth web page at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/index.html>

Please visit the Mental Health America–Bullying and LGBT Youth fact sheet at <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/sites/default/files/BACK%20TO%20SCHOOL%202014%20-%20Bullying%20and%20LGBT%20Youth.pdf>

Please visit the Mental Health America–Bullying and LGBT Youth web page at <http://http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/bullying-and-gay-youth.mentalhealthamerica.net/bullying-and-gay-youth>

Please see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

Please see U.S. Department of Education–to learn more about the right to form a GSA under the Equal Access Act <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/110607.html>