PARENTS

Bullying is a public health problem.

Bullying has long been tolerated by many people as a rite of passage among children and teens. But bullying is not a normal part of childhood. It is a serious public health problem. **Bullying harms the child who is bullied, the child who is the bully, and the bystanders.**

There are four main types of bullying:

1. **Physical bullying** involves the use of physical force (such as shoving, hitting, spitting, pushing, and tripping).

2. **Verbal bullying** involves words or writing that cause harm (such as taunting, name calling, offensive notes or hand gestures, verbal threats).

3. **Relational bullying** is behavior designed to harm the reputation and relationships of the targeted youth (such as social isolation, rumor-spreading, posting mean comments or pictures online).

4. **Damage to property** is theft or damaging of the target youth's property by the bully in order to cause harm.

Cyberbullying is not a separate type of bullying, but a way in which some types of bullying can happen. For example, verbal bullying and relational bullying can happen online.

Bullying can happen as early as preschool, but bullying is most likely to happen during middle school. It can happen in many different settings – in classrooms, in school gyms and cafeterias, on school buses, and online.

THE LANDSCAPE OF BULLYING

The National Academies of
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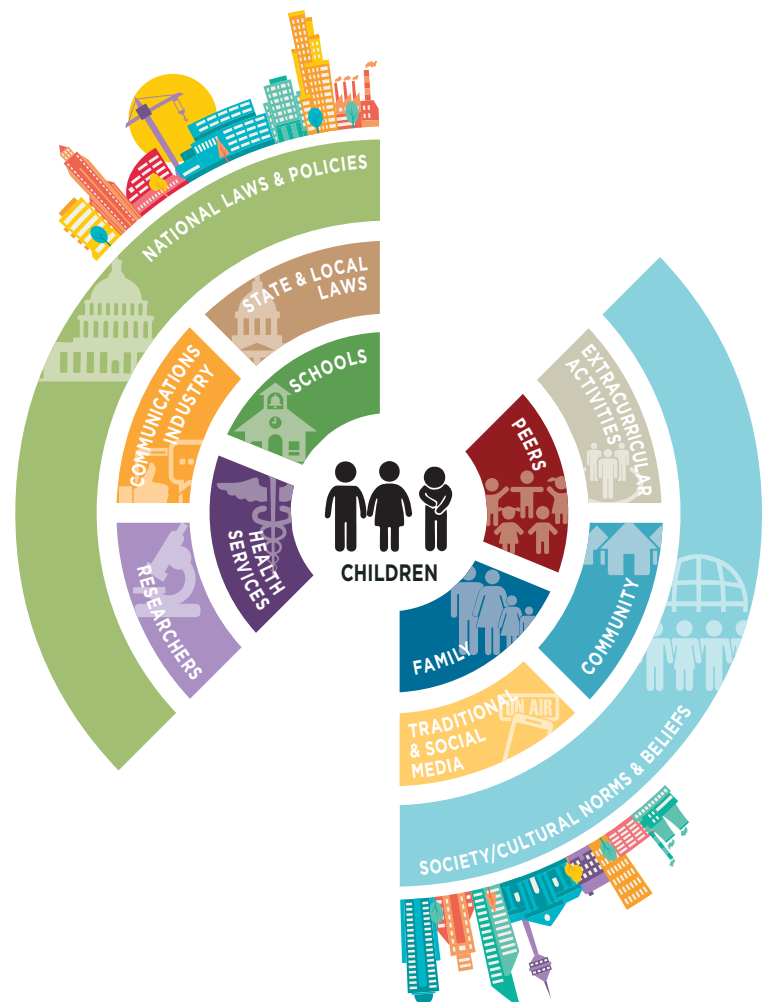
Bullying affects a large number of children and youth.

School-based bullying probably affects between 18 and 31 percent of children and youth, and cyberbullying probably affects about 7 percent to 15 percent of youth. Some young people are more likely to be bullied: youth with disabilities, obese youth, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth.

## The harm caused by bullying can last a long time.

Bullying can have long-lasting effects on youth who are bullied, for youth who bully others, and for youth who witness bullying. These consequences include poor school performance, anxiety, depression, and future delinquent and aggressive behavior. The harmful results of being bullied can last into adulthood.

Bullying can have long-lasting consequences for those who are bullied:

- Children and youth who have been bullied can experience problems such as sleeping problems, headaches, stomachaches, and bedwetting.

- Psychological problems are also common after being bullied, and can include depression, anxiety, and especially for girls, self-harming behavior. Anger, aggression, use of alcohol, and conduct problems are common, especially for boys.

- Children and youth who have been bullied can suffer academic problems such as poor grades or test scores.

- The harmful consequences of being bullied can last into adulthood.

- Children and youth who both bully others and are bullied themselves are at even greater risk of experiencing harm as a result.

- Individuals who are bullied or who bully others — or both — are much more likely to consider or attempt suicide, compared to children who are not involved in bullying.

Bullying CAN Be Prevented.

Reducing the presence and impact of bullying will require many groups working together: families and schools, communities, health care workers, the media and social media, and federal and state governments and agencies.
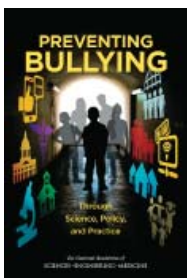
www.nas.edu/ScienceOnBullying

What Parents Can do to Prevent and Respond to Bullying

A child or youth's connectedness to other people has been shown to be a significant buffer against problems caused by being bullied. Families are one of the strongest influences on children's development. Because of this, families can also play a role in bullying prevention.

Parents can:

- Recognize symptoms that may mean a child is being bullied:

  - Physical injuries, headaches, sleep disturbances, or other physical symptoms that aren't fully explained by a known medical condition.

  - Depression, anxiety, self-harming behavior (common for girls) and anger, aggression, and engagement in risky and impulsive behavior (more common for boys). Children's grades or test scores may be negatively impacted as well.

  - Children who are both perpetrators and targets of bullying may have poor peer relationships, health problems, and aggression.

- Be aware that other factors in the home can be associated with being a perpetrator or target of bullying, such as domestic violence, abuse, and behavior such as bullying among siblings or cousins.

- Create opportunities for positive social involvement in the family, which can lessen a child's chances of being involved in antisocial behavior such as perpetrating bullying.

- Parental support may protect teens from multiple forms of bullying, including cyberbullying. This can include spending time with your teens, talking through their worries, taking an interest in school work, or helping with planning for the future.

- Get involved in implementing evidence-based antibullying programs in your child's school. The most effective programs appear to be those that combine elements that involve all students, such as providing class time to discuss bullying, with more targeted interventions for youth at risk of bullying or being bullied—for example, teaching more intensive social and emotional skills. See Chapter 5 of this report for detailed descriptions of programs.

- Be aware of anti-bullying laws and policies in your states and local school district. In the past 15 years, all fifty states and the District of Columbia have adopted or revised laws on bullying. Many state laws require school districts or schools to implement policies but allow school districts or schools to determine specific policy content. Emerging evidence suggests that anti-bullying laws and policies can have a positive impact on reducing bullying and on protecting groups that are especially vulnerable to bullying, such as gay and lesbian youth. See Chapter 6 of this report for more information about law and policy.

Parents should be aware of bullying prevention strategies that have NO evidence of effectiveness:

- Suspension and related exclusionary techniques, such as zero-tolerance policies. These approaches do not appear to be effective and may actually result in increased academic and behavioral problems for youth. There is little evidence that zero-tolerance policies have curbed bullying or made schools safer.

- Encouraging youth to fight back when bullied. This suggests that aggression is an effective way to respond to being a target of bullying and may perpetuate the cycle of violence

- Some peer-led approaches. Peer mediation, peer-led conflict resolution, forced apologies, and peer mentoring may not be appropriate or effective in bullying prevention.

- Conflict resolution approaches, even when facilitated by adults, are not typically recommended in situations of bullying, as they suggest a disagreement between two peers of equal status or power, rather than an instance of peer abuse.

- Grouping youth who bully together may reinforce their aggressive behaviors and result in higher rates of bullying.

- Short-term awareness raising events or brief assemblies. There is little evidence that such events, particularly those that focus on youth suicide, are effective at changing a climate of bullying or producing sustainable effects on bullying behavior.

Federal Resources for Parents

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Bullying Prevention for Parents: Podcast
  http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=8622473

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- Bullying Conversation Starter Cards for Parents
  http://store.samhsa.gov/product/15-Make-Time-To-Listen-Take-Time-To-Talk-About-Bullying-Conversation-Starter-Cards/SMA08-4321

- Know Bullying App
  http://store.samhsa.gov/product/KnowBullying-Put-the-power-to-prevent-bullying-in-your-hand/PEP14-KNOWBULLYAPP

United States Department of Education

- What You Can Do: Parents
  http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-you-can-do/parents/

- Understanding the Roles of Parents and Caregivers in Community-Wide Bullying Prevention Efforts
  http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/hrsa_guide_parents-and-caregivers_508v2.pdf

- Prevent Bullying: Engage Parents and Youth
  http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/engage-parents/

- Bullying at Camp – What Parents Should Know!
  http://www.stopbullying.gov/blog/2013/07/30/bullying-camp-what-parents-should-know

- Take Action Today: How Families and Students Can Take the Lead in Creating Safer School Environments
  http://www.stopbullying.gov/blog/2014/09/16/take-action-today-how-families-and-students-can-take-lead-creating-safer-school