Bullying & Cyberbullying
What We Need to Know

A Reference for Parents and Guardians
The Province of Nova Scotia acknowledges the significant contribution PREVNet made to this booklet. PREVNet is a Canadian network of researchers and organizations working together to stop bullying in Canada. We thank PREVNet for allowing us to use information from its book and website: Bullying Prevention: What Parents Need to Know and www.prevnet.ca.

Produced and published through Communications Nova Scotia for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.


The booklet uses the word “parents” throughout to mean both parents and guardians.

Communications Nova Scotia uses “they” as a genderless singular pronoun. We have chosen it as the most elegant solution to the need for a gender-neutral singular pronoun. The singular “they” is not new to English but a return to a usage common before grammarian Anne Fisher advocated the use of “he” for both sexes in A New Grammar, published in 1745, an approach now out of fashion.
SECTION 1:
How to use this booklet
SECTION 1:

Introduction

As parents, we care deeply for our children and want the best for them. That is why you are being given this booklet. We know you want to do all you can to make your child as happy and healthy as possible.

Bullying hurts all children—those who see bullying, those who are bullied, and those who bully others.

You can help your child when you know what bullying is. This booklet will help you to know what to watch for, what you can do, and where you can go for help.

How to use this booklet

This booklet is divided into 4 sections:
1. About bullying
2. Bullying at different ages
3. Parent resources
4. What is Nova Scotia doing?

About bullying

This section is about bullying in general. In it, you will find

• definitions of bullying and cyberbullying
• examples of the different kinds of bullying
• tips on how to be a responsible digital citizen
• legal consequences for parents of children found to have bullied others through the use of computers, cell phones, or other mobile devices
• reasons why some children bully others
• the effects of bullying on those who see it, those who do it, and those who are bullied
• tips on how to teach children and youth about empathy, feelings, and respect

Bullying at different ages

This section is divided into 3 parts:
1. The early years
2. Elementary school
3. Teens
The early years

The early years section focuses on teaching young children the language and behaviours they need to get along well with others. The focus is on preventing bullying through teaching and modelling the behaviours we would like to see in our children.

Elementary school

The elementary school section focuses on preventing bullying, but it also gives you information on how to help your child do the following:

- respond when they see bullying behaviour
- respond properly when they are bullied
- repair relationships and learn from bullying behaviour

In this section you will learn what bullying among elementary school children looks like. You will get a brief introduction to cyberbullying. And you will find examples of how to help your child, whether they see bullying, are bullied themselves, or have bullied others.

Teens

As in the section on elementary school, this section gives you information on how to do these things:

- prevent bullying
- help your teen respond to bullying when they see it
- help your teen respond properly when they are bullied
- help your teen repair relationships and learn from bullying behaviour

This section includes a discussion on the role of technology in the lives of today’s teenagers and goes further into detail on cyberbullying—what it is, how it can be prevented, where to report it, and how to stop it.

Parent resources

This section gives you information on the following:

- how to use restorative language to address bullying
- what to do if you are not satisfied with your school’s response to bullying
- when to call the police
- how to find help
What is Nova Scotia doing?

This section gives you information on what the province of Nova Scotia is doing to try to reduce bullying in our schools and communities. In it, you will find information on these things:

How Nova Scotia is using the law and special investigators to

- investigate bullying
- prevent people from continuing to bully
- respond to those who bully

What our schools are doing

- to prevent bullying
- to investigate bullying
- to help those involved in bullying
SECTION 2: About bullying
SECTION 2:

About bullying

Bullying is something a child or teen does. It is not that child’s identity. That is why this booklet will not use such labels as bully, victim, and bystander. These labels limit how we see children and how they see themselves—as a product of their actions and nothing more. We need to ditch the labels and focus on the whole child—their strengths and challenges. We also need to look at our children’s environment and their relationships with their families and friends at school and in the community.

Bullying occurs when someone repeatedly tries to hurt another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation, or property.

Helping or encouraging someone to bully another person is also bullying.

Four things to remember about bullying:

1. People learn how to bully. It is not just kids being kids.
2. Bullying is about power—getting power over others and using that power to build yourself up by keeping others down.
3. Bullying is a disrespectful behaviour which does not value our human rights.
4. Bullying is repeated. It is not one instance of a child being mean to another child.

What does bullying look like?

There are four kinds of bullying:

PHYSICAL BULLYING
hitting, pushing, stealing, or damaging someone else’s things

SOCIAL BULLYING
excluding someone from a group, spreading rumours

VERBAL BULLYING
name calling, mocking, making sexist, racist, or homophobic remarks

CYBERBULLYING
using technology to bully someone
What makes cyberbullying different?

Cyberbullying is unique because hurtful messages or pictures can be shared quickly and anonymously. The sense of “no one knows it’s me” can increase bullying actions. These are some of the tools used in cyberbullying:

- social networking sites and apps
- image-sharing sites and apps
- text messages
- e-mails

Use technology?
Be a responsible digital citizen.

It’s important to teach your child how to be a responsible digital citizen. Do this as soon as you give your child access to a computer, cell phone, tablet, or other mobile device.

Four steps to being a responsible digital citizen

1. **PROTECT YOUR PROFILE.** Only connect with people you know and trust on social network sites. Be careful when sharing personal information even when you share it with people you know in a private e-mail or text. Once you hit send you can’t take it back!

   **Keep personal information private!**
   Here is some information you should never share on the Internet:
   - your birth date
   - your address
   - your phone numbers
   - your current location
   - how much money you have
   - identification numbers, such as Social Insurance number, driver’s licence, and so on
   - passwords
   - vacation plans
   - intimate photos or videos

2. **PASSWORD PROTECT YOUR PHONE.** Find out how to do this when you buy your phone. Keep your password private. This “locks” your phone. You wouldn’t leave your home, car, or locker unlocked. So why would you leave your phone unlocked?

3. **MODEL DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP.** Think before you post, send a text message, e-mail, or tweet. Remember that you alone are responsible for your words and actions.

4. **BE PART OF THE SOLUTION.** Refuse to forward text messages or photos that could hurt others feelings, self-esteem, or reputation.
Legal consequences for parents

Under Nova Scotia law, victims of cyberbullying can file legal action against the person doing the bullying. If your child is found to have bullied someone in this way, you could be held legally responsible.

Who bullies?

Children who bully learn to use power to control other children. As long as they continue to bully and get away with it, they do not learn the difference between right and wrong. As a result, they may do poorly in school, they may begin to use drugs and alcohol, and even begin to commit crimes. These children have set themselves up for a lifetime of difficult relationships. They may even end up being bullied themselves.

The majority of bullying takes place where children spend lots of time together—in the classroom, on the school playground, and on the school bus. But bullying is not limited to school. It can happen wherever and whenever children gather. That’s why bullying is a community problem, not just a school problem.

Since children spend so much of their time at school, schools are the perfect place for children to learn that bullying is not OK and to learn how deal with and even prevent bullying.

There are three ways to be involved in bullying:

• watching bullying or seeing it happen but taking no action
• being bullied
• bullying others

Watching bullying or seeing it happen

Bullying takes place about once every 7 ½ minutes on the average school playground. Children and youth who see others being bullied learn how they too can use power to get what they want out of relationships. Children and youth who watch bullying or see it happen but do nothing to stop it give power to the person who is bullying. Doing nothing tells the person who is bullying that they can get away with their behaviour. In this way, it encourages the person who is bullying to continue.

Why don’t children and youth step in?

There are three main reasons that children and youth who see others being bullied don’t step in:

• They worry that if they step in they will make the bullying worse.
• They worry that they, themselves, will be bullied.
• They think that it is up to those being bullied to stand up for themselves.

The fact is, when children or youth who see bullying happen step in, bullying usually stops within 10 seconds.
Being bullied

Canadian studies show for every 5 school-aged kids, at least one has been bullied in the last month.

Children and youth who are bullied often feel powerless and risk being drawn into relationships in which they are abused. These children and youth need to know that it is up to the adults in their lives to make the bullying stop. They need to know that they can regain their power by reporting the bullying to a trusted adult.

Why are some kids bullied and not others?

Research shows that children and youth who are bullied have some things in common. Children and youth who have at least one friend are less likely to be bullied.

Sometimes children and youth are bullied because they are seen as being different from their peers by the way they look, the way they act, or how they learn.

It is important to know that everyone wants to belong and sometimes are willing to accept bullying behaviour from others if they feel will help them to be accepted as part of the group.

Bullying others

Canadian studies show that for every 10 school-aged kids, at least one has bullied others in the last month.

Children and youth who bully others risk growing up to be abusive adults. They need to learn how to create and maintain healthy, respectful relationships.

Why do some kids bully others?

Children and youth who bully others do so for a variety of reasons:

- They have seen bullying in their own homes. A parent or sibling may bully them or others in the family.
- They have learned that bullying makes them popular or respected.
- They see others bullying and join in or bully others because they see this as a way into a social group.
Why worry about bullying? Don’t kids just grow out of it?

Bullying affects everyone involved—those who see the bullying, those being bullied, and those who bully others.

Effects on feelings and behaviour

- anxiety
- depression
- feeling sick—frequent headaches or stomach aches
- loneliness
- low self-esteem
- low marks
- skipping school or quitting
- harming themselves

Effects on adult behaviour and relationships

Bullying can lead to serious problems in adulthood. A 1999 study found that about 6 out of every 10 boys who bullied others in grades 6 through 9 were convicted of at least one crime by the time they turned 24.

Bullying has also been found to lead to these behaviours in adulthood:

- sexual harassment
- workplace harassment
- spousal, child, and elder abuse

Preventing bullying with empathy

Empathy—the ability to feel what someone else feels

Teach your children that there are all kinds of feelings and all kinds of hurt. We don’t like to be hurt so we shouldn’t hurt others.

You can teach your children empathy by showing them that you take care not to hurt others.
Teaching about feelings

Children learn quickly what kinds of things hurt physically, like hitting and pushing. But it can be harder to learn what hurts our feelings.

You can start to talk about feelings by asking: “How would you feel if... ”

To understand how another person feels, children need to learn how to express their own feelings. Encourage your children to talk about when they are feeling happy, sad, disappointed, frustrated, angry, and so on. Talk to them about your own feelings as well. You don’t have to go into detail but you can say, “There was a lot of traffic on my way to work. I was worried I would be late.” Or “The flowers are blooming in the garden, that makes me happy.”

Teaching about respect

Young children need to be taught to show respect for others. These are some things you can teach your child to do:

- listen when others are talking
- share
- take turns
- follow rules
- help others
- say nice things

Even older children and youth can benefit from a refresher from time to time. Watch how your children behave with others. If they need a reminder, find a private moment to talk about respectful behaviour.

Praise kind, respectful behaviour

When you catch your children being kind or respectful, praise them. Your praise will be most effective if you describe exactly what the child did to deserve it. For example, “You washed the dishes without being asked. Thank you. That was very kind of you.”

Talk about unkind, hurtful behaviour

At the same time, if you catch your children being unkind or hurtful, talk about it. Be sure to describe exactly what they did that was unkind or hurtful. For example, “Susan looked sad when you said you wouldn’t be her friend anymore. Saying that hurt her feelings.”
Talk about empathy and bullying

Talk about empathy as it relates to bullying. Ask them how they would feel if they were being bullied and other kids watched but did nothing. Teach your child that if they want someone to step in to stop the bullying, they should step up when they see bullying happen. How children can step in depends on their age. This will be discussed in more detail in the How to deal with bullying at different ages section of this booklet.

Teach by example

Most of all, children and youth learn by example. Be a good role model. If you make a mistake—we all do—own up to it and apologize.

When you help your child learn how to manage conflicts with other children, you empower them. Remember that bullying is about power. A child who can deal with conflict and knows how to build healthy relationships will neither seek power nor give in and bullying cannot take place.
SECTION 3:
How to deal with bullying at different ages
SECTION 3: How to deal with bullying at different ages

The early years

The years before your child goes to school provide the best opportunity you will ever have to prevent bullying behaviour.

You are your child’s first teacher. From the time your child is born you shape their behaviour. That means that you can prevent bullying behaviours before they begin. You do this by modelling the behaviours you want to see in your child. How you react to your child’s behaviours teaches them how to behave with others.

Bullying occurs when someone repeatedly tries to hurt another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation, or property. Helping or encouraging someone to bully another person is also bullying.

Four things to remember about bullying:
1. People learn how to bully. It is not just kids being kids.
2. Bullying is about power—getting power over others and using that power to build yourself up by keeping others down.
3. Bullying is a disrespectful behaviour which does not value our human rights.
4. Bullying is repeated. It is not one instance of a child being mean to another child.

It’s natural for very young children to hit, push, slap, grab, kick, and bite. These are not bullying behaviours in themselves. Very young children do these things because they don’t yet have the words to express how they feel so they rely on their actions.

It is up to you, and any other adults who care for your child, to help them learn which behaviours are OK and which are not. Young children need to learn how to cope when they are upset. They also need to learn how to express their feelings.

You, and the other adults who care for your child, can help your child learn 2 important skills that they will use for the rest of their life:
• how to build and maintain positive relationships with others
• how to use words to express their feelings, wants, and needs and to understand the feelings, wants, and needs of others

Children learn about relationships and behaviour by watching the adults around them. They learn how to use words by listening to the adults around them. That is why it is important for you and all the adults who care for your child to be good role models.
**From babies to toddlers (0–3)**

Just as children at this age are learning to walk and talk, they are learning social skills such as waiting, sharing, and taking turns.

Children at this age are still learning to talk. They don’t yet have the words to express how they feel. It is up to you to teach them. The best way to teach is to be a good role model. Act the way you want your child to act and use words to describe what you are doing and why. Your child will imitate your actions and your words.

Other adults who care for your child may act differently from the way you do. That’s OK. The important thing is that you set an example that helps your child learn how to make friends and how to play well with others.

**Head off aggressive behaviour**

You can often tell when your child is about to scream, hit someone, or throw something. Try to catch your child before this happens and ask yourself why your child is doing this.

Pay attention to how you react to your child’s aggressive behaviour. Do your reactions teach how to act and which words to use?

Speak clearly and firmly when correcting your child’s behaviour. Once you have their attention, find something else to interest them, like a truck on the street or a bird in the yard.

**Teach self-control**

With so much learning going on, your child is bound to feel that it’s all too much. When this happens, your child doesn’t know what to do. That’s usually when young children appear out of control. Your job is to teach them how to manage their feelings and develop self-control. Here are some tips:

- Stay calm. This shows your child that you are in control. Just staying calm may help to calm your child.
- Use words to label your child’s feelings and to tell them how you feel. For example: “Please don’t hit me when you’re mad. I know you want to stay at the park, but, I’m worried that if we don’t leave now I won’t have supper ready in time.” This tells your child that it’s OK to feel mad but not OK to hit.
- Help your child find something else to do. For example, it is not OK to throw a book at a person, but it is OK to throw a ball as part of a game.
- Distract your child with something unexpected. For example, ignore your child’s tantrum by picking up an interesting toy and playing with it. This will give your child something else to do.
From toddlers to preschoolers (3–5)

Children at this age are beginning to enjoy social lives. They have play dates. Some go to full-day or part-day child care or other programs for young children. Most importantly, they are learning how to get along with others and make friends. Some days are easier than others.

Talk about what’s going on

You can help your child cope with the hard days by getting them to talk about what is going on. Here are some ways your child may tell you that they’re having a hard time:

- Your child is afraid to go to child care.
- Your child appears anxious or is afraid of a lot of things.
- Your child complains of feeling sick.
- Your child often appears unhappy or cranky.
- Your child has trouble sleeping.

If any of these statements fit your child, talk to them. Ask them how they are feeling and what is going on in their life that might lead to these feelings. Ask specifically about their friends. If you are concerned about a specific relationship, ask your child how their friend is. Find out what they did at school today, with whom your child played, and so on.

Just talking with your child lets them know that you care and that they can trust you. Sharing what is going on in their world can bring you closer together. Your child will learn what a positive, supportive relationship feels like. Your child will feel safe knowing that you can help to solve problems. Use these moments to teach your child the right words to use to get their own feelings, needs, and wants across to others.

Help build healthy relationships with children and adults

Introduce your child to caring, friendly children and adults. Help them to make friends with other children by inviting them over for play dates. Teach your child how to keep these friendships alive.

Watch children as they play. Teach them how to solve conflicts with words, like “It hurts me when you pull my hair” or “Can I play with the truck after you?”

Praise kind, respectful behaviour. Say something like “Thank you for waiting your turn.”

Step in when you see negative behaviours. Firmly tell the child to stop, and then use one of the tips for teaching self-control found on page 7.

Teach your child to find an adult they trust when they cannot solve a problem on their own. Tell them that it is part of an adult’s job to protect them and to step in when conflicts arise.
Let's Talk

There is a lot of information in this booklet. How do you use it in real life? Put yourself in this situation. How would you handle it?

Your 3-year-old son is usually easy-going and happy most of the time. However, lately he has been having trouble sleeping. He cries easily and hits and bites people when he is upset. This is new. He also used to love going to child care but now he is anxious and afraid to go.

One day he comes home from child care with a bruise on his arm. When you ask about it, he says a boy at child care bit him.

What do you need to do?

SEE it!

What behaviours are OK? What behaviours are not OK?

What might be happening?

- My son has trouble managing his feelings.
- A boy at child care has not yet learned to use words to express himself.
- A boy at child care has not yet learned how to manage his feelings.

What else might be happening?

SPEAK up!

Who do you need to talk to?

What do you need to know?

Is there anything you need to say?
Elementary school

As children go through elementary school they become more and more independent. They also form friendships that become very important to them. How your child’s friends see bullying will have a great effect on how your child sees bullying. Do they see the hurt it causes others, or do they think it’s fun?

Bullying occurs when someone repeatedly tries to hurt another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation, or property.

Helping or encouraging someone to bully another person is also bullying.

**Four things to remember about bullying:**

1. People *learn* how to bully. It is not just kids being kids.
2. Bullying is about *power*—getting power over others and using that power to build yourself up by keeping others down.
3. Bullying is a *disrespectful* behaviour which does not value our human rights.
4. Bullying is *repeated*. It is not one instance of a child being mean to another child.

Elementary school children are becoming very tech savvy. Many have already used computers and mobile devices at home. They are beginning to use computers and mobile devices, such as tablets, at school as early as grade primary. Some even have mobile devices of their own and can use them to send text-messages and e-mails, or surf the web.

For these reasons, bullying in elementary school becomes harder for adults to spot.

**Independence**

Children want to handle things themselves and often do not report bullying.

Children are not always under the watchful eyes of adults. Bullying takes place away from adults—in bathrooms and on the way to and from school, for example.

**Friendships**

Friendship and belonging are very important to children at this age. As they discover who they are and how they fit into social groups, children may be tempted to put up with bullying or bully others if they think doing so will make them part of “the group.”

**Technology**

Adults rarely see every text message or social media post a child sends.
Help your child learn about bullying

During the elementary school years you will have the opportunity to help your child learn to do 4 things:

• prevent bullying
• do the right thing when they see bullying behaviour
• respond properly if they are bullied
• repair relationships and learn from bullying behaviour

How can I help prevent bullying from becoming a part of my child’s life?

Be a role model
Teach your child by acting the way you want them to act. When you slip up—we all do it—admit it and apologize. Say something like “I’m sorry I yelled at you. That was not the proper way for me to behave.”

Teach words to express feelings
Teach your children how to express how they feel in words. When you recognize a feeling, label it for your child and encourage them to use words like sad, afraid, angry, ashamed, embarrassed, frustrated, and so on. Once they can recognize and label these feelings for themselves, teach them to recognize them in others. Your child should be able to say something like, “I was angry at you for making me leave the park” or “Jacob was sad when his balloon flew away.”

Play to your child’s strength
Talk to your child about what they are good at. Help them to find ways to use their strengths to help others. For example, if your child enjoys reading, encourage them to read to younger children.

Practise and look for random acts of kindness
Encourage your child to do nice things for others and to talk about how they feel after doing each thing.

Ask your child to watch for others doing nice things. Talk to them about what they saw and how they think the people felt.

Find teachable moments
Pay attention to your child’s interest in movies, websites, magazines and other media. When you recognize bullying, talk about it with your child. Ask them how they feel about it. Ask them to describe facial expressions, body language, and tones of voice that tell them how a person is feeling.
How can I help prevent cyberbullying from becoming a part of my child’s life?

The best way to protect your child from cyberbullying is to control their online presence. There are many things you and your child can do to protect your online presence. Controlling your online presence is good advice for everyone. These tips are for you as well as your child.

- Protect all computers, cell phones, and mobile devices with a password.
- Read the help, privacy, or safety pages for every social network site you use. These pages tell you
  - the rules for using the site
  - how to stay safe online
  - how to protect yourself by blocking users, changing passwords, and so on
- Set the privacy settings on all social networking sites to the max.
- Think carefully before “checking in” to locations or using apps that tell others where you are. Do not let friends tag you in a location.
- Let only people you have a good personal relationship with see your social network profiles.
- Use e-mail, text messages, or private messages when your message is intended for only one person or a select group.
- Block users who bully.
- Delete embarrassing photos or videos.
- Ask friends to delete embarrassing photos or videos.

How can I teach my child to do the right thing when they see bullying behaviour?

What does bullying look like in elementary school?

Children do a lot of growing up in the years they spend in elementary school. Bullying behaviour changes as children learn which behaviours are OK and which are not. In the early grades, children may still hit and push, but this can soon give way to social and verbal bullying. Near the end of elementary school, cyberbullying becomes more common. Help your child recognize these kinds of bullying:

**Physical bullying**
- repeatedly pushing or shoving a certain child
- repeatedly stealing from a certain child
- repeatedly damaging or destroying a certain child’s things
Social bullying
• repeatedly laughing or making faces when a certain child talks
• repeatedly excluding a certain child from a game
• repeatedly ignoring a certain child
• repeatedly tattling on a certain child to get them into trouble
• repeatedly making a point not to sit near a certain child

Verbal bullying
• repeatedly calling a certain child names
• repeatedly using a child’s name as an insult

Cyberbullying
• repeatedly sending negative text messages to a certain child or about a certain child
• repeatedly posting negative messages about a certain child on social media sites
• repeatedly sending embarrassing photos or videos of a certain child through text messaging, e-mail, or social media sites

Where does bullying happen?
With the use of technology, bullying can happen anywhere. Verbal, social, and physical bullying happen wherever elementary school aged children gather, including:
• at school
• on the way to and from school
• in parks and playgrounds
• at home

Where does cyberbullying happen?
Cyberbullying can happen anywhere a child has access to a computer, cell phone, or other mobile device. That means that your child may see bullying even when they are alone in their own bedroom.
How can my child do the right thing when they see bullying behaviour?

In 85 per cent of cases, bullying takes place in front of witnesses. Your child can stop the bullying by doing one of these 4 things:

**Step in**
Most of the time bullying stops in less than 10 seconds when someone steps in to protect the person being bullied. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to tell the person doing the bullying to stop.

**Walk away**
Staying to watch gives the person doing the bullying power and attention. Don’t give it to them. Walk away.

**Report it**
Encourage your child to tell a trusted adult about the bullying. Tell your child that there is a difference between telling to get someone into trouble and telling to get someone out of trouble. Telling about bullying gets people out of trouble. It’s the responsible thing to do.

School principals have the authority to respond to bullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

**Be a friend**
Encourage your child to be a friend to the person being bullied. Children and teens who have at least one friend are less likely to be bullied than those with no friends.

---

When you see bullying behaviour
- Step in
- Walk away
- Report it
- Be a friend

When you see cyberbullying
- Stop it
- Track it
- Report it

How can my child do the right thing when they see cyberbullying?

Your child can be alone in their own room and still see cyberbullying on their computer, cell phone, or mobile device. Here are some things they can do to help:

**Stop it**
The most important thing your child can do when they see cyberbullying messages or embarrassing photos and videos is to stop them in their tracks. They can do this in 2 ways:
- Don’t pass them along to others
- Don’t “like” them

**Track it**
Encourage your child to save messages, photos, and videos so that they can show them to a trusted adult. These will help school principals, CyberSCAN investigators, or police to investigate the cyberbullying.

**Report it**
Encourage your child to tell a trusted adult about the cyberbullying.
School principals have the authority to respond to cyberbullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

You or your child can also file a complaint about cyberbullying by calling CyberSCAN at 242-6900 (within HRM) or toll-free at 1-855-702-8324. (Please note, this unit will be operational in September 2013). Investigators will first try to stop the cyberbullying by talking to all those involved. They can also seek a court order that would prevent people from using technology to bully, and even take away their computers, cell phones, or mobile devices.

How can I help my child respond properly if they are bullied?

How can I tell if my child is being bullied?

Many children don’t report bullying, even to their parents, because they worry that reporting it will make the bullying worse. Here are some signs to watch for that may tell you that your child is being bullied:

- Your child’s behaviour has changed.
- Your child is afraid to go to school or other places children gather, such as parks or playgrounds.
- Your child complains of frequent stomach aches, headaches, or difficulty falling asleep.
- Your child appears unhappy, worried, or moody.
- Your child lacks confidence.
- Your child complains of being left out.
- Your child loses interest in being with or talking with friends.
- Your child threatens self-injury.
- Your child’s things are often damaged or go missing.
- Your child has cuts, scratches, or bruises that they don’t explain.
- Your child appears stressed or worried when online.
- Your child suddenly stops using their computer, cell phone, or mobile device.

What do I do if I see these signs?

**Talk to your child**

Find a time when you can give your child your full attention. Since, we are all busy, it is important to find a time when you and your child can be in the same place, relaxed, and relatively private. Here are some suggestions:

- **Linger over breakfast.**
  If you and your child are both morning people, have a chat before the busy day begins.

- **Chat on the way to or from school in the car or walking.**
  Sometimes kids open up when they don’t have to make eye contact.

- **Make a date.**
  If your family’s time is tightly scheduled, plan a short outing with your child just to chat.
Take advantage of wait times.
Traffic jams, doctor’s appointments, and long grocery line-ups don’t have to be frustrating. Take advantage of them to strike up a conversation with your child.

Let books, movies, and TV kickstart the conversation.
When you read, watch TV, or view Internet sites with your child, look for opportunities to talk about bullying.

How you talk to your child is just as important as when you talk. Here are some tips on how to talk about bullying with your child:

Keep the lines of communication open.
Your child is more likely to listen to you if you have listened to them and answered their questions in the past.

Ask questions that require detailed answers.
For example, instead of asking, “How was your day?” Try some of these questions:
- What was one good thing that happened today? Did any bad things happen?
- What was lunch time like? Who did you sit with? What did you talk about?
- Tell me about your way to and from school? Who did you walk (or ride the bus) with? What did you talk about?

When your child is ready to talk about the bullying, ask questions that will encourage conversation. A good place to start might be to ask about details, such as what happened, who was involved, and where and when it took place. It is also important to focus on how your child feels about what happened.

Be patient
Your child may not want to talk about bullying. Children often worry that reporting bullying will make it worse. Tell your child that part of an adult’s job is to protect them and to make the bullying stop.

Be supportive
Once your child has told you about the bullying, they will need your support. Here are some ways to support your child:
- Praise your child for being brave enough to tell you about the bullying.
- Tell your child that the bullying is not their fault.
- Model empathy. Show your child that you understand the hurt they are feeling.
- Take note of the details of the bullying and keep a record.
- Tell your child to continue to report the bullying until it has stopped.
- Keep asking about the bullying. Your child may not tell you if the bullying continues.
- Have your child join a sport or club outside of school. This will give them the chance to make new friends and learn a new skill. Try to find an activity your child will do well at. This will improve their confidence.
Teach your child to do the right thing
Here are some things your child can do if they are being bullied:

- Calmly tell the person doing the bullying to stop.
- If your child is confident and has a good sense of humour, they could try to laugh it off.
- Walk away.
- Tell a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult.
- Talk about the bullying with friends or siblings. Talking about it can make your child feel less alone.
- Stay away from places where the bullying happens.
- Stay where adults can see them and they can see adults.
- Use the buddy system. Find a friend to walk to and from school with and to hang out with in parks and playgrounds.

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Your child can’t solve a bullying problem on their own. They need your help. Here are some things you should do if you think your child is being bullied:

Speak up

REPORT the bullying to your child’s teacher, guidance counsellor, or principal. Schools must act in cases of bullying and cyberbullying. School principals have the authority to respond to bullying and cyberbullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

MEET with your child’s teacher, guidance counsellor, vice-principal, or principal to come up with a plan to help stop the bullying.

FOLLOW THROUGH. Keep an eye on your child’s behaviour. If the plan that was put in place does not stop the bullying, let your school know. Continue to work with the principal to resolve the issue. If you are not satisfied with the response you are getting from the school, contact the next level of authority at your school board’s central office. For more information see the “Parent resources” section of this booklet.

REASSURE YOUR CHILD. It is important that you tell your child that you will continue to support them through this difficult time.

CALL THE POLICE if you feel that your child is in danger, that the bullying involves criminal behaviour such as sexual harassment, sexual assault or the use of a weapon, or that the threat to your child’s safety is in the community rather than the school.

Track it

Keep a journal yourself or have your child keep a journal. Write down how your child is being bullied, who is doing the bullying, and when and where it happens. You can also use the “Notes” sections provided in this booklet.
What do I do in a case of cyberbullying?

**Speak up**
In addition to reporting cyberbullying to your child’s teacher, guidance counsellor, and principal, report it to your Internet or cell phone service provider or social network site administrator. You should also report severe cases of cyberbullying to the police or the province’s CyberSCAN investigators.

**Track it**
Save all messages, photos, and videos. You can save messages and photos easily by taking a screen shot of the text, tweet, e-mail, or picture.

How can my child repair relationships and learn from bullying behaviour?

How can I tell if my child is bullying others?

These are some signs to watch for:

- Your child is aggressive with other children and animals.
- Your child plays mean jokes or passes off mean comments and behaviour as “a joke.”
- Your child has trouble keeping friendships or changes friends often.
- Your child appears not to care about others’ feelings.
- Your child appears not to care if their words or actions hurt others.
- Your child feels they are “owed” things, has trouble forgiving others, and blames others for their actions.
- Your child’s role models use their power to build themselves up and to keep others down.
- You are aware that your child’s friends have bullied others.
- Your child follows along with the group.
- Your child hangs out at the same places, such as a neighbourhood store, playground, or school, for no reason.
- Your child is bossy and always wants to be in control.
- Your child suddenly has more money than usual or new things, with no explanation of how they got them.
- Your child hides their Internet activity, switching screens when someone walks by.
What do I do if I see these signs?

Your child is old enough to learn from their mistakes. The best thing you can do is to teach them that bullying is unacceptable, and to help them to understand how their words and actions affect others.

Here are some things you can do to teach your child not to bully:

- Be a role model. Act the way you want your child to act. That means
  - responding to situations calmly
  - using words to express anger, frustration, disappointment, and so on
  - not using your power or authority to “put others in their place”
- Tell your child that bullying is wrong and that it hurts them as much as it hurts those they bully.
- Talk about what you expect from family members. Make sure your children know that bullying is not acceptable.
- Talk to your child about their own strengths. Teach them how they can use their power to help, not hurt, others.
- Teach empathy. Ask your child how they think it feels to be bullied.
- Spend time with your child and get to know their friends. Talk about their interests and activities.
- Pay attention to your child’s behaviour in daily life and online.
  - How do they treat pets, siblings, and friends?
  - How much time do they spend on the computer, cell phone, or other mobile device?
  - Do they hide their online activities from you?
- Praise your child when you see kind, respectful behaviour. It is also important to praise their efforts, talents, and achievements.
- Praise your child when you see them working out a problem or solving a conflict in a non-violent way—for example, when they show that they understand how another child feels.
- Get help for your child if they are struggling in school or in other areas of life. Your family doctor can help with problems of aggression or lack of self-control.
- Work with your child’s teachers and school to reward your child’s positive behaviour and to discourage bullying.
Let’s Talk

There is a lot of information in this booklet. How do you use it in real life? Put yourself in this situation. How would you handle it?

Your child tells you that a friend is being bullied at school. The friend is being called names, left out of games and social activities, and other kids make rude gestures behind her back. Your child has not stood up for her friend for fear of being bullied too. Your child wants to know if it is OK to stop seeing her friend to avoid being bullied.

What do you need to do?

SEE it!

Do you see signs of bullying? If so, what are they?

What might be happening?

- Physical bullying
- Social bullying
- Verbal bullying
- Cyberbullying

Do you have trouble naming it? If so, why? What else do you need to know that would help you to name the behaviour?

SPEAK up!

Who do you need to talk to?

What do you need to know?

What steps do you and your child need to take?
Teens

Bullying is often at its worst near the end of junior high and near the beginning of high school. This is a time when teens face a number of challenges and new experiences:

• physical challenges—their bodies are changing and they are becoming aware of themselves as sexual beings
• relationship challenges—crushes and puppy love are turning into serious romantic relationships, even sexual relationships
• academic challenges—there is pressure on teens to decide what they will do after high school and to prepare for university, college, a trade, or a job
• life challenges—risky behaviours are harder for some teens to resist:
  - alcohol
  - illegal and prescription drugs
  - gambling
  - pornography

Each one of these challenges brings with it the risk that a teen may use it to bully another teen.

At the same time, teens are becoming more skilled in how they relate with one another. They know which teens have more social power and can spot other teens’ weaknesses. Their increased social skills and use of technology mean that bullying can be even harder for adults to see.

Bullying occurs when someone repeatedly tries to hurt another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation, or property.

Helping or encouraging someone to bully another person is also bullying.

Four things to remember about bullying:
1. People learn how to bully. It is not just kids being kids.
2. Bullying is about power—getting power over others and using that power to build yourself up by keeping others down.
3. Bullying is a disrespectful behaviour which does not value our human rights.
4. Bullying is repeated. It is not one instance of a child being mean to another child.
Teens and technology

In junior high and high school, technology becomes an important part of a teen’s social life. In fact, social media sites are an extension of most teens’ social lives. They use these sites to keep in touch with friends, make plans, share photos and videos, and even help each other with homework.

Teens also use social networks to talk about problems in their lives ranging from the trivial to the serious. This can be a way for teens to get help from their friends, but the same information can be used to bully them.

Because teens use technology as just another tool to connect with friends, they sometimes forget that what they send in an e-mail or text message or post on social media can be seen by far more people. They also forget how easily they can lose control of such information. An e-mail, text, photo, or video can “go viral” when the recipient’s privacy settings are wide open or when they choose to share it with others.

That’s why teen practices such as “sexting” are so dangerous. A message or image meant for one person can quickly spread to the World Wide Web, with no way of getting it back.

Help your teen learn about bullying

During the teen years you will have the opportunity to help your teen learn to do 4 things:

• prevent bullying
• do the right thing when they see bullying behaviour
• respond properly if they are bullied
• repair relationships and learn from bullying behaviour

sexting:
sending sexually explicit messages or photos between cell phones or other mobile devices.

Speak Up!
Ask questions. Get details. Take notes.
How can I prevent bullying from becoming a part of my teen’s life?

Be a role model
Look at your own behaviour. Do you yell, act aggressively, or try to scare or threaten others into doing what you want? If you do these things from time to time, tell your teen that you know they are wrong and apologize.

Teach your teen by acting the way you want them to act. Be respectful of others and show that you can cope with your own frustrations calmly.

Encourage your teen to express their feelings in words
Being a teenager is a difficult emotional time. Teens sometimes slam doors and tear, break, or throw things when they are upset. Help your teen express feelings like anger, sadness, and disappointment calmly and in words. Sometimes it helps to acknowledge your teen’s feelings and to label the emotion for them. For example, “It’s too bad that you didn’t make the team. You worked so hard. I know you’re disappointed.” In turn, your teen should be able to recognize others’ emotions and to say things like, “I felt bad for Emma. She prepared for her audition and then got a sore throat. She’s so frustrated.”

Play to your teen’s strength
Talk to your teen about their own strengths. Together come up with ways that they can use their skills to help others.

Encourage acceptance
Have your teen list the qualities they admire in people of all races, from all walks of life, and all sexual orientations. Have them list the qualities they share with these people.

Talk a lot
Take an interest in the movies, websites, magazines, and other media that your teen enjoys. Talk about them together. When you recognize bullying, talk about it. Ask your teen how they feel about what they see. Ask them to point out facial expressions, body language, and tones of voice that tell them how others feel.

Talk about news and current events together. When stories about bullying arise, ask them how they feel about them. Ask them how they think the people being bullied feel.

Practise and look for random acts of kindness
Encourage your teen to do nice things for others and ask them how they feel about doing these things.

Ask your teen to be on the lookout for people doing nice things for others. Talk to them about what they saw and how they think it made the people feel.
How can I help prevent cyberbullying from becoming a part of my teen’s life?

As we said earlier, technology is an important part of your teen’s social life. They use it to keep in touch with friends, make plans, share photos and videos, and even help each other with homework.

There are many things you and your teen can do to protect your online presence. The best way to protect your teen from cyberbullying is to control their online presence. Controlling your online presence is good advice for everyone. These tips are for you as well as your teen.

- Protect all computers, cell phones, and mobile devices with a password.
- Read the help, privacy, or safety pages for every social network site you use. These pages tell you
  - the rules for using the site
  - how to stay safe online
  - how to protect yourself by blocking users, changing passwords, and so on
- Set the privacy settings on all social networking sites to the max.
- Think carefully before “checking in” to locations or using apps that tell others where you are. Do not let friends tag you in a location.
- Let only people you have a good personal relationship with see your social network profiles.
- Use e-mail, text messages, or private messages when your message is intended for only one person or a select group.
- Block users who bully.
- Delete embarrassing photos or videos.
- Ask friends to delete embarrassing photos or videos.

CYBERBULLYING:
when someone uses technology to bully someone else. The most common tools are computers, cell phones, and other mobile devices. Bullying messages are often text messages, e-mails, social media posts, or embarrassing photos or videos.
How can I teach my teen to do the right thing when they see bullying behaviour?

What does bullying among teens look like?

By the time they hit their teen years, most kids have learned that it is not OK to hit people or push them around physically. While there may be some physical bullying among teens it is less common than it was in elementary school. Teens are more likely to use social or verbal bullying in person, and, because they are so attached to electronic communication, they can continue this behaviour from a distance. This is cyberbullying.

Physical bullying

- repeatedly stealing from a certain teen or pressuring that teen to “give” something to the person who is bullying
- repeatedly damaging or destroying another teen’s belongings
- repeatedly touching a certain teen in a sexual way. This does not have to be explicit. It could mean brushing up against someone “accidentally on purpose.” This is called sexual harassment.

Social bullying

- repeatedly excluding a certain teen from social groups, outings, or parties

Verbal bullying

- repeatedly making fun of a teen for being different—making racist, sexist, or homophobic remarks, or remarks about a certain teen’s physical appearance or abilities
- repeatedly remarking on a certain teen’s sexual body parts or sexuality. This is called sexual harassment.
- repeatedly making fun of a certain teen or group of teens because of the people they choose to spend time with

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can often be more mean-spirited and challenging to deal with than social bullying because teens can hide their identities behind screen names. It can also be more harmful than other forms of bullying because one message, picture, or video can be sent to everyone in a teen’s network, or posted for everyone in the world to see. Once these messages are posted online, they can be impossible to get rid of. These are some examples of cyberbullying:

- repeatedly sending mean or threatening e-mails or text messages to a certain teen
- spreading gossip, rumours, or secrets about a certain teen
- hacking into an e-mail account and sending hurtful messages, photos, or videos to others, using someone else’s name
- making blogs or websites dedicated to making fun of others
• polling other teens in a way that asks them to rate their peers in a negative way
• repeatedly sending embarrassing photos or videos using e-mail, cell phones, or other mobile devices
• tricking a teen into revealing personal information in a text or e-mail and then forwarding that information to another or posting it online
• using another teen’s password to access their social media account and using that account to spread hate, racism, sexism, homophobia, or other offensive content
• repeatedly posting false or hurtful messages about a certain teen on online bulletin boards or in chat rooms
• making sure to keep a certain teen off everyone’s contact list

Where does bullying happen?

With the use of computer technology, bullying can happen anywhere. As in elementary school, physical, social, and verbal bullying happen wherever teens gather:
• at school
• on the way to and from school
• at home
• at work
• in the shopping mall

Where does cyberbullying happen?

Cyberbullying can happen anywhere a teen has access to a computer, cell phone, or other mobile device. For this reason, bullying reaches teens in their own homes. It can reach teens in their own bedrooms. A teen who is bullied by means of electronic devices never feels safe. Text messages, e-mails, and social media posts pop into their lives 24 hours a day.

How can my teen do the right thing when they see bullying behaviour?

Almost half (47 per cent) of Canadian parents report that their child had been bullied. With bullying this common, your teen’s chances of seeing another teen being bullied are quite high. Your teen can stop the bullying by doing one of these 4 things:

Step in

Your teen has the power to stop bullying. Most of the time bullying stops in less than 10 seconds when someone steps in to protect the person being bullied. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to tell the person doing the bullying to stop.

Walk away

Staying to watch gives the person doing the bullying power and attention. Don’t give it to them. Walk away.
Report it
Encourage your teen to talk to an adult they trust about the bullying. Teens may worry that reporting the bullying will make it worse. Reassure them that reporting is the best way to get help for everyone—those who saw the bullying, the person who was bullied, and the person doing the bullying.

Teens need to know that bullying at their age can have serious results. This is why it is so important that they do everything they can to make the bullying stop.

School principals have the authority to respond to bullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

Be a friend
Encourage your teen to be a friend to the person being bullied. Children and teens who have at least one friend are less likely to be bullied than those with no friends.

How can my teen do the right thing when they see cyberbullying?
Teach your teen that “liking” or forwarding a hurtful or embarrassing message about another teen is just as bad as creating the message. In fact, the more teens “like” or forward the message, the more damaging it becomes. Teens who have been bullied in this way feel lonely and abandoned.

• Don’t pass bullying messages, photos, or videos along to others.
• Don’t “like” them.

Encourage your teen to do these things if they see bullying in a text message or online:

Think
Take the time to think about every text message, e-mail, social media post, photo, or video you come across. Ask yourself these questions:

• Is it hurtful? Is it meant to hurt? Would it be funny if the message were about me? Parents can be held legally responsible for messages sent or forwarded by their teens.
• Is the message meant to hurt someone’s reputation? If it is, it’s called libel. Again, parents can be held legally responsible if their teen is found to have libelled someone.
• Is this a sexual photo or video of a teen under 18? If so, you could be found guilty of distributing child pornography.

Speak up
Tell the person doing the bullying to stop. Tell them that what they are doing is not cool.

Track it
Take screen shots of the messages, embarrassing photos, or videos. Keep a record of when you received each one. This can help school principals, CyberSCAN investigators, or police investigate and stop the bullying. Once you have sent the message or image to the authorities, delete it.
Report it

Tell an adult you trust about the bullying. School principals have the authority to respond to cyberbullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

Report the bullying to your Internet or cell phone service provider or social network administrator. These service providers have terms of use that forbid bullying, harassing, malicious or illegal behaviour. They can investigate and even remove the messages, photos, and videos.

You or your teen can also file a complaint about cyberbullying by calling CyberSCAN at 242-6900 (within HRM) or toll-free at 1-855-702-8324. (Please note, this unit will be operational in September 2013). Investigators will first try to stop the cyberbullying by talking to all those involved. They can also seek a court order that would prevent people from using technology to bully, and even take away their computers, cell phones, or mobile devices.

Call the police if the message includes physical threats or there is a possibility that a crime has been committed. See “When should I call the police?” in the “Parent resources” section of this booklet.

How can I help my teen respond properly if they are bullied?

Checklist

**Ask questions.**

**Get details.**

**Take notes.**

**Speak Up!**

How can I tell if my teen is being bullied?

Teens like to take care of their problems on their own. Like younger children, teens often worry that reporting the bullying will make it worse. For these reasons, your teen is not likely to tell you if they are being bullied, but they may show you. Here are some signs to watch for:

- Your teen avoids going to school.
- Your teen has lost interest in activities.
- Your teen is anxious, fearful, or has low self-esteem.
- Your teen complains of feeling sick or having trouble sleeping.
- Your teen is unusually unhappy or crabby.
- Your teen appears to be left out of many activities.
- Your teen threatens self-injury.
- Your teen often “loses” things, needs money, or has damaged clothing or belongings.
- Your teen’s marks are slipping.
- Your teen appears troubled when online or using a cell phone.
- Your teen hides their Internet activity, switching screens when someone walks by.
- Your teen refuses to talk about what they do online.
- Your teen uses their computer, cell phone, or mobile device much less often.
What do I do if I see these signs?

Talk with your teen

Find a time when you can give your teen your full attention. We are all busy, and so it’s important to find a time when you and your teen can be in the same place, relaxed, and relatively private. Here are some suggestions.

- **Linger over breakfast.**
  If you and your teen are both morning people, have a chat before your busy day begins.

- **Chat on the way to or from school in the car or walking.**
  Sometimes teens open up when they don’t have to make eye contact. Walking side-by-side or keeping your eyes on the road as you drive gives them this opportunity.

- **Make a date.**
  If your family’s time is tightly scheduled, plan a short outing with your teen just to chat.

- **Take advantage of wait times.**
  Traffic jams, doctor’s appointments, and long grocery line-ups don’t have to be frustrating. Take advantage of them to strike up a conversation with your teen.

- **Let books, movies, and TV kickstart the conversation.**
  When you read, watch TV, or view Internet sites with your teen, look for opportunities to talk about bullying, sex, peer pressure, good behaviour, and healthy relationships.

How you talk to your teen is just as important as when you talk.

Here are some tips on how to talk about bullying with your teen:

- **Keep the lines of communication open.**
  Your teen is more likely to listen to you if you have listened to them and answered their questions in the past.

- **Ask questions that require detailed answers.**
  For example, instead of asking, “How was your day?” Try some of these questions:
  - What was one good thing that happened today? Did any bad things happen?
  - What was lunch time like? Who did you sit with? What did you talk about?
  - Tell me about your way to and from school? Who did you walk (or ride the bus) with? What did you talk about?

When your teen is ready to talk about the bullying, do these things:

- **Listen**
  Recognize how hard it is for your teen to tell you about the bullying. Give them your full attention.

- **Be brave**
  Let your teen know that they are not alone. It may help to share stories from your own youth. Were you bullied as a teen? Did you see others bullied? Did you bully others? These may not be easy stories to tell but they are important. It can be a great help to tell your teen about things that you regret or wish you had done differently to make things better.
Ask questions
When your teen is ready to talk about the bullying, ask questions that will encourage conversation. A good place to start might be to ask about details such as what happened, who was involved and where and when it took place. It is also important to focus on how your teen feels about what happened.

Be patient
Your teen may not want to talk about the bullying. Teens like to handle problems on their own. They also worry that reporting bullying will make it worse. They need to know that it is very hard to stop a bullying problem alone. Everyone needs help with this, even adults. Your teen needs to know that it is part of your job to protect them and to help make the bullying stop.

Be supportive
Here are some ways you can support your teen:
• Thank them for trusting you enough to tell you about the bullying.
• Tell them that the bullying is not their fault.
• Express empathy. Show them that you understand the hurt they are feeling.
• Take note of the details of the bullying and keep a record.
• Tell your teen to continue to report the bullying until it has stopped.
• Keep asking about the bullying. Your teen may not tell you if the bullying continues.
• Help your teen find activities to get involved in outside of school, such as a sport, a club, volunteer work, or a job. This will give them the chance to make new friends and learn a new skill. Try to find an activity your teen will do well at. This will improve their confidence.

Encourage your teen to do the right thing
• Calmly tell the person doing the bullying to stop.
• If your teen is confident and has a good sense of humour they could try to laugh it off.
• Walk away.
• Do not hit back or talk back to the person doing the bullying.
• Tell a parent, teacher, or trusted adult.
• Talk about the bullying with friends or siblings. Talking about it can make your teen feel less alone.
• Stay away from places where the bullying happens.
• Use the buddy system. Find a friend to travel to and from school with and to hang out with after school.
What can I do if my teen is being bullied?

As much as they would like to, your teen can’t solve a bullying problem on their own. They need your help. Here are some things you should do if you think your teen is being bullied:

Speak up

REPORT the bullying to your teen’s teacher, guidance counsellor, or principal. Schools must act in cases of bullying and cyberbullying. School principals have the authority to respond to bullying and cyberbullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

MEET with your teen’s teacher, guidance counsellor, vice-principal, or principal to come up with a plan to help stop the bullying.

FOLLOW THROUGH. Keep an eye on your teen’s behaviour. If the plan that was put in place does not stop the bullying let your school know. Continue to work with the principal to resolve the issue. If you are not satisfied with the response you are getting from the school, contact your school board’s central office. For more information see the “Parent resources” section of this booklet.

REASSURE YOUR TEEN. It is important that you tell your teen that you will continue to support them through this difficult time.

CALL THE POLICE if you feel that your teen is in danger, that the bullying involves criminal behaviour such as sexual harassment, sexual assault or the use of a weapon, or that the threat to your teen’s safety is in the community rather than the school.

Track it

Keep a journal yourself or have your teen keep a journal. Write down how your teen is being bullied, who is doing the bullying, and when and where it happens. You can also use the “Notes” sections provided in this booklet.

What do I do in a case of cyberbullying?

Speak up

In addition to reporting cyberbullying to your child’s teacher, guidance counsellor, and principal, report it to your Internet or cell phone service provider or social network site administrator. You should also report severe cases of cyberbullying to the police.

You or your teen can also file a complaint about cyberbullying by calling CyberSCAN at 242-6900 (within HRM) or toll-free at 1-855-702-8324. (Please note, this unit will be operational in September 2013). Investigators will first try to stop the cyberbullying by talking to all those involved. They can also seek a court order that would prevent people from using technology to bully, and even take away their computers, cell phones, or mobile devices.

Track it

Save all messages, photos, and videos. You can save messages and photos easily by taking a screen shot of the text, tweet, e-mail, or picture.
How can my teen repair relationships and learn from bullying behaviour?

How can I tell if my teen is bullying others?

These are some signs to watch for:

- Your teen does not care if their words or actions hurt others.
- Your teen sees aggression as a good thing.
- Your teen gets angry quickly and often.
- You are aware that your teen’s friends have bullied others.
- Your teen follows along with the group.
- Your teen is bossy and always wants to be in control.
- Your teen is skilled at getting others to do what they want.
- Your teen suddenly has more money than usual or new things with no explanation of how they got them.
- Your teen hides their Internet activity, switching screens when someone walks by.
- Your teen spends more time online than usual.
- Your teen gets upset if they are not allowed to use the computer or mobile device.
- You discover that your teen has several social media identities or e-mail addresses.
What do I do if I see these signs?

Teens who get away with bullying risk turning to other forms of abusive behaviour, such as

- sexual harassment
- abuse in dating relationships
- workplace harassment
- marital, child, and elder abuse

You need to help your teen to learn that bullying is unacceptable and to understand how their words and actions affect others.

Here are some things you can do to teach your teen not to bully:

- Be a good role model. Act the way you want your teen to act. This means
  - responding to situations calmly
  - using words to express anger, frustration, disappointment, and so on
  - not using your power or authority to “put others in their place”

- Tell your teen that bullying is wrong and that it hurts them as much as it hurts those they bully.

- Talk about what you expect from family members. Make sure your teen know that bullying is not acceptable.

- Talk to your teen about their own strengths and weaknesses. Teach them how they can use their power to help, not hurt, others.

- Teach empathy. Ask your teen how they think it feels to be bullied.

- Spend time with your teen and get to know their friends. Talk about their interests and activities.

- Pay attention to your teen’s behaviour in daily life and online.
  - How do they treat pets, siblings, and friends?
  - How much time do they spend on the computer, cell phone, or other mobile device?
  - Do they hide their online activities from you?

- Praise your teen when you see kind, respectful behaviour. It is also important to praise their efforts, talents, and achievements.

- Praise your teen when you see them working out a problem or solving a conflict in a non-violent way—for example, when they show that they understand how another teen feels.

- Get help for your teen if they are struggling in school or in other areas of life. Your family doctor can help with problems of aggression or lack of self-control.

- Work with your teen’s teachers and school to reward your teen’s positive behaviour and to discourage bullying.
Let’s Talk

There is a lot of information in this booklet. How do you use it in real life? Put yourself in this situation. How would you handle it?

Your teen forgot her phone. When you pick it up to take it to her you notice a series of texts on the screen. Curious, you begin reading. The texts are from your daughter’s friend. She complains of getting hurtful e-mails and text messages and has seen embarrassing comments posted about her online. The friend is asking your daughter for advice.

What do you need to do?

SEE it!

Do you see signs of bullying? If so, what are they?

What might be happening?

- Physical bullying
- Social bullying
- Verbal bullying
- Cyberbullying

Do you have trouble naming it? If so, why?
What else do you need to know that would help you to name the behaviour?

SPEAK up!

Who do you need to talk to?

What do you need to know?

What steps do you and your child need to take?
SECTION 4:
Parent resources
Parent resources

Restorative approaches

A restorative approach provides a foundation for building strong and healthy relationships and addressing harmful patterns of relationships, without being limited to a process or a response to bullying in particular. Many schools in Nova Scotia are now using a restorative approach. Schools using a restorative approach report positive results with fewer bullying and school discipline issues and fewer suspensions. In schools that use a restorative approach teachers, families, and students work together to model healthy relationships, and everyone at the school makes an effort to make everyone else feel at home.

Can I use a restorative approach at home?

If you and your child are familiar with a restorative approach used in your school, you can apply this approach at home. You do this by modelling a different way of addressing the effects of bullying behaviour.

If you think your child is being bullied, ask questions like these:
- What happened?
- Who was there?
- How does what happened make you feel?
- Do you think anyone else was affected by what happened?
- How?
- What do you think needs to change for things to get better?
- Who do you think could help make things better?

If you think your child is bullying another child, ask questions like these:
- What happened?
- Who was there?
- What were you thinking about or feeling when this happened?
- How did you respond?
- Who do you think was affected by what happened?
- How?
- Is there anything you wish you had done differently?
- What will you do differently if a situation like this happens again?
- What do you think needs to change to make things better?
These questions will help your child to understand what was happening and to see how they and others can be part of making things better.

These questions show that you know bullying is about more than the person who was bullied and the person doing the bullying. It is also about who else was affected and who else can help to make things better.

How can I work with my school and school board to respond to a bullying incident?

You should report all incidents of bullying and cyberbullying to your school. School principals have the authority to respond to bullying and cyberbullying at their school, as well as cyberbullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

If you need further support in responding to bullying, you can contact your school board. If your board has a Parent Concern Protocol, read it and follow the process it outlines.

If you cannot find such a protocol, call your school board and explain your problem.

As you work with your school board to resolve the issue, be sure to ask these questions:

- Who is looking into my concern?
- When can I expect them to contact me?
- How will my child be kept safe while the issue is being investigated and resolved?

If you wish to contact the parents of another child involved in the bullying, do so through the school or school board.
When should I call the police?

Call the police if you feel that your child is in danger or that the threat to your child is in the community rather than the school. You should also call the police if the bullying involves criminal behaviour such as

- assault
- sexual assault
- the use of a weapon

Cyberbullying

Call the police if the message includes physical threats or there is a possibility that a crime has been committed. Crimes related to cyberbullying include

- harassment—persistent behavior that threatens or torments somebody
- distributing child pornography—any image that shows a person under the age of 18 engaged in explicit sexual activity
- defamatory libel—a published statement directed at a person in authority that could seriously harm that person’s reputation. Anything posted online or even sent from one cell phone to another counts as being “published.”
How to find help

If you or someone you know needs help, reach out to people you can trust—a family member, relative, friend or teacher. You’re not alone. Support and resources are available to help.

www.prevnet.ca
PREVNet is a national network of leading researchers and organizations, working together to stop bullying in Canada.

kidshelpphone.ca
Toll-Free 1-800-668-6868
Kids Help Phone is a free, anonymous, and confidential phone and online professional counselling service for youth.

Anti-bullying Support
antibullying.novascotia.ca
The provincial anti-bullying website has information tailored to four audiences: children and youth, parents and guardians, educators and schools, and community on how to address bullying and cyberbullying.

www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/index-eng.aspx
Get Cyber Safe is a national public awareness campaign created to educate Canadians about Internet security and the simple steps they can take to protect themselves online.

The Jack Project
www.thejackproject.org/resources
Find tip sheets on suicide prevention, bullying, and mental health for teens and families, produced in partnership with Kids Help Phone.

Mental Health Crisis Line:
1-888-429-8167 (toll free)
Telephone crisis support and mobile response is offered to work, home, school, and community agencies Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

TeenMentalHealth.org
This website is dedicated to helping improve the mental health of youth.

Communities Addressing Suicide Together [CAST]
novascotia.cmha.ca/programs_services/cast/
CAST works to help prevent suicide in Nova Scotia communities.

Youth Drug Prevention for Parents
drugprevention.gc.ca
The National Anti-Drug Strategy website for helping parents talk about substance use with teens.
PsychosisSucks.ca
This site promotes early detection, educates about psychosis, and provides direction for those seeking help.

LaingHouse.org
Laing House is a peer support organization for youth living with mental illness.

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
www.suicideprevention.ca
Find information about preventing suicide, with links to regional support.

Canadian Mental Health Association
cmha.ca
This site provides support for people with mental illnesses. It includes the Communities Addressing Suicide Together Program.

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
avaloncentre.ca
The Avalon Centre provides services for those affected by sexual violence. We provide support, education, counselling and leadership/advocacy services for women.

Domestic Violence Resources
nsdomesticviolence.ca
View a map of available resources for domestic violence victims in Nova Scotia.

NeedHelpNow.ca
If you, or someone you know has sent intimate photos on a computer, cell phone, or other mobile device (sexting) NeedHelpNow.ca is here.

CyberSafeGirl.ca
A prevention and education initiative for online safety for girls, led by the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women.

District Health Authorities/IWK
Check with your district health authority to see what services are available for children and youth in your local area.

ns.211.ca
211 is here to help you find the right social and community services.

811.novascotia.ca
Just three numbers—8-1-1—and you will have access to non-emergency health information and services.

911.novascotia.ca
Call 911 when someone’s health, safety, or property is seriously threatened and help is needed right away.
SECTION 5:
What is Nova Scotia doing?
SECTION 5:
What is Nova Scotia doing?

Nova Scotia is working to protect children and youth from bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. At the same time, we will hold those who bully responsible for their actions. We are doing this through our laws, through our schools, with special investigators, and by consulting Nova Scotians.

Bullying occurs when someone *repeatedly* tries to hurt another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation, or property.

Helping or encouraging someone to bully another person is also bullying.

**Four things to remember about bullying:**

1. People *learn* how to bully. It is not just kids being kids.
2. Bullying is about *power*—getting power over others and using that power to build yourself up by keeping others down.
3. Bullying is a *disrespectful* behaviour which does not value our human rights.
4. Bullying is *repeated*. It is not one instance of a child being mean to another child.

Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology to bully someone else. The most common tools are computers, cell phones, and other mobile devices. Bullying messages are often text messages, e-mails, social media posts, or embarrassing photos or videos.

**Laws**

**Cyber-Safety Act**

You can call police or apply to a justice of the peace to get protection from those who cyberbully. Through a protection order, the person who is doing the cyberbullying can be restricted in their use of technology so that they cannot use it to bully. People who disobey these conditions can be charged a fine of up to $5,000, go to jail for up to 6 months, or both for a first offence.

Cyberbullying is also grounds for a lawsuit. This means that if your child is found to have bullied someone through the use of technology, you can be taken to court and ordered to pay damages.

**Special investigators**

Nova Scotia has a special investigative unit whose only job is to look into cyberbullying complaints. It’s called CyberSCAN. If you think you, or someone you know, are being bullied by means of electronic technology, you can call CyberSCAN.
CyberSCAN investigators will work with everyone involved, including schools and families, to solve the problem. If that doesn’t work, they can apply for a court order to stop the person who is cyberbullying or to take away their computer, cell phone, or any device used to bully.

If investigators determine that a crime may have been committed, they will call the police. Crimes linked to cyberbullying include:

- harassment
- sexual harassment
- distributing child pornography
- defamatory libel

**Criminal Code of Canada**

Nova Scotia is pushing for changes to the Criminal Code of Canada to make the distribution of intimate pictures without consent a crime.

**Schools**

**Principals**

School principals now have the authority to respond to bullying that takes place off school grounds or after school hours if it affects the learning climate of the school.

**Nova Scotia’s School Code of Conduct**

Nova Scotia’s School Code of Conduct identifies behaviour standards for all school members as well as consequences for not following those standards. Severely disruptive behaviour, which includes bullying and cyberbullying is never ignored. Appropriate action is always taken. The provincial School Code of Conduct strengthens and supports positive social relationships as a school wide goal, endorses using a restorative approach to strengthen safe and secure school communities, and, in the process, holds all school members accountable to address bullying and cyberbullying.

**Web-based Anonymous Reporting**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will soon have a way for parents and students to report bullying and cyberbullying without giving their names. This new tool will be an online form that will be launched in the Fall of 2013. Look for it on your school board’s website and at www.antibullying.novascotia.ca.

---

**CyberSCAN**

Anyone can file a complaint about cyberbullying by calling CyberSCAN at 242-6900 (within HRM) or toll-free at 1-855-702-8324.

*(Please note, this unit will be operational in September 2013).*
Schools Plus

Schools Plus brings professionals into schools to offer services for children, youth, and families, such as

- health and mental health services
- anger management
- mentoring

This program is expanding so that more students and families can use these and many other services during and after school.

Teaching about healthy relationships

Bullying is a relationship issue. Students in Nova Scotia learn how to form healthy relationships at home, at school, in the community, and online.

Children and youth have the opportunity to learn skills that promote healthy relationships as part of the Health Education curriculum in elementary school and the Healthy Living curriculum in junior high.

Teaching about healthy relationships in elementary school

Healthy relationships with adults

In the first year of school, Nova Scotian students learn that it is up to adults to protect them and care for them. They learn that it is important to have at least one adult in their lives who will keep them safe.

Healthy relationships with other children

Children learn how to communicate with others to build healthy relationships. They learn what makes someone a good friend and practise ways to make and keep friendships.

They also learn about empathy—the ability to feel what someone else feels. This helps them to do these things:

- understand healthy ways to connect with others
- value ways in which we are different from each other
- make good decisions when managing conflict

Children learn that some relationships are healthy and some are harmful. Some encourage healthy living, while others might get in the way of learning or having good relationships at home.

They learn to spot bullying and aggression. And they practise helping others.

Children are encouraged to create their own code of ethics to guide their relationships.
Healthy online relationships
As early as grade 2, Nova Scotian students learn when it is safe to share personal information. They also learn how to use the Internet safely.

Keep personal information private!
Here is some information you should never share on the Internet:
• your birth date
• your address
• your phone numbers
• your current location
• how much money you have
• identification numbers, such as Social Insurance number, driver’s licence, and so on
• passwords
• vacation plans
• intimate photos or videos

Diversity
Early on, students learn that there are all kinds of families. There are families with one parent, families with 2 mothers or 2 fathers, families led by grandparents, families whose parents and siblings are of different races, ethnic backgrounds, as well as families with different socio-economic means, and many other forms of diversity.

Later, they learn that everyone has rights and responsibilities. They learn that it is up to each of us to protect our own rights and those of others. They also learn that sexuality and sexual orientation is part of a person’s personality, not something for which a person should be judged or criticized.

Teaching about healthy relationships in junior high
Healthy relationships among teens
Teens learn that all different kinds of relationships have 2 things in common:
• People should always treat each other with respect.
• There should be no violence.

They also look at the different reasons people start and end relationships.

Teens learn how to deal with the negative influences other teens may have on them. They also learn that they can have a positive influence on others.
Teens learn that it is important to step in to protect the person being bullied. And they practise how to do this.

Teens practise listening to others, showing understanding of others’ needs, and supporting them if they decide to go for help.

Healthy online relationships
Teens learn how easy it is to lose control of their information online.

Teens learn about the benefits and risks of connecting with others online. They learn to make healthy, responsible decisions that reduce their chances of being exploited or victimized.

Sexual Diversity
Teens learn to respect differences. They learn how stereotyping and stigma can keep people from seeking the help they need.

Finally, teens look at the sexual portrayal of teens in the media. They learn that this can affect how they see themselves, how they form relationships, and how this portrayal can lead to violence.

Taking a restorative approach

In the next few years many Nova Scotia schools will adopt a restorative approach. This approach focuses on building healthy relationships every day among students, staff, parents, and the community.

Bullying is reduced in schools that adopt a restorative approach. Here’s why:

- Teachers, families, and students work together to model healthy relationships.
- Students, teachers, and parents are encouraged to look at what causes bullying.
- Teachers use problem solving circles, sharing circles, and check-in circles to build strong and healthy relationships on a daily basis in their classrooms.
- The focus is on building safe, healthy relationships and on students taking meaningful responsibility. Families, students, and teachers are invited to work together.
- Students come to learn that reporting bullying makes things better, not worse.
Does a restorative approach reduce bullying?
Yes! Here’s how:
• by inviting everyone affected by the bullying to help make things better, including
  - those who were bullied
  - those who did the bullying
  - those who saw the bullying
  - those otherwise affected by the bullying
  - those who can help to make things better
• by involving parents and families as soon as an incident of bullying is reported
• by focusing on repairing the harm done, and ensuring that the bullying does not happen again, rather than focusing on blame
• creating plans to support healthy relationships for the future

What does a restorative approach look like?
Restorative activities that build healthy relationships in the classroom include
• problem-solving circles
• check-in circles
• sharing circles

Teachers ask questions like these:
• What happened?
• Who needs to be here to help us solve this problem?
• What do we need to do differently so that this does not happen again?

Formal restorative conferences are set up in cases of ongoing bullying. These conferences bring together
• students
• families
• teachers

Consulting Nova Scotians

We continue to look for ways to improve our services. That’s why we continue to meet with
• community and women’s groups
• health and education professionals
• police
• Nova Scotians like you

For the most up-to-date information please visit antibullying.novascotia.ca
SECTION 6: References

Publications and websites that informed this booklet


*Not in my school! Learn how you can help stop bullying at school and in your community*, by the Government of Manitoba, undated.


Kidshealth.org

PREVNet.ca

Stopbullying.gov

Talkwithkids.org