

# Information for Parents/Guardians about Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week – November 21–27, 2021

Ontario schools should be places where students, staff, parents/guardians and the community feel welcome. Providing a safe learning environment is critical to ensuring student success.

This is why bullying and cyberbullying in all forms, is considered a serious issue that can affect students' learning, sense of safety and overall well-being.

## Bullying Prevention and Awareness Week

Ontario has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday of November (November 21 – 27, 2021) as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. This week is dedicated to promoting safer schools and positive learning environments.

During Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, students, staff and parents/guardians are encouraged to learn more about bullying and cyberbullying. In addition to understanding how bullying impacts student learning and well-being, there will be opportunities to learn about preventing bullying.

## What is cyberbullying?

Bullying by electronic means or cyberbullying can take many forms, such as using email, text messages, apps or through social media. It can also include:<sup>1</sup>

- Sending hurtful and sometimes threatening emails, pictures or text messages.
- Spreading gossip, secrets or rumours about another person that will damage that person's reputation, sense of safety and well-being.
- Hacking into an email account or creating an anonymous account and sending/posting hurtful materials to others under an assumed identity.
- Creating social media posts or websites that contain stories, cartoons, pictures or jokes ridiculing others.
- Creating polling websites where visitors are asked to rate individuals' attributes in a negative manner.
- Taking an embarrassing photo of someone and sharing it with others.
- Directly messaging someone and deceiving them into revealing personal information, including gender identity or sexual orientation and then sharing that information with others.
- Hacking someone's online profile to impersonate them or posting sexual, racist and other content that may be offensive.
- Deliberately excluding others from or in gaming sessions, group chats or social media accounts.

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1. Source: PREVNet: <https://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/cyber-bullying>

## Signs a Student is Being Bullied

As students may not directly discuss what is taking place at school, you can watch for signs that a child is being bullied that could include:

- being upset or feeling anxious/sick on school days or inquire about changing schools
- not wanting to take part in activities or social events at school
- may be acting differently than they normally do
- suddenly beginning to tell you they lost money or personal belongings
- coming home with torn clothes/broken possessions or physical markings and offer explanations that don't make sense.

## How Can I support my Child's Success?

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### Talk About It

Parents/Guardians can find tips and suggestions to help support and encourage these conversations using the following resources:

- *Parent Tool Kit: Teen Edition*, developed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), provides tips for parents on various topics that include being a listener, a mentor, a coach, and a learner.
- *Parent Tip Sheets*, a multi-lingual resource developed by Ontario's Principal Association Service Partners and Victim Services Toronto, through the Healthy Relationships project on how to navigate cyberbullying together.

### Information to Help You: Cyberbullying

- *Building Healthy Relationships – A toolkit and guide* that highlights the role electronic devices can have in building and maintaining relationships in this digital age.
- *Kids Help Phone* – Offers counselling 24/7 in English and French. Children, parents and guardians can talk with someone about what

they are feeling at 1-800-668-6868. Or text CONNECT at 686868 to chat by text.

- *Media Smarts – Cyberbullying Resources*
- *Cybertip.ca – What To Do if Your Child is Being Bullied?*
- *PREVNet* – Cyberbullying information and resources: including, *What Parents Can Do*.

### Interactive Resources

- *Bullying – we can all help stop it* – this resource provides information on what to watch for, what you can do, what you can expect from the school and where you can learn more.
- *We All Belong* and *A Circle of Caring*
- Storybooks and Comic books for young children developed by COPA to accompany *We All Belong*
  - ◆ *Toof and That Blanket*
  - ◆ *Specs and The Best Part*
  - ◆ *Bouncy and The Any Kind at All Fish*
  - ◆ *A Sticky Situation*
  - ◆ *Caring is the Universal Language*

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