

When Your Child Has Been a Victim of Bullying

What a School Official Cannot Tell You	What a School Official Can Tell You
Specific disciplinary procedures instituted against any child except your own	Specific disciplinary procedures that are defined in school policy or administrative procedures, and whether or not they intend to follow that policy in this case
Any actions the school is taking that specifically affect a child other than your own (e.g., moving another child to a different classroom)	Any actions the school is taking that affect your child (e.g., moving your child to another classroom)
The content of any communications with another child's parents or guardians	The fact that they have been in communication with the parents or guardians of other children
Any contract or agreement with a child who is not your own, or with the parents of that child	Any actions the school is taking that affect the children generally but which may impact the incident(s) in question (e.g., placing an adult monitor in a spot which has been identified as one where bullying occurs)
The names or identification of other children involved in previous incident(s) in which your child had some involvement, for which there is a Record	Previous incident(s) in which your child had some involvement, without naming other children
Measures other parents are taking to help their child (e.g., parents putting another child in therapy)	Measures you might use to help your child (e.g., practicing your child's response to a bully; "checking in" daily with your child's teacher; getting important information from your child)
Previous or past behaviors or behavior problems of any child other than your own child	Any reports or referrals made to law enforcement regarding the incident(s) in question

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Step One: What's going on?

- Children tend to overuse the word “bullying” to describe many different kinds of situations. So the first job is to determine what kind of problem your child is dealing with.
- Tell them you're proud and glad that they came to you; then ask your child to walk you through the incident. What happened first? What next? Who else was there? What did they do?
- The most important thing is for you to get details – as many details as possible. It's those details that will help you resolve this.
- The situation may or may not be bullying, but that's not the most important thing.
- The critical issue to resolve the situation – and you need those details to do that.

Step Two: Working With Your Child's School

- Approach your child's school calmly, with as many facts as possible. Here are a few tips to make the conversation go better:
- Consider going in person. Phone and email contact is often not as effective.
- Stay calm and listen to what the educator or administrator tells you. Don't assume they have all the same facts that you have.
- It's not often that administrators can truly make a bullying situation vanish overnight – but they can immediately work to help your child feel more supported and safer.
- Never assume you know everything about what's going on, and never assume your child is telling you the 100% entire truth.
- It is normal for children to tell small lies to their parents, if it means they will avoid getting in trouble.
- Never over-focus on whether or not the situation is truly “bullying.” Focus instead on how to resolve it successfully.

Step Three: Some Tips to Help

- If you feel unable to communicate with the administrator, go see another person in your child's District or school. Don't give up.
- Stay calm – losing your temper will not help your child feel safer.
- Remember that schools cannot tell you anything about another child – even a bully – so don't expect to get information about what happens to the bully. They cannot tell you.
- When you end a conversation, be sure to ask, “When we will speak next, to check in about this situation?” Insist upon an answer.
- Do you need more help? Ask your pediatrician for advice and referrals.
- Finally, always ask your child if any part of the bullying is happening online or through texting. Our research shows that the older kids are, the more common that is.

Get specific information from your child. The more specific the information you can get, the better the school will be able to help end the situation. Ask your child the following questions:

1. Where did this happen? (Playground? Lunchroom? Classroom?)
2. When did this happen? (Morning? During recess? After school?)
3. Is this the first time this has happened?
4. What happened right before this happened? What were you doing? What was “Joey” doing?
5. Walk me through what happened. i.e. You said “Hi.” What did ‘Joey say or do next? What did you say/do?
6. Who else was there? (Teacher? Other adult? Other kids?) What did they do?
7. Did you tell anybody? If yes, what did they do? If no, why didn't you tell an adult?

Take this information, in written form, to your school.

Ask them to read it and make an appointment to sit down afterwards.

During that appointment, ask the school: Is there any other information that I can get from my child to help you address this situation?

Will you be following school policy in addressing this situation?

What specific actions can you tell me you will be taking? (**Note that you understand the legal limitations school officials are under.**)

Have you spoken with my child's teacher/playground monitor/lunch room attendants/etc.? When will we touch base next?