

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:¹

- 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.

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?

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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