



RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Bullying can occur in schools and anywhere children interact. According to Georgia Code, bullying is:

“(1) Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so; or (2) Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm.”

No one should have to put up with feeling threatened or being harmed. Georgia law requires schools to adopt policies to prohibit bullying and apply penalties against those who bully. If your child is being bullied, there are steps you can take to protect your child.

HELPING YOUR CHILD RESPOND TO BULLYING

- ✦ **Let Your Child Know It Is Okay To Tell.** Both adults and children need to feel safe and secure to seek help and talk about what is happening. Let your child know that you are glad they told you and that it is not his or her fault. Let your child know that he or she is not alone and that you will deal with this together.
- ✦ **Document and Report the Bullying to the School.** If the bullying happened at school, do not confront the bullying child or the child’s parents directly. Write down the facts – dates, times, people involved, and the specifics of what happened. Bring this to your school personnel’s attention. Focus on the common goal that you and the school personnel have, which is to get your child the education he or she deserves. This cannot happen when the child is being bullied.
- ✦ **Focus on Behaviors.** Think about the words that you use to describe people and situations. Labeling someone is returning the attack verbally. Labels also tend to limit our sense that the situation can change, for example, the bully is just “bad.” More neutral terms like “unacceptable” and specific discussions of actions and consequences will further a discussion of events more effectively. Encourage your child to try to think of the behavior in this way as well when confronting a bully.
- ✦ **Make One Statement and Walk Away.** Do not tell your child to fight back or ignore the bullying. Those seem to be natural responses, but they are not usually effective. Instead, one firm statement that says, in essence, “no” to the bully can be said by the victim or a bystander, whether adult or child. These statements can be prepared and rehearsed ahead of time. Practice with your child what he or she might say to someone who is rude or abusive. Remember not to label the bully. Some examples of statements include:
 - I can’t play with you if you are bullying. Stop it so we can play together.
 - I don’t listen to bully talk because it’s mean.
 - I don’t do this to you. You should really think about that.

Once a statement is made, the victim should move to a place of safety, and an adult should be told.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To speak to someone about how to address your child’s situation, call Prevent Child Abuse Georgia’s Helpline at 1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373). You can also e-mail the Helpline at helpline@preventchildabusega.org. Understanding how to respond to bullying is one approach for communities to take to help prevent child abuse. *Preventing child abuse is the work of everyone, every day.* Join our efforts.