

What You Can Do if You Suspect Your Child Is Bullying Others

If you discover that your child is bullying others, it may be difficult to accept or understand. Here are some suggestions:

- Become familiar with the anti-bullying policy at your child's school. Discuss school rules and behavior expectations with your child. Ensure that your child understands what behaviors are acceptable and what behaviors are unacceptable.
- Find out exactly what it is that your child has been doing. What has your child been *accused* of doing? What does your child *admit* to doing?
- Talk to your child, calmly, about why such behaviors are being engaged in. It is important that you not approach your child in an accusatory or confrontational tone. Your child may be experiencing social or emotional difficulties that are difficult to handle. Some children may feel pressure to participate in bullying behavior in order to fit in with peers or to avoid being bullied themselves.
- Explain to your child why bullying behavior is unacceptable. Attempts should be made to explain how bullying affects others (victims, bystanders, school climate).
- Discuss alternatives to aggressive behavior with your child. Role playing may help some children to understand how it feels to be bullied. Teach your child some alternatives to aggressive behavior such as asking for help, respecting others, and showing tolerance for those who are different. Praise your child for using alternative, appropriate behavior. Acknowledgment of desirable behaviors will serve as a reward for your child and encourage the use of such behaviors in the future.
- Establish rules regarding aggressive behavior. Explain to your child that there will be consequences for these types of behaviors, such as losing privileges (consequences should be nonphysical in nature). Implement nonphysical consequences consistently when rules are violated.
- Ensure appropriate adult supervision at all times. Be aware of your child's involvement in activities inside and outside of school. Make certain that adequate adult supervision is present in every situation.
- Report any incidents of bullying behaviors to school officials, even if your child is the one engaging in those behaviors. This teaches children that they are accountable for their own behavior. Engage school officials' help in monitoring and addressing these behaviors. This will show your child that you will not tolerate such behavior, and that you want to help your child avoid it.
- Seek outside help. Dealing with bullying behavior is difficult. Your school's psychologist, counselor, or social worker may be able to offer additional suggestions or work with your child to change behavior. **Resources** – www.nasponline.org