

Talk to your child about bullying

Make sure your children know what bullying is. If they know what bullying is, they will know what not to do and will be able to recognize a bullying incident.

Ask for a copy of the school's bullying policy and procedures. Every Montana school district is required to have policies and procedures to address bullying and cyber-bullying. Make sure you and your children know how to report an incident, whether it is your child being bullied or someone else.

Take bullying seriously

Listen to your kids when they talk about their days. Are they telling you about a bullying incident? Children may be embarrassed or afraid to acknowledge that they are being bullied.

Encourage your children to report incidents of bullying. Let them know that you will support them through the reporting process.

Report the incident to school personnel

Share your child's concerns and specific information about bullying incidents with appropriate school personnel.

Ask how the school plans to deal with the incident as well as their plans for preventing future bullying incidents as well as preventing retaliation.

If you feel the problem hasn't been addressed, follow-up with the school administration to make sure they are following the district's policies and procedures.

What NOT TO Do:

- Do not ignore your child's report.
- Do not advise your child to physically fight back. (Bullying lasts longer and can become more severe when children fight back.)
- Do not confront the child who bullies.
- Do not confront the family of the child who bullies.

Adapted from stopbullying.gov: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/parents/index.html>.



Tips for Parents Dealing with a Child who Bullies

It can be difficult for any parent to learn that their child is bullying others. The sooner you address the problem, the better chance you have of avoiding the long-term effects this behavior can have on a child.

People who bully others:

- Are more likely to get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school.
- Have a higher risk of abusing alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults.
- Are twice as likely as their peers to have criminal convictions as adults and four times more likely to be multiple offenders.
- Are more likely as adults to be abusive toward their intimate partners, spouses, or children.

Warning signs your child may be bullying others

Your child:

- Gets into physical or verbal fights with others.
- Gets sent to the principal's office or detention a lot.
- Has extra money or new belongings that cannot be explained.
- Is quick to blame others.
- Does not accept responsibility for his or her actions.
- Has friends who bully others.



What to do if your child is engaging in bullying behavior

- **Educate your child about bullying.** Foster empathy by encouraging your child to look at his/her actions from the victim's perspective. Remind your child that bullying can have legal consequences.
- **Remember you are a model for your children.** Kids learn from adults' aggressive and mean-spirited behavior as well as from acts of kindness and empathy.
- **Establish consistent rules of behavior.** Make sure your child understands your rules and the consequences for breaking them.
- **Set limits with technology.** Let your child know you'll be monitoring his or her use of computers, email, and text messaging.
- **Seek Support.** Talk to school personnel, mental health providers, the PTA or other parenting organizations in your community about how to address the issue. Also, there are many good resources online. (Review the "Resources" tab on the Bully Free Montana page).

Adapted from stopbullying.gov and [Helpguide.org](http://helpguide.org):

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/parents/index.html>

<http://helpguide.org/mental/bullying.htm>