

# **CYBER-BULLYING: WHAT SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS NEED TO KNOW**

## **What is cyber-bullying?**

Cyber-bullying is bullying (making threats, spreading rumors, harassing others, intentionally excluding others) that occurs through the use of electronic technology such as cell phones, computers, and tablets. It often takes place via text, e-mail, internet messaging, and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr.

## **How can you help students who have been cyber-bullied?**

1. The first step in combatting cyber-bullying is developing a strong anti-bullying policy and providing a written copy of this policy to all staff members, parents, and students affiliated with your school. The anti-bullying policy should be consistent with state laws and school district policies, and should be incorporated into your school's code of conduct and/or student bill of rights. Additionally, this policy should include a detailed description of the consequences that will be enforced by administrators when the policy is violated.
2. Create a clear protocol for the reporting of cyber-bullying. All school staff, parents, and students should know exactly how to report cyber-bullying including to whom a report can be made. These reports should be kept confidential as much as possible in order to reduce the fear of retaliation.
3. Take each report of cyber-bullying seriously, even if the alleged victim has a history of being a perpetrator of bullying behavior. Inform the parents of the bully and the parents of the bully's victim(s) about the allegations as soon as possible.
4. Encourage students to be honest about how they have been threatened, harassed, ostracized, or mistreated. Be sure to tell them that any kind of bullying or harassment is wrong and that you are there to help and offer support.
5. When students are cyber-bullied, they often feel like there is no safe haven because they can be bullied at any time, day or night. Encourage parents to limit their child's use of the internet, phones, and other devices, not as a punishment, but as a way of temporarily protecting the child who has already been bullied from further mistreatment.
6. Instruct parents and students to print and save all harassing messages from phones and/or computers so that they can provide this evidence of cyber-bullying to school personnel or law enforcement officials if necessary.

## **How can you effectively address the bullying behavior with the bully and his/her victim?**

1. Do **not** encourage the bully and his/her victim to "talk it out" or resolve the problem themselves.
2. Do **not** instruct the victim to ignore the bully or the bully's behavior. Teach assertiveness instead.
3. Do **not** imply to the victim that the bullying is somehow his/her fault.
4. Inform the bully that his/her cyber-bullying will **not** be tolerated regardless of when or where it happens. Effective anti-bullying policies address bullying behavior that takes place both on and off school grounds.

**For more information on cyber-bullying or to obtain help for a student who has been cyber-bullied, please contact:**

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