

Bullying Questions & Answers

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Does Ohio have a law prohibiting bullying in schools?

Yes. Ohio's law is found in the Ohio Revised Code, Section 3313.666. The law prohibits harassment, intimidation, or bullying in schools. It went into effect in March 2007, and was amended effective November 4, 2012.

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Who does this law apply to?

The law applies to every public school district in Ohio. It does not apply to private schools. Under the law, all public schools must prohibit bullying.

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How does the law define "bullying"?

Bullying includes physical attacks or verbal abuse of another student using threats or taunts. A student who has not been physically harmed might still be a victim of bullying.

Bullying, harassment, or intimidation are defined as:

- any intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act that a student has exhibited toward another student **more than once**, and
- the behavior causes mental or physical harm, and
- the behavior is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for the other student.

The law also states that violence within a dating relationship is an incident of bullying.

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Does the law address cyber bullying?

Yes. The law prohibits bullying by an electronic device such as cell phone, computer, pager, or other electronic device. Cyber bullying that does not happen at school is still bullying that can be prohibited bylaw.

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What does the law require schools to do?

The law requires all school districts to establish a comprehensive **policy** prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The law requires school districts to publish their bullying policy in the student handbook every year and to include the policy in school employee training materials.

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How can parents or caregivers prevent bullying?

- Talk to the child and be aware of what is going on at school.
- Communicate regularly with the child's teachers and the school staff.
- Pay attention to how your child interacts with friends.
- Pay attention to how your child deals with social pressures at school.
- Stay involved in your child's life as she gets older and becomes more independent.
- Talk to your child often and be positive and respectful.
- Be a positive role model to your child by avoiding put-downs and offensive language.
- Stress the importance of respect for others.

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What can parents or caregivers do if they think their child is being bullied?

If you believe a child in your care is the victim of bullying:

- Notify the child’s teacher and principal immediately.
- Ask for a copy of the school’s bullying policy.
- Keep records of your communications with the school and keep copies of any letter or email that you send the school.
- If you call or speak to a school administrator in person, write down the date, time, and a summary of your conversation.
- Ask the school to follow up and inform you of what action is taken to address the problem.
- If problems continue, let the school know.

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What can parents or caregivers do if they think their child is bullying another child?

If a child in your care has been bullying other students, don’t ignore the problem. Ask the school, your child’s doctor, or other trusted sources for help in stopping your child’s behavior.

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What if a child in my care is facing some type of problem at school, but I am not sure if it meets the definition of bullying?

You can and should report any incident of abuse or harassment. Inform the child’s teacher and the school principal of what you hear, and ask them to let you know of any actions they take, and if they hear of further incidents.

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What happens once schools receive a report of bullying?

Each school must follow its own bullying policy. A school should investigate, and if a problem is found, the school should develop a strategy to protect the child from additional bullying or retaliation.

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What should I do if the school doesn’t believe that bullying is taking place or if the child continues to be bullied after the initial report?

If you have already involved the principal but the child in your care continues to experience bullying, contact the superintendent for your school district and explain the situation. You can also decide at that point to inform the Board of Education in writing of your concerns.

If your child continues to experience bullying despite the school’s attempts to protect her, you should continue to report future incidents to the school. If the school continues to fail to protect your child, you should consider consulting an attorney regarding a possible violation of the Ohio law prohibiting bullying.

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Are there any federal protections against harassment or discrimination in schools?

Yes. Federal (U.S.) law says that school may not be deliberately indifferent to harassment or discrimination against students in school based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability etc. If you think this is happening in your child’s school, you should consult an attorney.