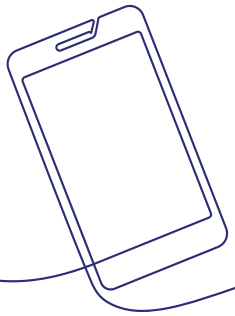
Parent's guide to cyberbullying

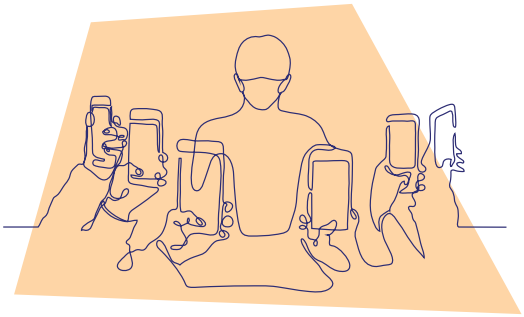


With the rise of social media platforms and electronic communication, opportunities for bullying behaviors have increased, often occurring outside of school environments and beyond the awareness of parents, caregivers, and trusted adults. The more adults know about cyberbullying, the quicker they can intervene.

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the intentional, repeated act of using electronic devices and platforms like phones, computers and social media to harass, embarrass or harm someone else. Cyberbullying has three unique challenges that can create more harm than in-person, face-to-face bullying.

1. **Persistent.** Social media, text messaging and other platforms allow for immediate and continuous communication, making it difficult to stop or end communication.
2. **Permanent.** Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation can impact college admissions, employment and other life aspects for everyone involved, including the bully.
3. **Hard to notice.** Due to the nature of electronic communication, parents and teachers are often unaware that cyberbullying is taking place, making it harder to notice and intervene.



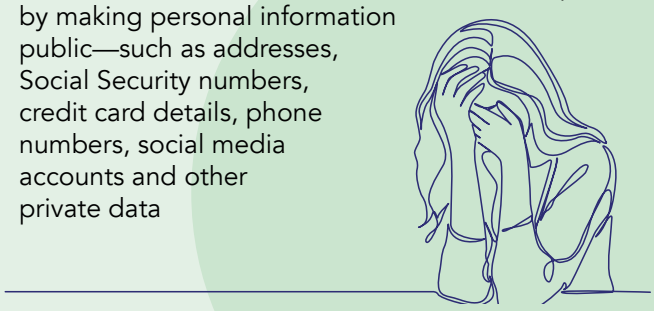
Statistics show that cyberbullying is a common form of bullying behavior. Most young people have personal cell phones and/or computers that allow for easy access to messaging apps and social media platforms, usually outside of the supervision of adults.

According to the 2022 National Crime and Victimization Survey, among students ages 12-18 in grades 6-12 who reported being bullied during school (19.2% of all students), about 21.6% reported being bullied online or by text, including nearly twice as many girls (27.7%) than boys (14.1%).

The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that an estimated 16% of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey.

What does cyberbullying look like?

- Posting comments or rumors about someone online that are mean, hurtful or embarrassing
- Threatening to hurt someone or telling them to kill themselves
- Posting a mean or hurtful picture or video
- Pretending to be someone else online to post or solicit personal or false information about another person
- Posting mean or hateful names, comments or content about someone's race, religion, ethnicity or other personal characteristics
- Creating a mean or hurtful webpage about someone
- Doxing: A form of online harassment used to exact revenge, threaten or violate someone's privacy by making personal information public—such as addresses, Social Security numbers, credit card details, phone numbers, social media accounts and other private data



What are some warning signs a child is being cyberbullied or is cyberbullying others?



- Noticeable increases or decreases in device use, including texting
- Emotional responses such as laughter, anger or distress while using a device
- Hiding the screen or device when others are near and avoiding conversations about what they're doing online
- Social media accounts are suddenly shut down or new ones appear
- Avoiding social situations, even those previously enjoyed
- Becoming withdrawn or depressed, or losing interest in people and activities
- Not wanting to go to school; frequent complaints of physical ailments like headaches or stomach pain
- Changes in mood, appetite and sleep patterns
- Declining grades or loss of interest in schoolwork

Additional resources:

Local schools have policies and procedures in place to report and handle bullying incidents. Below are links to the bullying prevention and intervention websites of local school districts along with other helpful resources.

- Duval County Public Schools DCPS Bullying Prevention
- St. Johns County Public School District
  Parent Bullying Prevention Education & Resources
  District Prevention Education
- Clay County School District
  Report Bullying | Clay County District Schools
- Nassau County School District
  Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program
  Nassau County School District

Additional state and national resources
What You Can Do | StopBullying.gov
Bullying – PACER Center
Florida DOE Bullying Prevention

How to respond if your child is being cyberbullied?



Notice. Parents and caregivers may recognize if there are changes in a young person's mood and/or behaviors. These changes may be more observable when a young person is using technology.

Talk about it. If you're noticing changes in a young person's mood and/or behavior it helps to ask questions about what may be going on and who is involved.

Document. Keep a record of what is happening and where. Take screenshots of harmful posts or content if possible. Most laws and policies note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records help to document it.

Report. Most social media platforms and schools have clear policies and reporting processes. If a classmate is cyberbullying, report it to the school. You can also contact apps or social media platforms to report offensive content and have it removed. If a child has received physical threats, or if a potential crime or illegal behavior is occurring, report it to the police.

Explore mental health support. Cyberbullying can negatively affect a young person's mental health in several ways, including signs and symptoms of anxiety or depression, sleep disturbances, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts and substance use. Connecting a young person to mental health support during or after a cyberbullying incident can offer an important outlet and additional support during a difficult time.

What Is Cyberbullying | StopBullying.gov

Common Thread
by Wolfson Children's