

Autism & Bullying

Research shows that children with disabilities are two to three times more likely be bullied than their non-disabled peers. Yet, children on the spectrum are even more vulnerable due to differences in communication skills, motor skills and social cognition. A recent study by the Interactive Autism Network (IAN) showed that 63% of children with autism have been bullied at some point in their lives.

It's important for adults to help students learn how to deal with bullies while they are young. They need to gain understanding of how to recognize bullying, as well as vital self-advocacy skills. But studies show the responsibility shouldn't just lie with the victim. Successful practices are those that create environments of respect and tolerance throughout schools.

Parents should also be aware that when bullying is directed at a child because of his or her established disability and it creates a hostile environment at school, bullying behavior may cross the line and become "disability harassment." Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the school must address the harassment.

For additional information about bullying and state laws, please visit StopBullying.gov or pacer.org.

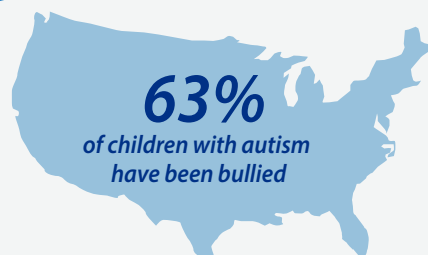
AUTISM & BULLYING: Tips for Prevention

**A Resource Provided by
the National Autism Association**



AUTISM & BULLYING:

Tips for Prevention



About Bullying

Bullying is behavior that hurts, harms, or humiliates. Whether physically or emotionally, it can happen while at school, in the community, or online. Those bullying often have more social or physical “power,” while those targeted have difficulty stopping the behavior. The behavior is often done with intent and typically repeated.

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Types of Bullying



Verbal Bullying: Teasing; Name-calling; Inappropriate sexual comments; Taunting; Threatening to cause harm



Social Bullying: Hurting someone’s reputation or relationships; Leaving someone out on purpose; Telling other children not to be friends with someone; Spreading rumors about someone; Embarrassing someone in public



Physical Bullying: Hitting/kicking/pinching; Spitting; Tripping/pushing; Taking or breaking someone’s things; Making mean or rude hand gestures

Signs of Bullying



- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing or items
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches
- Changes in eating habits
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends
- Decreased self esteem
- Running away, self-harm, or suicide ideations



Five Tips for Parents

1. **Communicate:** Talk to your child’s teachers and administrators about autism and your concerns about the increased risk of bullying. Ask about any anti-bullying initiatives they may have in place, and programs aimed at teaching tolerance in the classroom.
2. **Use the IEP Process:** Include social and self-advocacy skill goals in your child’s IEP, as well as peer support.
3. **Prepare Your Child:** Talk to your child about friendships and how real friends should behave. Emphasize your child’s strengths and let them know bullying is always wrong and must be reported.
4. **Monitor:** Visit the school, volunteer, and observe what’s happening. Also talk to your child often about his/her school day.
5. **Know Your Rights:** State and local lawmakers have taken action to prevent bullying and protect children. Visit StopBullying.gov to learn how your state refers to bullying in its laws and what they require on part of schools and districts.



What Works

School Climate Change
Safe ways to report
Focus on all types of bullying
Focus on role of bystanders
Peer support networks
Adults model supportive relationships
Active parent involvement



What Doesn’t Work

Individual counseling (for bully or victim)
Accepting bullying as normal
Focusing on only physical aggression
Zero tolerance policies
Isolated efforts (special auditorium events, lectures)
Stigmatizing victims
Adults model intimidation, anger, power

What Works, What Doesn’t Work in Bullying Prevention Strategies.
Michael B. Greene, Ph.D. Director, YCS Center for the Prevention of Violence.



For more resources, visit
nationalautismassociation.org