



FACT SHEET

What to Do If Your Child Is Being Bullied

Parents

Youth frequently will not tell you they are being bullied because they are embarrassed, ashamed, frightened of those who are bullying them, or afraid of being seen as a “tattler.” If your Scout tells you about being bullied, it has taken a lot of courage to do so. Your Scout needs your help and support to stop the bullying.

What to Do If Your Child Is Being Bullied

First, focus on your child. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying behavior.

- Never tell your child to ignore the bullying. What they may actually hear when you say this is that *you* are going to ignore it. If the child were able to simply ignore it, they probably would not have told you about it. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.
- Don't blame your child for being bullied. Don't assume that they did something to provoke the bullying. Don't say, “What did you do to aggravate the other Scout?”
- Listen carefully to what your Scout tells you about the bullying. Ask them to describe who was involved and how and where each bullying episode happened. Document what your child tells you.
- Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics used, and when and where the bullying happened. For example, if a game was being played, what game was it? Can your Scout name other youth or adults who may have witnessed the bullying?
- Empathize with your Scout. Tell them that bullying is wrong, not their fault, and that you are glad they had the courage to tell you about it. Ask what your child thinks can be done to help. Provide assurance that you will think about what needs to be done and, once decided, you will let them know what you are going to do.
- If you disagree with how your Scout handled the bullying situation, don't be critical.
- Do not encourage physical retaliation (“Just hit them back!”) as a solution. Hitting another Scout is not likely to end the problem, and it could result in your child being removed from Scouting or escalating the situation.
- Check your emotions. A parent's protective instincts stir strong emotions. Although it is difficult, a parent is wise to step back and consider the next steps carefully.
- Increase supervision to ensure the bullying is not repeated and does not escalate. Let the Scout who bullies know you will be watching to be sure there is no repetition or retaliation. Notify other adult leaders in the unit and discuss the incident at the next unit meeting.

Contact your Scout's unit leader or the council Scout executive.

- Parents are often reluctant to report bullying, but bullying may not stop without the help of adults.
- Keep your emotions in check. Give factual information about your Scout's experience of being bullied including who, what, when, where, and how.
- Emphasize that you want to work with the Scout leaders to find a solution to stop the bullying, for the sake of your Scout as well as other Scouts.
- Do not contact the parents of the Scout(s) who bullied your Scout. This is usually a parent's first response, but sometimes it makes matters worse. Scout leaders should contact the parents of the Scout or Scouts who did the bullying.



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- Expect the bullying to stop. Talk regularly with your Scout and with Scouting leaders to make sure it has stopped. If the bullying persists, contact the council Scout executive.

Help your Scout become more resilient to bullying.

- Help your child to develop their talents and positive attributes. Suggest and facilitate musical, athletic, and artistic activities. Doing so may help your Scout be more confident around peers.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly Scouts in their unit. An adult Scout leader may be able to suggest Scouts with whom your child can make friends, spend time, or collaborate on advancement.
- Teach your child safety strategies. Teach them how to seek help from a trusted adult when feeling threatened by a bully. Talk about which trusted adult they should go to for help and role-play what they should tell that person. Assure your Scout that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling.
- Ask yourself whether your child is being bullied because of a learning difficulty or a lack of social skills. If the child is hyperactive, impulsive, or overly talkative, the Scout who bullies may be acting out of annoyance. This doesn't excuse the bullying, but it may help to explain why it happened. If this is the case, seek help from a counselor who can help your Scout learn the informal social rules of their peer group.
- Home is where the heart is. Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment where they can take shelter, physically and emotionally. Always maintain open lines of communication in the home.

What to Do When Bullying Continues or Gets Worse

If the bullying gets worse and you need additional help, consider the following:

- If someone is at immediate risk of harm because of bullying, contact the police by calling 911.
- If your child is feeling suicidal, contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK).
- If Scout leaders are not keeping your Scout safe from being bullied, contact your local Scout executive. If your Scout executive is not available, contact the Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).
- If your child is sick, stressed, not sleeping, or is having other problems because of bullying, contact a health professional.
- If your child is being bullied because of their race, ethnicity, or disability, and local help is not working to solve the problem, contact the council Scout executive. If the Scout executive is unavailable, call the Scouts First Helpline at Scouts First Helpline at 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871).

You can find the contact information for your local council Scout executive at www.scouting.org/training/youth-protection.