



# 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. You Scout needs your help to stop the bullying.

### What to do if your child is being bullied

*First, focus on your Scout. BE supportive and gather information about the bullying.*

- Never tell your Scout to ignore the bullying. What the Scout may “hear” is that *you* are going to ignore it. If the child were able to simply ignore it, he or she likely would not have told you about it. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.
- Don’t blame the Scout who is being bullied. Don’t assume that your Scout 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 him or her to describe who was involved and how and where each bullying episode happened, and document what he or she tells you.
- Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics used, and when and where the bullying happened. (e.g., What was the name of the game played?) Can your Scout name other Scouts or adults who may have witnessed the bullying?
- Empathize with your Scout. Tell him/her that bullying is wrong, not their fault, and that you are glad he or she had the courage to tell you about it. Ask your Scout what he or she thinks can be done to help. Assure him or her that you will think about what needs to be done and you will let him or her know what you are going to do.
- If you disagree with how your Scout handled the bullying situation, don’t criticize him or her.
- 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.

*Contact your Scout’s unit leader or 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



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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.

- Expect the bullying to stop. Talk regularly with your Scout and with Scouting leaders to see whether the bullying has stopped. If the bullying persists, contact the council Scout Executive.

*Help your Scout become more resilient to bullying.*

- Help to develop talents or positive attributes of your Scout. Suggest and facilitate music, athletics, and art activities. Doing so may help your Scout be more confident among his or her peers.
- Encourage your Scout to make contacts with friendly Scouts in his or her unit. Your child's Scout leader may be able to suggest Scouts with whom your Scout can make friends, spend time, or collaborate on advancement.
- Teach your Scout safety strategies. Teach him or her how to seek help from an adult when feeling threatened by a bully. Talk about whom he or she should go to for help and role-play what he or she should say. Assure your Scout that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling.
- Ask yourself if your Scout is being bullied because of a learning difficulty or a lack of social skills. If your Scout is hyperactive, impulsive, or overly talkative, the Scout who bullies may be reacting out of annoyance. This doesn't make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why your Scout is being bullied. If your Scout easily irritates people, seek help from a counselor so that your Scout can better learn the informal social rules of his or her peer group.
- Home is where the heart is. Make sure your Scout has a safe and loving home environment where he or she can take shelter, physically and emotionally. Always maintain open lines of communication with your Scout.

## **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 - Call the police 9-1-1
- Your Scout is feeling suicidal because of bullying - Contact the suicide prevention hotline at 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Your Scout's leader is not keeping your Scout safe from being bullied - Contact your local BSA council service center
- Your Scout is sick, stressed, not sleeping, or is having other problems because of bullying - Contact a health professional
- Your Scout is bullied because of their race, ethnicity, or disability, and local help is not working to solve the problem - Contact Boy Scouts of America Member Care (972-580-2489)

You can find the contact information for your local council Scout executive at

[www.Scouting.org/YouthProtection](http://www.Scouting.org/YouthProtection)