

Respecting Cultural Diversity

Bullying is any repeated, hostile or demeaning behaviour intended to cause harm, fear or distress, including physical or psychological harm.

For an action to be considered bullying it needs to involve:

- Intent: the actions happens on purpose
- Harm: the recipient hurts is hurt by the action
- Repetition: the recipient is repeatedly targeted

Bullying can be:

- Verbal: name calling, put downs, threats
- Social/ relational: exclusion, gossiping, ganging up
- Physical: hitting, pushing, slapping

Bullying creates fear and threatens the safety and well-being of individuals, families and society as a whole. To end bullying, we need to work together to promote healthy relationships by demonstrating trust, empathy, honesty and respect.

Bullying someone for their ethnicity, heritage, culture or beliefs is unacceptable and is a serious issue. It may be considered a hate crime under Canada's Criminal Code.

Fourteen per cent of elementary school children report they have been bullied because of their ethnicity, heritage, culture or beliefs.¹ Additionally, high school students who were not born in Canada experienced significantly more bullying, racism and bigotry related to their ethnic background than

those born in Canada.² A survey conducted for Alberta Education revealed that some children and youth in Alberta have experienced exclusion from play or social activities because of their ethnicity.³

Who experiences ethnic bullying?

This type of bullying can affect anyone, including those who:

- Self-identify as part of an immigrant or ethnic community
- Are perceived to be part of an immigrant or ethnic community
- Are teachers, parents, coaches and community members that are not a part of the ethnic majority but are sensitive to this issue

Bullying directed at someone because of their ethnicity, heritage, culture or beliefs may include:

- Malicious name-calling
- Obscene gestures
- Racially motivated teasing, taunting, froshing or threats
- Spreading rumours or gossip about a person's cultural identity
- Physical aggression such as hitting, pushing, kicking, punching, choking and stalking
- Isolating someone from his or her friends or peer group
- Using the Internet, instant messaging and social networking sites to intimidate, put

down, spread rumours, make fun of, threaten or exclude someone because of their actual or perceived cultural identity

People who have been bullied for their ethnicity, heritage, culture or beliefs may feel:

- Alone
- Embarrassed or ashamed
- Depressed and uncertain about yourself or your future
- Angry and want to turn the tables and become a bully yourself
- Stressed (you may think about skipping school or activities to avoid bullies)
- Set apart from your cultural community, and as though you no longer want to acknowledge your heritage
- Isolated (you may want to withdraw from social activities and hide away)

These are all normal and natural feelings. But remember – you can always reach out for help.

If you are being bullied:

Tell someone you trust – Talk to a friend or trusted adult who respects your confidentiality. This may be a teacher, parent, relative, youth worker, counsellor, coach or faith leader. Remember, you don't have to suffer in silence. Keep telling until someone helps you. No one deserves to be bullied.

Stay safe – Don't fight back. Bullies want attention and fighting back gives them what they want. If you fight back, you may get hurt or make the situation worse. If you are a

bystander or witness, become an ally. Go for help and provide moral and emotional support to the person being bullied.

Write down everything – Keep a record about the incident including the date, time, location, and what was said or done. If you are being bullied online or in a text, don't delete this message. You don't have to read it, but keep it. It's your evidence. The police, your parents/guardians, or school authorities can use this information to help protect you from further abuse.

Get help – Caring and trusted adults and friends are available to help and support you. Look for resources in your community that can offer culturally appropriate approaches to healing. While it is not usually recommended to try to resolve issues with the bully and the target together, some cultures may feel this is an appropriate way to deal with bullying behaviours.

Find support in your community – Check to see if there is a local group in your community where you can meet others who have had similar experiences. Consider starting support groups or other types of resources in your community if they do not exist. It is important to ensure that any support is culturally appropriate and includes Elders and well-respected community members.

For more information on bullying, visit bullyfreealberta.ca.

1. Pepler D, Connolly J, Craig W. *Bullying and Harassment: Experiences of Minority and Immigrant Youth*. CERIS Report. www.metropolis.net

2. McKenny K, Pepler D, Craig W, Connolly J. *Peer victimization and psychosocial adjustment: The experiences of Canadian immigrant youth*. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*. No. 9 Vol 4(2). 2006, pp: 239-264.

3. *Focus Alberta Survey, September 2007, Alberta Education*