

## Stop! Save! Report!

If your child is a victim of cyberbullying:

1. Strongly encourage your child not to respond to the cyberbullying
2. Do not erase the messages or pictures. Save them as evidence. Take a photo of the evidence.
3. Contact the Cyber Crime Unit of the Attorney General's Office and your child's school.

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. While more than four in 10 teens experience some form of cyberbullying, but only one in 10 told their parents.

Mississippi does have laws in place that can help prevent cyberbullying:

- Mississippi code § 97-29-45, against obscene electronic communications, states that it is unlawful for a person to make any request or suggestion which is obscene through electronic communication; or make a call without disclosing his identity or to make repeated phone calls with the intent to annoy or harass.
- Mississippi code § 97-45-15, against cyberstalking, states that: it is unlawful for a person to electronically communicate: threats to exert money or inflict harm to body or property; for the purpose of threatening, terrifying or harassing; or to knowingly make any false statement with intent to threaten, terrify or harass. A conviction can lead up to a maximum fine of \$5,000 and two years in prison.

Keep your kids cyber safe by encouraging them to never post or share personal information online. They should never share Internet passwords with anyone other than a parent, and should never meet anyone face-to-face whom they only know through online communications. Parents should talk with their kids about what they do and what content they visit while online.

## Where to Find More Information

### Fear Stops Here

[www.fearstopshere.com](http://www.fearstopshere.com)

### STOP Cyberbullying

[www.stopcyberbullying.com](http://www.stopcyberbullying.com)

### National Crime Prevention Council

[www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying](http://www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying)

### Wired Safety

[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)

### Cyberbullying Research Center

[www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)

### Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use

[www.cyberbully.org](http://www.cyberbully.org)

### Mississippi Department of Education

(866) 960-6472

[www.healthyschools.ms.org](http://www.healthyschools.ms.org)

### United States Department of Health and Human Services

[stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)

### U.S. Department of Education

Office of Civil Rights

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/>

*Disclaimer: The Mississippi Attorney General's Office is not responsible for the content of listed websites, which may have changed since review.*



Attorney General Jim Hood

For more information about bullying and tips for parents, visit the Mississippi Attorney General's website [www.agjimhood.com](http://www.agjimhood.com).

# Bully-Proof



A Parent's Guide Prepared By:  
The Mississippi Attorney General's Office  
Crime Prevention and Victim Services Division

Post Office Box 220 • Jackson, MS 39205-0220  
(601) 359-3680 • Toll Free: (800) 829-6766  
[www.agjimhood.com](http://www.agjimhood.com)

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is the act of intimidating a weaker person to make them do something. It happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years.

Bullying behavior can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victims. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target. Recently, bullying has even been reported in online chat rooms and through e-mail.

### Recent statistics show:

- Each month one out of every four kids will be abused by another youth.
- Seventy-seven percent of students are bullied mentally, verbally, and physically.
- One out of five kids admits to being a bully, or doing some "Bullying."
- Eight percent of students miss one day of class per month for fear of Bullies.
- Forty-three percent fear harassment in the bathroom at school.
- By the age of 24, sixty percent of bullies have criminal records
- 282,000 students are physically attacked in secondary schools each month.
- More youth violence occurs on school grounds as opposed to on the way to school.

## Why Do Some Kids Bully?

There are a lot of reasons why some people bully. They may see it as a way of being popular, or making themselves look tough and in charge. Some bullies do it to get attention, or to make other people afraid of them. Others might be jealous of the person they are bullying. They may be a victim of bullies themselves. Some bullies may not even understand how wrong their behaviour is and how it makes the person being bullied feel. Most bullies do not consider the consequences that could come with getting caught. They think bullying is anonymous, funny and no big deal.

## What You Can Do...

Parents can make a difference! Combatting bullying is a mission that requires cooperation between everyone involved. An intervention plan that involves all students, parents, and teachers can help ensure students continue to learn in a safe and fear-free environment.

This can include school surveys on bullying to identify the problem; awareness campaigns in schools, churches, libraries, and recreation centers; and a school climate where bullying is not tolerated (educational programs, peer counseling, whole-school policies, classroom rules, cooperative learning activities, and increased supervision during lunch and recess).

You can lessen the impact of bullying at home. Encourage your kids to get together with friends that help build their confidence. Help them meet other kids by joining clubs or sports programs. And find activities that can help a child feel confident and strong, such as a self-defense class like karate or a movement class.

**Research shows that approximately half the children who have been bullied never tell their parents about it.** Children are often too ashamed of themselves to tell anyone; sometimes they feel that no one can help, not even their parents. So talk with your child every day. Your children need to hear from you that it is not normal, okay, or tolerable for them to bully, to be bullied, or to stand by and watch other kids be bullied.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services suggests asking your child a few subtle questions that may get them to open up about bullying:

- Who do you sit with at lunch/on the bus?
- Are there any kids at school who you really don't like? Why don't you like them? Do they ever pick on you or leave you out of things?
- Do you have any special friends at school this year? Who are they?



[www.fearstopshere.com](http://www.fearstopshere.com)

- Teach your children to respect others
- Open the line of communication with your child
- Talk to school officials and administrators
- Seek professional help if your child is sick, stressed, or having any other problems because of bullying
- Call the suicide prevention hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), if your child is feeling suicidal because of bullying
- Contact the U.S. Department of Education's Office on Civil Rights if your child is being bullied because of their race, ethnicity, or disability, and local help is not working to solve the problem

## Signs of Bullying:

A change in your child's behavior may be a clear indication that something is wrong. If your child shows any of the following signs, you may want have a talk with your child and his or her teacher, administrators and friends.

- Comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings;
- Has unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches;
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus, or taking part in organized activities with peers (such as clubs);
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school;
- Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home;
- Complains frequently of headaches, stomach aches, or other physical ailments;
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams;
- Experiences a loss of appetite; or
- Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem.