



Bullying - Notifying School Administrators of Incidents and Concerns

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Emotions can run high when a child has been bullied. If you learn your child is being bullied, you may immediately want to protect your child and confront the aggressor. You may feel embarrassed and want your child to toughen up, to get in there and fight back. You may feel helpless yourself. Fears about causing more trouble for your child or sore feelings between the school and your family are common. It is important that we recognize that the schools want to provide a safe environment for all students and need your help in preventing and reducing the number of bullying encounters for your child and others.

Bullying is not acceptable, and requires action on the part of each community member to insure it does not take place or continue. We must insist on zero-tolerance of bullying behaviors.

There are specific bullying policies in place in every school district in Utah to help keep children safe at school. Each situation is important and different and needs to be dealt with appropriately. You and your child have a right to a safe learning environment.

What can you do?

Here are steps a parent/guardian can take to help a child who has been bullied.

1. Talk to your child and write down details about the interactions/incidents.

Communicate empathetically with your child about what happened. Take brief notes to help you stay on track as you prepare to document the incident and speak to officials about this emotional experience.

2. Contact the teacher and principal of your school as soon as possible.

An important place to start is to contact the teacher and principal for a conversation to facilitate communication about what occurred. At the same time, it is important to use the documentation you created from listening and talking to your child to write a letter to a specific person and date the letter. Write the letter to a person who has the authority to investigate and the authority to correct the wrong. Describe the circumstances and explain as well as you can, what you would like the school to do to stop the harassment and to remediate the harm the bullying has done to your child.

BULLYING FACT SHEET

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Sometimes no one observed the contact or was aware of the nature of the interaction. The principal, any teachers or aides, the bus driver, or any other school personnel who were in the vicinity need to be made aware of what is going on.

In your letter state your understanding that your child has protections under state and federal laws, Utah State Board of Education Rules and district policies and procedures. Also indicate the date that you expect a response to your letter and to receive documentation regarding the action that will be taken.

It may take the school 24 hours to get back to you. If they do not contact you within 24 hours, call them again. If necessary, you may choose to inform the principal that you want to involve district administrators with the responsibility to oversee the implementation of policies and procedures related to bullying.

3. If you are not satisfied with the principal's actions, call the school district main phone number and speak with the individual responsible for the enforcement of district policies and procedures related to bullying.

The person you want to speak to in each district will vary. Finding this person may require being passed to a few people when making contacts to resolve your concerns. Do not explain the full story to each person you are transferred to. Briefly explain what the issue is (i.e. a need for information or clarification about the district's policies and procedures, assistance with resolving a concern related to a bullying incident, a disagreement with the way your principal handled a bullying incident, etc.) and what you want to see happen (i.e. assistance for the local school in addressing the incident, the involvement of district leadership in resolving the concerns, etc.). When you reach the person who can directly impact the situation, be prepared to share the details related to your concerns, what you want to see happen and how they can help.

Remember to write down the name of the person you speak to, the date and time, what was discussed, who will do what, and when and how you will hear back from them.

4. Consider if the police should be involved.

The principal should know how policies and procedures guide how this decision to notify the police is made. If you are not happy with the decision, call our local police station, briefly explain the situation, and ask them for their opinion. Typically for incidents involving assault, the police should be notified.

References

- Adapted from *Bullying – Notifying School Administrators of Harassment Concerns*, The National ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, a project of PACER Center, Inc. ©2003. Used with Permission.
- Adapted from *Has Your Child Been Bullied at School?*, Utah Parent Center.

Advice for Parents of Both Victims and Bullies

- *Promote honesty. Ask questions. Listen with an open mind and focus on understanding. Children may be too embarrassed, scared, or ashamed to admit to being a victim or bully, and might deny it. They need to know they can trust you and look to you for help.*
- *Allow children to express how they feel, and treat a child's feelings with respect.*
- *Teach children to identify and focus on "the problem", rather than attacking "the Person." Tell them conflicts are a way of life, but violence doesn't have to be.*
- *Teach them positive ways to handle conflicts.*