

# What is bullying?

## Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)

for Students with Disabilities

For Parents

### Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

Bullying is **unwanted, aggressive** behavior that involves a real or perceived **power imbalance**. A power imbalance exists when one person is (or is perceived to be) more popular, physically stronger, smarter, or has a higher social status than another person. Bullying is **repeated, or has the potential to be repeated**, over time. Bullying can be physical (e.g., pushing), verbal (e.g., calling someone names), relational (e.g., leaving someone out of something), and it can happen in person or online. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place with the use of digital devices and typically occurs on social media or with cell phones.

Bullying can happen to **anyone!** Between 20-30% of students report experiencing traditional bullying and about 15-25% report cyberbullying. Some youth are more at risk for being bullied. This includes those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer; racial or ethnic minorities in a school; and youth with disabilities.

**No one ever deserves to be bullied and it is never their fault if they are bullied. All youth have a right to feel safe at school and at home.**

When we think about bullying we often think about the bully and the victim; however, youth may be involved in bullying in other roles. For example, there are also bystanders who see the bullying happen to others. Some students who see bullying help the victim, which is called being a defender. In contrast, there are also assistants who may act to help the bully and reinforcers who encourage the bully. Finally, there are students who see bullying but do nothing (outsiders).

#### Some examples of bullying are:

- Calling someone mean names
- Hitting, punching, or kicking someone
- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Talking about hurting someone
- Teasing someone
- Posting rumors about someone online
- Posting unkind comments on social media
- Making fun of someone's disability, race, gender, or sexual orientation

#### Signs your child is being bullied:

- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Change in eating patterns or missing meals
- Unexplainable injuries
- Declining grades, loss of interest in school, and lack of effort in schoolwork
- Missing personal items (money, electronics, etc.)
- Unexplained change or avoidance of routine (taking the bus, eating in the lunchroom, etc.)

Find additional handouts on our website at [go.niu.edu/PPAB](http://go.niu.edu/PPAB)



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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