

Helping Someone Who's Being Bullied

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) can play a key role to help the individuals they support understand and address the signs of bullying.

Talk to the Person

First, talk to the person who is being bullied about what is happening. Try to answer these key questions:

- How big is the problem?
- Where is it happening?
- How does it affect the person?

Be supportive of the person. Encourage them to tell you who is involved and how and where the bullying happens. Reassure the person that it is not their fault. No one deserves to be bullied.



Ask questions about their friendships. People with disabilities may not always realize that they are being bullied. For example, individuals may think they made a new friend even though the "friend" calls them names and makes fun of them.

Helping the Person Deal with Bullying

If someone believes they are a victim of bullying, talk to them about ways to keep safe. Go over this list of do's and don'ts. Plan for what to do to prevent bullying.

Do:

- ✓ Do talk to someone you trust
- ✓ Do speak confidently to the bully
- ✓ Do write down or talk about how you feel
- ✓ Do walk or run away if a bully tries to hurt you
- ✓ Do learn to say and believe good things about yourself

Don't:

- ✗ Don't ignore the bullying
- ✗ Don't get into a fight with the bully
- ✗ Don't try to get even with the bully
- ✗ Don't believe that you deserve to get picked on
- ✗ Don't believe what the person says about you
- ✗ Don't hang around places where the bully might be

As a supporter, you can offer a safe place for individuals to get help and assist them with learning how to deal with bullying. You could role-play together about what to do. For example, if a person is being bullied, show them how to walk away or how to find a teacher or supervisor to help. The person will feel more confident when they know what to do and how to react. It's important to help individuals think through actions they can take so they can develop a plan.

A good support system is important to help prevent bullying. Going places in groups with trusted friends can help keep a person safe.

Who Else Can Help?

When someone you support is being bullied, get the regional center involved. Talk to the person's service coordinator about the situation and get their help. Include the person who is being bullied in these discussions. Getting everyone together in an individual program planning (IPP) meeting can help with problem-solving solutions.



If bullying is happening at school, discuss the problem with the teacher, principal, or counselor and come up with a plan. This may include holding an individual educational program (IEP) meeting. When bullying is directed at a student because of their disability, under Federal law, schools are required to take action to both protect the student and prevent bullying.

If the bullying occurs at work, help the individual to clearly describe the "who, what, where, and when." Encourage them to talk to their supervisor or other support persons at their job. Companies are required to take actions to protect employees from this type of behavior. There are legal and civil remedies for harassment, abuse, and other forms of bullying at work.

Bullying has become a concern across the United States. As U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said, "We must do more. Building safe neighborhoods and schools where young people can thrive is a job for all of us. We are all responsible. No one can afford to be a bystander."

Be More Than a Bystander

- Be a friend to the person being bullied
- Help the person stay away from the situation
- Tell others who can help
- Go for help when you see someone being bullied

