

Hot Topics: In an effort to assist educators, parents, students and administrators for effectively responding to acts of bullying and cyberbullying, the information below provides definitions, statutory references and requirements, guidance documents, presentations and other resources and materials related to bullying and cyberbullying.

Bullying occurs when a person is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself. Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions. Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others. "Cyberbullying" is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. It has to have a minor on both sides, or at least have been instigated by a minor against another minor. Once adults become involved, it is plain and simple cyber-harassment or cyberstalking. Adult cyber-harassment or cyberstalking is never called cyberbullying.

Texas Law Related to Bullying

Texas Education Code, Chapter 37 Section 37.001 (a); **Student Code of Conduct:** requires each independent school district in Texas to have a local policy that:

(7) prohibits bullying, harassment, and making hit list and ensure that district employees enforce those prohibitions; and

(8) provide, as appropriate for students at each grade level, methods, including options, for:

(A) managing students in the classroom and on school grounds

(B) disciplining students; and

(C) preventing and intervening in student discipline problems, including bullying harassment and making hit list.

(b-1) The methods adopted under Subsection (a)(8) must provide that a student who is enrolled in a special education program under Subchapter A, Chapter 29, may not be disciplined for conduct prohibited in accordance with Subsection (a)(7) until an admission, review, and dismissal committee meeting has been held to review the conduct.

The requirements for prohibiting bullying, harassment, and making hit list are quite detailed and there is also a requirement in law to require the local school district policy to "ensure that district employees enforce those prohibitions."

Under the requirements of 37.001 (a) (8) the school district is also required to have specific options developed under local policy that are appropriate to each grade level that provide for preventing and intervening in student discipline problems, including bullying, harassment, and making hit list.

Texas Education Code Chapter 25, Section 25.0342 also offers a parent an opportunity to transfer their child to another campus if their child has been determined by the school to have been bullied.

It is important for each student to report any bullying or threats to the nearest teacher or adult at school as soon as possible so school officials may take appropriate action.

If you have concerns about bullying meet with the campus principal to express your concerns. If your child is receiving special education services go to the ARD committee to focus on the problem and

arrange a plan to intervene at the campus level. For additional guidance related to addressing your concerns, we encourage you to visit your district office for clarification.

Online Resources

http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/take_action/stop_block_and_tell.html This site provides guidance to youth for responding to acts of cyberbullying.

<http://www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing> This site includes a list of peer-reviewed articles related to bullying.

<http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adult/indexAdult.asp?Area=cyberbullying> This site offers practical advice to students and parents about ways to respond to bullying at school.

<http://www.oag.state.tx.us/criminal/cybersafety.shtml> The Texas Attorney General's Office offers information about cyberbullying, dating violence, and other safety issues.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/may07/vol64/num08/How_We_Treat_One_Another_in_School.aspx A survey of middle school students' experiences with bullying shows that kids want the adults in school to pay attention and keep them safe.

Support Organizations and Hotlines

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org (888) 333-2377

Covenant House Youth Crisis Hotline covenanthouse.org (800) 999-9999

Focus Adolescent services www.focusas.com (877) 362-8727

National Center for Victims of Crime www.ncvc.org (703) 276-2880

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and neglect Information

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/reslist/tollfree.cfm>

National Domestic Violence Hotline www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/ (800) 799-7233, (800)787-3224 (TTY)

National Mental Health Association www.nmha.org (800) 969-6642

National Referral Network for Kids in Crisis www.kidspeace.org (800) 543-7283

National Runaway Switchboard www.nrscrisline.org (800) 621-4000

National victim Center (800) 394-2255

Trevor Helpline for gay, Lesbian and Bisexual youth thetrevorproject.org (800) 850-8078