

How Can Parents of a Victim Become Active in Resolving Bullying Situations?

Get specific information from your child.

The more specific the information you can get, the better the school will be able to help end the situation. Ask your child the following questions, and record the answers in writing carefully:

Where did this happen? (Playground? Lunch room? Classroom?)

When did this happen? (morning? During recess? After school?)

Is this the first time this happened?

What happened right before this happened? What were you doing? What was Joey doing?

Walk me through what happened. You said, "Hi." What did Joey say or do next? What did you say or do?

Who else was there? (Teacher? Other adult? Other kids?) What did they do?

Did you tell anybody? If yes, what did they do? If no, why didn't you tell an adult? (Were you frightened? Not sure what to do?)

Take this information, in written form, to your school. Ask them to read it and make an appointment to sit down afterwards.

During that appointment, ask the school:

Is there any other information that I can get from my child to help you address this situation?

Will you be following school policy in addressing this situation? The policy states..... (read appropriate policy statement here about consequences)

What specific actions can you tell me you will be taking? (Note that you

understand the legal limitations school officials are under.)

Have you spoken with my child's teacher/ playground monitor/lunch room attendants/ etc.? Have you spoken with any adults or children who witnessed the event?

What will you tell my child to emphasize to them that you are here to make school a safe place for them?

Set up another meeting in a week or so to review progress.



Websites

WWW.MARCCENTER.ORG

WWW.SAFETYOUTH.ORG

WWW.KIDSHEALTH.ORG

WWW.STOPBULLYNOW.HRSA.GOV

WWW.FAMILYINTERNET.ABOUT.COM

Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center
Maxwell Library 201
Bridgewater, Massachusetts 02325

Phone: 508-531-1784

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E-mail: marc@bridgew.edu

Website: www.MARCCenter.org

BRIDGEWATER STATE
COLLEGE

Why Is It Confidential?

Understanding Your School's Limits on Sharing Information

Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center



www.MARCCenter.org

You want to know.....

When your child has been a victim of bullying, it's natural to want to know exactly what will happen to the child who bullied him or her. If you ask an educator in the United States, "What punishment is that child going to receive?" and hear...

"That's confidential."

You may conclude that the educator or administrator is avoiding your question or protecting the bully. In fact, they are simply obeying the law!



Educators in the United States must obey the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This act strongly affects schools and disciplinary procedures against minor students. One effect is this act is

to **make school records (including discipline) a private matter**. That means a school is *prohibited* from sharing any information in a student's record - including disciplinary information - to third parties without parental consent.

The result of this is that you cannot expect a school official to tell you how they have disciplined a student, even if your child was directly victimized by that student. School officials must obey state and federal laws which mandate that they keep student records confidential and private.

In Massachusetts, state law 603 CMR 23.07(4) similarly prohibits disseminating any student record information to third parties without parental consent. There are a few exceptions in the law.

What A School Official CANNOT tell you	What a School Official CAN tell you
-Specific disciplinary procedures instituted against any child except your own	-Specific disciplinary procedures that are defined in school policy or administrative procedures, and whether or not they intend to follow that policy in this case
-any actions the school is taking that specifically affect a child other than your own (e.g., moving another child to a different classroom)	-any actions the school is taking that affect your child (e.g., moving your child to another classroom)
-the content of any communications with another child's parents or guardians	-the fact that they have been in communication with the parents or guardians of other children
-any contract or agreement with a child who is not your own, or with the parents of that child	-any actions the school is taking which affect the children generally but which may impact the incident(s) in question (e.g., placing an adult monitor in a spot which has been identified as one where bullying occurs)

What A School Official CANNOT tell you	What a School Official CAN tell you
-the names or identification of other children involved in previous incident(s) in which your child had some involvement, for which there is a record	-previous incident(s) in which your child had some involvement, without naming other children
-measures other parents are taking to help their child (e.g., parents putting another child in therapy)	-measures you might use to help your child (e.g., practicing your child's response to a bully; "checking in" daily with your child's teacher; getting important information from your child)
-previous or past behaviors or behavior problems of any child other than your own child	-any reports or referrals made to law enforcement regarding the incident(s) in question

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