



BULLYING 101:

UNDERSTANDING & RESPONDING



BULLYING QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



Definition

- ▶ Bullying Behavior is aggressive behavior directed at or about a Minor. It may be repeated behavior or a single, severe incident. Bullying Behavior is intended or likely to hurt or control someone emotionally, physically, or sexually. It can include words, gestures, discriminatory behavior, or physical contact. It can happen in person or online.

Examples of Bullying Behavior

- ▶ Repeatedly ignoring and socially excluding someone on purpose
- ▶ Spreading emotionally damaging rumors about someone online
- ▶ Threatening violence or physically intimidating someone until they quit the team
- ▶ Consistently hitting someone and then ridiculing them in front of their teammates

Tips for Responding

- ▶ If an incident is in progress, separate everyone involved and make sure they are safe.
- ▶ Remain calm and do not raise your voice in anger.
- ▶ Talk with the initiator, target, and witnesses separately.
- ▶ Follow your organization's policies to report what happened.
- ▶ Make separate follow-up plans with everyone involved.
- ▶ Revisit behavior expectations and your organization's Bullying Behavior policy with the team, but do not talk about any specific incident.

RESOURCES FOR HELP AND SUPPORT

[RAINN](#)
1-800-656-4673

[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
988

[PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center](#)

REPORTING CONSIDERATIONS

What are my organization's reporting policies?

Do I need to report to law enforcement?

Do I need to report to my local child
protection agency?

Do I have other reporting responsibilities?

Reporting Contacts

Fill in your reporting contacts based on your sport organization's policies. For example, if you're an Adult Participant in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement, you must report [Sexual Bullying Behavior](#) to the Center immediately, but no later than 24 hours. You may also need to report it to law enforcement. You must also report all known or suspected Child Abuse, including sexual abuse, to the Center and law enforcement immediately—even if the abuse happened in the past, you knew about it before joining the Movement, or the victim-survivor is now an adult. You must also follow any other reporting requirements under state law.

This resource is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. It does not replace or override the Center's legal documents and policies (e.g., the [SafeSport Code](#)). Every Participant in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement is responsible for knowing the information outlined in the [SafeSport Code](#).

RESPONDING TO BULLYING BEHAVIOR: ACTIONS TO TAKE



With Athletes Who Experience Bullying Behavior

- ▶ **Listen with empathy:** Let them tell you any details they want to share at their own pace. Ensure your facial expressions and body language are open and not judgmental.
- ▶ **Be supportive:** Thank them for telling and trusting you with this information. Acknowledge that it was probably difficult to do. Ask how you can help and inform them of resources as needed.
- ▶ **Know your role:** Do not ask questions to find out more details. Leave them for others positioned to follow up. Do not make promises about what will happen or what other people will do.
- ▶ **Tell them what you will do next:** Include who you are making a report to, and anyone else you will need to tell. Ask them if they are OK with you checking in with them later and, if so, how.
- ▶ **Report the behavior:** Follow reporting guidelines related to the behavior, including mandatory reporting requirements that apply even if they do not want the incident reported.
- ▶ **Create a plan:** Work with them, their parents/guardians, and other adults to protect them going forward.
- ▶ **Respect privacy:** Do not share private information with anyone unless required.

With Athletes Who Engage in Bullying Behavior

- ▶ **Talk to them away from other Athletes.** Keep any one-on-one interaction observable and interruptible by others. Wait until the individual is calm and you have time for the conversation. Use “I” statements to promote open dialogue and reduce defensiveness.
- ▶ **Explain why their behavior is considered Bullying Behavior** and why it is a problem for the Athlete being targeted.
- ▶ **Revisit established behavior expectations** and address how their behavior violated those expectations.
- ▶ **Remind them that you take this kind of behavior seriously** and do not tolerate it.
- ▶ **Help them understand** their behavior’s impact and harm, regardless of its intent.
- ▶ **Clearly explain consequences** and how you expect them to be accountable for their actions.

With the Team

- ▶ **Revisit behavior expectations,** if the incident involved team members, to remind everyone that you will not tolerate Bullying Behavior.
- ▶ **Learn and talk about ways to stop these incidents.** Make sure you and your team are trained on preventing Bullying Behavior and bystander intervention.
- ▶ **Do not share details** about any specific situation with any team members not involved.

Actions That Are Not Helpful

- ▶ **Don’t ask Athletes to apologize on the spot.** Learn what happened before deciding next steps. Youth who bully must recognize why their actions were wrong before apologies can be meaningful.
- ▶ **Don’t make assumptions** about those involved. Situations may be nuanced.
- ▶ **Don’t encourage mediation or suggest Athletes “talk it through.”** Power differences that exist in these situations may make mediation ineffective or harmful.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING BEHAVIOR: HELPFUL PHRASES



WITH ATHLETES WHO EXPERIENCE BULLYING BEHAVIOR

What happened is not OK.

How are you doing?

Thank you for telling me this. It took a lot of courage.

You don't have to share any information with me that you don't want to.

It isn't your fault.

What can I do to support you? You might not know right now, and that is OK.

Let's talk about how we are going to handle this.

Let me explain what I am going to do next.

This is a serious situation. I need to report this to help you and others be safe.

WITH ATHLETES WHO ENGAGED IN BULLYING BEHAVIOR

Hey—that's not cool.

I'm certain they don't want to be called that name.

I'm telling you that is not how we speak to our teammates. Are we clear?

I don't find that funny. I'm surprised to hear you say that.

I understand that you are [frustrated, angry...] but it is not OK for you to [push, shove, threaten, verbally abuse] your teammates.

What you did isn't OK. We will meet to talk about what happened.

This product was supported in part by grant number 15PSMA-24-GG-03789-KYAS, awarded by the SMART Office, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this product are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.