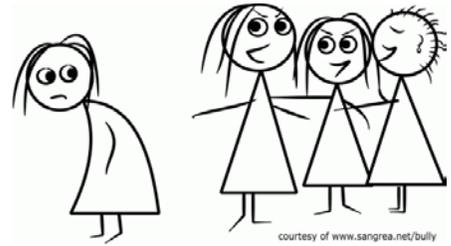


# Bullying & Harassment – What it is and what to do about it!



Bullying and Harassment are very real issues in today's world. Our focus is on students in our school, but it is important to note that these issues also occur in the work world, online, in some families, and even in senior citizen centers. Nearly everyone has been a target of unkind behaviors and, in the cases of bullying and harassment, many adults do not know how to respond when they recognize bullying. As part of educating our children, we have a duty to ensure they recognize bullying and harassment, and they know how to handle it.

Bullying and harassment are more than unkind behaviors.

- Bullying is **repeated** verbal, physical, social or psychological behavior that is harmful and involves a misuse of power by an individual or group toward one or more persons. Cyber-bullying refers to these behaviors through information and communication technology such as cell phones or via social media. **Conflicts or fights between equals and single incidents is not defined as bullying.**
- Harassment is behavior that targets an individual or group due to their identity, race, culture, ethnic origin; religion; gender; physical characterizations, sexual orientation; marital, parenting, or economic status; age; ability or disability and that offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment. **This may be on-going or a single act.**

We are fortunate at PHHS to have many resources available to address Bullying & Harassment. We also have obstacles in addressing these serious issues: Primarily the behaviors are never reported or, even worse, they are only reported once. When an issue is brewing, we must talk with the students involved, and generally their parents. If the issue continues, we escalate the situation ranging from local and district disciplinary actions to involving the local authorities including conflict resolution services ([crc.baltimorecounty.org](http://crc.baltimorecounty.org)).

Reporting the behaviors is scary for many students and some parents as they fear retaliation. While no one can say that retaliation never occurs, it is important to note that it is rare. Those who intimidate count on the target's fear and, when they are called out for their behavior, they often stop their behavior. When your child is made to feel uncomfortable, they should tell the person to stop. If it does not stop, your child should ignore the offending person but record what happens (along the time and the date,) and reach out to you, their administrator or school counselor. Involving their peers beyond asking them to come to the office or go to you generally muddies the water, so stress that they should speak to you first. It is important to note that bullying and harassment are not only against the *BCPS Student Handbook*: They are also illegal!

To report bullying and harassment, contact your child's administrator or counselor. You can also report the incident to the district as well as the school by filling out a "Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation" Form online at <http://www.bcps.org/apps/bhi/>. This will initiate an investigation to the behavior. To inquire on the status of the report, contact your child's administrator however understand that investigations may sometimes take days.

It's important to include your child in this process. As adults, they are likely to experience such behaviors as they navigate through life. We want them to know what to do to avoid being a victim where ever they may go. It is also important to note that the troubles do not always automatically disappear overnight.

By working "HALL TOGETHER", we can help you and your child feel empowered, safe, and supported.