

- Help your child understand the hurtful consequences of cyber-bullying, how the other person may feel, and how to behave differently in the future.
- Provide non-violent consequences for your child's bullying actions, such as suspending cell phone or computer privileges.
- Increase supervision of your child's or teen's cell phone and computer use, and establish rules for appropriate behaviour.
- Set an example for your child by using technology positively and appropriately.

How do schools respond to cyber-bullying?

The principal will listen to all reports that your child or teen has been cyber-bullied, has witnessed bullying, or has bullied someone else. The principal will investigate the matter immediately, in a way that protects your child's privacy and reduces the possibility of retaliation, as much as possible. The school will take appropriate steps, such as disciplining the cyber-bully, ensuring all the individuals involved receive the support they need, and reinforcing bullying prevention. There also may be closer supervision of students using technology at school.

The principal also may recommend that the person causing harm, the individual harmed, witnesses and families participate in a restorative circle. The person causing harm will be able to hear how the actions have affected others, will be encouraged to take responsibility for his or her actions, and will be supported to make things right. Restorative practice works only if all parties agree to and support the process. It should not proceed if the person causing harm has not accepted responsibility, the person harmed does not want to participate in it, or there is potential for further harm. It does not replace other consequences, such as suspension.

Want more information?

All schools must have a School Code of Conduct, bullying prevention and intervention plans, and a safe school team. Contained within each school's Code of Conduct are rules outlining appropriate use of cell phones, computers and personal electronic devices. For more information on what your school is doing to prevent and respond to cyber-bullying, please speak to the principal or vice-principal.

The information for this brochure was gathered from the following websites:



Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
1994 Fisher Drive, Peterborough, ON K9J 6X6
705-742-9773 or toll-free 1-877-741-4577
www.kprschools.ca • kpr_info@kprdsb.ca

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board is committed to making environmentally-responsible choices, including the use of this 100% post-consumer paper, certified Ecologo, processed chlorine free, FSC recycled and manufactured using biogas energy.



Cell phones, e-mail and social networking websites are creating new ways for society to connect and socialize. Unfortunately, some people abuse new technology to cyber-bully others. Like all forms of bullying, cyber-bullying is never acceptable.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a deliberate, repeated act that is meant to cause harm or fear in another person. It happens persistently, when one person or group believes it has power over another.

What is cyber-bullying?

Cyber-bullying involves sending harmful messages or pictures using the Internet, cell phones or other communications devices. It involves deliberate, repeated actions that are meant to harass, frighten, embarrass or harm someone. Spreading rumours online, posting embarrassing photos and sending offensive text messages are examples of cyber-bullying.

Why is cyber-bullying a concern?

Cyber-bullies can use technology to spread offensive messages or photos to many people very quickly. Using the Internet and cell phones can make the bully feel anonymous and behave more viciously. Even young people who normally would not bully others have been known to get involved in cyber-bullying.

PREVNet, a group of 42 national organizations devoted to bullying prevention, offers three important reminders:

- **Bullying is wrong and hurtful.** Every child, youth and adult has the right to be safe and free from bullying.
- **Bullying is a relationship problem.** Bullying involves relationships where someone uses power to hurt another. To solve cyber-bullying, children and teens need help to develop respect and empathy for others.
- **Promoting positive relationships and eliminating violence is everyone's responsibility.** Cyber-bullying can happen anywhere young people live, learn and play. It affects the victim, the bully, and those who know it is happening. Adults need to become involved, to promote and model healthy relationships. They must look for, listen and respond to bullying, and they can organize social activities that support positive relationships and prevent bullying.

How can you prevent cyber-bullying?

- Place computers in a common space in your home, rather than a bedroom.
- Talk about bullying with your kids. Teach them it's never acceptable.
- Remind your children not to share passwords.
- Establish rules regarding appropriate use of cell phones and computers.
- Explain the difference between proper and improper online behaviour.
- Urge your children to come to you if they ever feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- Show an interest in the way your child is using new technology.
- Monitor your child's use of cell phones and the Internet.
- Maintain healthy relationships and connections with your children.
- Every day, ask questions such as:
 - What went well at school today?
 - What do you wish went differently?
 - What are you worried about at school? What do you think you should do about it?

How can you tell if your child is being cyber-bullied?

Look for the following, which could be signs your child or teen is being cyber-bullied:

- anger or sadness when using the computer or cell phone
- unusual anxiety and distress
- declining grades and lack of interest in school
- withdrawal from friends and usual activities
- frequent comments or complaints about the same person
- changes in your child's habits, such as irritability, lack of sleep or nightmares
- refusal to go to school.

What can you do if your child is being cyber-bullied?

- Listen to your child or teen.
- Be clear on the facts. Remain calm to support your child and plan the next steps.
- Keep copies of the messages or images as evidence.
- Tell your Internet Service Provider or cell phone company about the abuse.

- Contact the school if the bully is a schoolmate. Arrange for a meeting with the principal or vice-principal. Some schools also have a bullying hotline through which you can report cyber-bullying anonymously.
- Consider asking the principal for a "restorative circle". This would involve everyone affected by the bullying sitting down together to discuss its hurtful effects; encourage the bully to take responsibility; and allow the victim to tell the bully how to make it right.
- Contact the police if the cyber-bullying gets worse. Harassment and certain forms of online bullying - such as threatening or counselling others to commit offences - can result in arrest and criminal charges.
- Consider reporting cyber-bullying, anonymously or by name, through the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board's website at www.kprschoools.ca, or to police by calling their anonymous tip line at 1-800-222-8477.

What shouldn't you do?

- Don't overreact. Forbidding your child to use the computer or cell phone will leave him or her feeling more victimized and less likely to confide in you again.
- Don't respond to bullying messages or images.
- Don't make excuses for the bully's behaviour.
- Don't confront the bully or bully's parents alone.

What if your child witnesses cyber-bullying?

Technology is so fast and widespread that there is no limit to the number of young people who can receive and pass on bullying messages instantly. Encourage children and teens to take responsibility for handling messages appropriately. They should refuse to pass on a hurtful message, tell the bully to stop, stand up for the victim, or report cyber-bullying to an adult, whether anonymously or by name. A young person can also help someone who is being bullied by being a friend.

What if your child is a cyber-bully?

- Explain to your child that the behaviour is not acceptable. It is not a joke.
- Encourage your child or teen to take responsibility for causing someone harm, and for doing something to make it right. Participating in a restorative circle at school is an effective way to do this.