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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
राष्ट्रीय बाल अधिकार संरक्षण आयोग
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS
नई दिल्ली-110 001
New Delhi - 110 001



F. No. 2501/40/2022-23/ NCPCR/ RTE
Dated: 14th December, 2023

Subject: Suggestions/ Comments on Guidelines for prevention of bullying and cyber bullying in schools by NCPCR-reg.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a statutory body constituted under CPC Act, 2005 with a mandate to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India. As per Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005, NCPCR is mandated to monitor laws related to rights of the child, review policies and procedure of the governments and give recommendations for their effective implementation.

It has been observed that the threat to online safety of children having multiple dimensions have increased, be it the scare of misuse of children's data or exposure of children to sexual content or bullying in schools. Considering the growing use of technology and increasing cases of bullying, NCPCR has prepared guidelines for prevention of bullying and cyber bullying in schools. The said guidelines are available at NCPCR's website for comments/suggestions.

The comments/suggestions on the above mentioned guidelines may be sent through the email at ms.ncpci@nic.in on or before **21.12.2023**.

Yours faithfully,

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National Commission For Protection of Child Rights



Preventing Bullying and Cyberbullying

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge the grave issue of bullying and its detrimental effects on individuals. Bullying encompasses repeated acts of aggression, including verbal, physical, and social behavior, with the intention to inflict physical, social, or psychological harm. It is important to recognize that bullying can occur both in person and online, utilizing various digital platforms and devices.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been actively working to ensure the safety of children in both physical and digital environments. In line with this objective, the Commission is pleased to present the "Preventing Bullying and Cyberbullying: Guidelines to Schools." These guidelines aim to serve as a comprehensive resource for schools, enabling them to prevent, prohibit, and address incidents of bullying that occur within their premises or online spaces frequented by children.

I express my sincere appreciation for the Ministry of Education (MOE) for their unwavering commitment to enhancing the safety and security of children within educational institutions. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in supporting children who have been subjected to bullying through the establishment of mandatory Anti-Bullying Committees (ABCs) in schools.

Furthermore, I extend my gratitude to the former Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) for their dedicated efforts in preventing bullying, particularly in residential schools, by implementing Anti-Ragging Committees (ARCs) to address and mitigate incidents of bullying.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to Ms. Chitra Iyer, CEO and co-founder of Space2Grow, for her technical assistance and expert input in the development of these guidelines. My thanks to Space2Grow for designing the document to enable Schools to adopt this seamlessly. Furthermore, I am grateful to Dr. Geetanjali Kumar from Aakar Wellness and Counselling Centre for her invaluable support in the context of this guideline development.

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Priyank Kanoongo
(Chairperson, NCPCR)

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE GUIDELINES

Abbreviation

Meaning

1.ABC	Anti-Bullying Committee
2.ARC	Anti-Ragging Committee
3.CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
4.CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
5.CCL	Child in Conflict with Law
6.CNCP	Child in Need of Care and Protection
7.CWC	Child Welfare Committee
8.CWPO	Child Welfare Police Officer
9.IPC	Indian Penal Code
10.IT Act	Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000
11.JJ Act	Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015
12.JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
13.MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
14.MOE	Ministry of Education
15.NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Right
16.POCSO Act	Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012
17.SCPCR	State Commission for Protection of Child Right
18.SEL	Social Emotional Learning
19.SJPU	Special Juvenile Police Unit



INTRODUCTION

Bullying in its different forms has been a common phenomenon in schools, universities, workplaces and even outside the confines of these traditional boundaries - in play areas, neighbourhoods, etc., anywhere students interface with people or peers. While the reasons for bullies to engage in such behaviour are many, it is established that such actions of deliberate harm and humiliation often cause its victims to deal with negative physical, social, emotional, academic and mental health issues.

As per the NCPCR's National Report on Safe and Secure School Environment 2019-20, approximately 90% of schools discourage and/or actively prohibit all forms of bullying. Along the same lines, 88% of schools said that they have a low tolerance for incidents of bullying, harassment, and discrimination against students based on factors such as caste, religion, gender etc. But the question is are we able to identify bullying?



Despite these efforts at the school level, in India, there are no laws that could handle bullying in schools. In other words, bullying is not technically illegal. However, if an individual commits an act of bullying, causing the victim to die by suicide, the accused bully will be liable for abetment of suicide under Section 306 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860. The Indian legal framework covers within its ambit options to prosecute aspects of physical and cyberbullying largely under the Indian Penal Code, the Information Technology (IT) Act 2000, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Childre) Act, 2015.

However, due to the significant surge in bullying incidents, particularly in Indian boarding schools, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD, now Ministry of Education) had initiated Anti-Ragging Committees (ARCs) to address and mitigate the prevalence of bullying. Also, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) mandates schools to set up Anti Bullying Committees (ABCs) to provide children the support required, in case they are bullied. These committees are dedicated to penalising students engaged in bullying activities or behaviours, and severe cases may result in expulsion from the institution.

Increasingly, it's being noticed and evidenced that bullying, just as an act, has several mental health consequences (detailed in this guideline) that lead to varied negative impact on children, and their overall development.

Recognising this, and creating safe learning spaces and environment for children, this guideline mandates recognising bullying in schools and immediate spaces like playgrounds, buses, tutorials etc and ensures redressal and actions to protect children who have been victims of bullying and further prevent bullying as essential aspects.

Other significant literature dealing with bullying and cyberbullying include:



Guidelines on School Safety and Security issued by the Ministry of Education.
https://dsei.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-10/guidelines_sss.pdf



Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools, covering aspects of bullying and suggestions to deal with them, by NCPCR
[https://ncpcr.gov.in/public/uploads/165650439662bc404c9314e_Manual%20on%20Safety%20and%20Security%20of%20Children%20in%20Schools%20\(Sep%202021\).pdf](https://ncpcr.gov.in/public/uploads/165650439662bc404c9314e_Manual%20on%20Safety%20and%20Security%20of%20Children%20in%20Schools%20(Sep%202021).pdf)



Safe Online Learning in Times of COVID 19, developed by NCERT and UNESCO, on staying safe online and dealing with online harassment.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373605>

The following guidelines aim to facilitate teachers, parents, and caregivers in identifying spaces where bullying and cyberbullying can take place, telltale signs to identify bullied victims and handling situations of bullying. The aim is to provide this as a one-stop guideline to ensure the redressal and prevention of bullying. It also enunciates practical strategies to encourage disclosure by victims of bullying and provides suggestions for the creation of safe spaces in schools and homes.

1. DEFINITIONS

This guideline recognises and addresses both bullying in the physical spaces as well as online space. Bullying is a persistent pattern of threatening, harassing, or aggressive behaviour directed toward another person or persons who are perceived as smaller, weaker, or less powerful. Bullying is also called harassment.¹

What is bullying and what are its implications?

Definition: Bullying can be defined as an act of aggressive physical or social behaviour, intentionally and repeatedly meted out by an individual or a group towards another person(s) which causes harm or discomfort. It often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, in which the victim is unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can be repetitive over time, and it can have immediate, medium, and long-term physical, mental, and psychological impacts on the bully and the bullied.

Effect of bullying on a child:

- 01 The victim would isolate themselves or resort to self-harm.
- 02 Bullying disrupts any chance to learn new things and form new relationships.
- 03 A child might suffer from anxiety, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and other social phobias.
- 04 A child's self-esteem and self-confidence could be damaged beyond repair.
- 05 A child who gets bullied may have anti-social behaviour, substance abuse, and even become aggressive.
- 06 The child may show signs of depression and would want to avoid going to any place that makes them uncomfortable.
- 07 The child might have "school refusal behaviour" (avoiding school)



(1) <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/education/education-terms-and-concepts/bullying#A>

1.1. TYPES OF BULLYING



Physical

It includes fighting, kicking, pushing, slapping, spitting, damaging belongings, and other harm to the body.



Verbal

It includes abusing, writing, or speaking cruel words to others, name calling, making fun of others, taunting, and teasing.



Psychological

It includes spreading rumours, destroying social relationships, social exclusion, and intimidation. Emotionally hurting the person and their sentiments also comes under this category. It is also known as social bullying.



Cyber

Cyber Bullying includes the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. It can also include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.



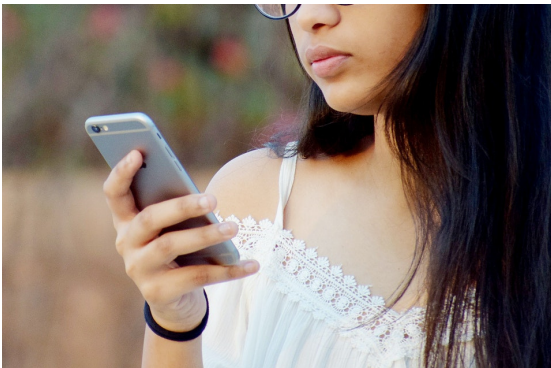
Body Shaming - As an example of Bullying

Body shaming is the act of making negative comments about a person's physical appearance, which can involve criticising either one's own body or someone else's. The commentary can be about a person's body size, age, hair, clothing, food choices, and perceived level of attractiveness. This can take the form of verbal, psychological or even within the online space as cyber bullying.

2. POSSIBLE CAUSES OF BULLYING

It is widely known that **no one is born with a behaviour that characterises bullying**, however, under certain conditions, anyone can learn and acquire the characteristics of a bully behaviour.

Some of the frequent causes include:



01 The emergence of aggressive and bullying behaviour portrayed through the media.

02 Sensing a lack of attention at home or having a negative relationship with their parents.

03 Experiencing aggressive behaviour or harsh parenting styles at home

04 When students feel vulnerable, powerless, and lack self-esteem, they look for other ways to gain power and exercise control over others.



05 Jealousy and attention-seeking.

06 Inadequate emotional and psychological safety.

07 Lack of awareness of the real harmful impact of bullying on victims.

08 Most children who engage in bullying behavior have, in fact, been bullied themselves in the past.

09 They join a group of bullies in an effort to gain attention from others, be accepted by them.



10 Bullies lack the ability to manage their emotions effectively, resulting in their tendency to engage in bullying behavior, causing distress to others

11 They resort to bullying as they mimic others and seek to display dominance or impress their peers.

12 To show their dominance and popularity in school or other spaces.

13 They experience unhappiness in their own lives, engage in frequent comparisons, and struggle with low self-esteem.

Psychosocial Aspect

- Insufficient education and awareness about the consequences of bullying can hinder efforts to prevent and address it effectively.
- Individuals who struggle with social skills, such as communication, conflict resolution, or empathy, may resort to bullying as a maladaptive way to interact with others.
- Bullying often occurs when there is a perceived power imbalance between the bully and the victim, such as differences in physical strength, popularity, or social status.
- Bullies may continue their behaviour if they receive positive reinforcement, such as attention or admiration, for their actions.

3. IDENTIFYING SPACES WHERE BULLYING CAN TAKE PLACE

The act of bullying cannot be confined to a particular space but can happen across places, situations, and locations.

01 PLAYGROUNDS



Concealed or hidden away from constant supervision, coupled with high noise levels, playgrounds become vulnerable places for bullying to take place.

02 CLASSROOMS



Reported to be the most prevalent place for bullying among children, despite the presence of teachers. Bullying can be carried out subtly (gestures, passing notes, etc.) during classes and in intervals

03 BETWEEN CLASSES



Restrooms, hallways, locker areas, and changing dormitories (in residential and non residential schools) that are not aptly monitored.

04 TO AND FROM SCHOOL



Students walking to and from school or within transport (buses, vans, etc.) are reported to be prime locations for bullying.

05 TUTORING CENTRES



Tutoring centres that are not formally recognised may not always be under adult supervision, making them vulnerable places for bullying to take place from other students and the tutors themselves.

06 OTHER PLACES



Areas outside school premises within the community at large that are not supervised by authorities can become vulnerable places where children of the local school or neighbourhood display bullying behaviour with each other.

4. IDENTIFYING SPACES WHERE CYBERBULLYING CAN TAKE PLACE

Cyberbullying can occur through text messages, apps, social media, gaming, edtech/online learning platforms, etc. where people can view, participate in, or share content. They include sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content. It is important to note that cyberbullying can occur in any online space where people interact, and new platforms may emerge over time as technology evolves.

Some examples include bullying and harassing the victim by posting private or embarrassing photos of others online or sending them; starting a website that rates someone's appearance or popularity; verbally abusing other players on gaming platforms; creating fake profiles to ridicule someone; spreading gossip, secrets, or rumours about another to harm their reputation. The content part of the offence could be treated as beyond just bullying - including sharing sexually explicit content, and offensive pictures as well.

01 EDTECH / ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS



Platforms used by students for tutoring, training, or learning can be used by other students or tutors as a medium for cyberbullying.

02 SOCIAL MEDIA



Children are active users of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, etc., making them susceptible to cyberbullying by perpetrators that may be known or unknown to the victim.

03 INSTANT MESSAGING PLATFORMS



Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, online forums etc. are mediums used by perpetrators (known and unknown) to bully susceptible victims through personal messages or group messages.

04 ONLINE GAMING



With the availability of increased interactions between players (known and unknown), gaming platforms are widely used by bullies to hail verbal abuses and threats, grossly impacting unsuspecting victims.

With the influence of peers and general curiosity, children are active users of online platforms for e-learning, social media and online gaming. Online platforms offer anonymity to their users, making them a widely used medium to bully victims while being able to hide behind a screen and get away with the consequences of the act. Cyberbullying is likely to be accompanied by some form of physical bullying as well.

5. TELL TALE SIGNS TO IDENTIFY VICTIMS OF BULLYING

5.1. SIGNS IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF BULLYING

01

Signs of Physical Bullying

This may include having unexplained bruises, returning home with lost or damaged belongings, or returning home unusually hungry.

02

Signs of Emotional Bullying and Behavioural Signs

Children who have been emotionally bullied may experience a decline in academic performance. They may avoid going to school, or adopt an alternate route to and from school. They might refuse to take the bus/train to school, or often feel ill when they wake up in the morning. They might experience distressed sleep and alterations in their sleep patterns. Additionally, frequent crying, anger and mood swings may be observed. They might often target their siblings when they feel irritable. They may become withdrawn, isolate themselves, or resort to self-harm. Some children may also experience frequent stammering due to the stress. Oftentimes, they may avoid talking about their days and what might be going wrong.

03

Psychosocial Signs

In younger children (Pre teens) - Younger children may experience nightmares and sleep issues. They might retreat to child behaviours such as bedwetting and thumb sucking. Furthermore, they might develop a unique or new fear of certain people or places and resist undressing for baths.

→ Adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children

In older children (Teens)- Older children may appear distracted or aloof at odd moments. They might exhibit frequent and sudden mood swings, fury, fear, insecurity, or withdrawal. They might have frequent stomach aches and illnesses for no apparent reason. They may suddenly have money, toys, or gifts without any particular reason. Additionally, they may exhibit adult-like sexual behaviours, language, and knowledge, and act mature for their age.

04

Other subtle signs

Children who are being bullied are often by themselves or left out of friendship groups at school. They may often prefer being alone and occupied, instead of being part of friend groups. They are frequently the object of ridicule, teasing, imitating, or mocking at school. This may lead to feeling insecure, and they may be unable to speak out in classes due to fear and lack of confidence. In addition to psychosocial and emotional trauma, children who are bullied are also at an increased risk of substance abuse.

5.2. SIGNS IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF CYBERBULLYING

A child victim of cyberbullying may exhibit one or more of the following signs:

01

Secretive behavior: Quickly switches screens or hides their device when parents are close by

02

Uses devices for long hours into the night

03

Avoids discussions on online activities

04

Increasingly isolated from family and social circles

05

Seems to be using multiple accounts online or an account that is not their own

06

Increased behavioural issues/disciplinary actions

07

Emotional changes and mood swings showing signs of depression, anxiety, anger outbursts, etc.

08

Overly concerned with popularity and presence in a social circle

09

Demonstrating increasing insensitivity or callousness towards peers

10

Disturbed sleep



Additionally, children increasingly dependent on the internet or beginning to develop a digital addiction are **highly susceptible** to online abuse. Some of these include:



01

Inability to control screen usage.

02

Loss of interest in physical activities as opposed to online activities.

03

Preoccupied thoughts of online presence.

04

Digital interactions beginning to interfere with other aspects of physical socialisation with family and friends.

05

Showing withdrawal symptoms - Irritable, mood swings or anger outburst when screen time is curbed.

06

Secretive about online presence, interactions and usage.

07

Digital interactions serve as mood moderators.

08

Regular and trusted interactions with adults online

5.3. SIGNS TO IDENTIFY A CHILD WHO COULD BE A BULLY



The following indicators could point to a child who displays a bully behaviour amongst peers:

- 01 Getting into verbal or physical fights.
- 02 Associating with children who are bullies.
- 03 Increased aggressive behaviour.
- 04 Frequent detention or visits to the Principal.
- 05 Have new belongings or extra money, with no explanation where they came from.
- 06 Blaming other children for their problems.
- 07 Worrying about how popular they are or how they appear to other people.
- 08 Not taking responsibility for their actions.
- 09 Showing off power and security for elder friends, parents and other adults.

6. REPORTING

India does not have a special law that specifically deals with the issue of bullying. However, certain aspects of bullying are punishable under various laws - depending on the consequences. Therefore schools and actions by the school administration plays an important role in addressing Bullying.

6.1. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES (POCSO) ACT, 2012

The Act prosecutes sexual crimes against children under the age of 18 years. Cases of bullying that involve ingredients of sexual harassment can be prosecuted under this Act.

Reporting procedure under the Act

-  The case must be reported to the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or the local police.
-  The police or the SJPU must then record the report in writing, ascribe an entry number, read the report over to the informant for verification, and enter it in a book
-  A FIR must be registered and its copy must be handed to the informant free of charge.
-  If a case is reported by a child, it must be recorded verbatim and in simple language so that the child understands what is being recorded.
-  A child's statement must be recorded at his or her residence or a place or at a place of his or her choice.
-  Under no circumstances can a child be detained in the police station.
The statement must be recorded by a woman police officer not below the rank of a Sub-inspector.
-  The statement must be recorded in the presence of parents or any other person in whom the child trusts or has confidence.
-  The police officer must seek the assistance of a qualified special educator or a person familiar with the manner of communication of the child, while recording the statement of a child with mental or physical disability.

6.2. THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015

The Act consolidates the law relating to Child in Conflict with Law (CCL) and Child in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP). In extreme cases, where it is decided that a bully (CCL, in this case) requires to be reported, the procedure established under this Act will be followed through the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) (under Section 10 (1) of the JJ Act)

Reporting procedure under the Act

- Inquiry of the bully (CCL) will be done by the JJB under procedures listed in Chapter IV - Section 17(1) of the JJ Act. In case, the JJB, through inquiry finds that the bully (the CCL) is in need of care and protection, it will refer the case to the CWC with appropriate directions under Section 17 (2) of the Act. In case of the child is bullied - will be provided care and support through the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) if produced at the CWC as CNCP.

Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

- The CWC is established by the State Government under the Juvenile Justice Act in each district to provide assistance to children who are in need of protection. Any person or children themselves can call at toll free number 1098 and can freely access the Child line services. Together with various government and non-government agencies rescue processes, counselling, medical treatment and rehabilitation are done so that the needs of the child can be fully addressed. If anyone sees any child being abused or bullied or any parents whose child is being bullied and do not know what to do and which authority to contact, then just reach out to POCSO e-Box of NCPCR or call on toll free number 1098.

6.3. REPORTING CASES OF CYBERBULLYING

Cyber bullying in the context of children can involve aspects of cyber stalking, sexual harassment, violation of privacy, identity theft, hacking, or even circulation of child sexual abuse material.

The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000

- is the primary legal instrument that deals with prosecuting cybercrimes. This Act, when read with the Indian Penal Code addresses elements of cybercrimes while the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, addresses cyber sexual offences concerning minors. Child perpetrators are treated as 'Child in conflict with Law' under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Common legal provisions include the following:

Offence	Penal Provisions
Cyber Bullying	IPC Sec. 503, 506, 507
Cyber Stalking	IPC Sec. 354D, 509 POCSO Sec. 11 (iv)
Identity Theft	ITA Sec. 66C
Violation of privacy	ITA Sec. 66E, 72 POCSO Sec. 23
Hacking	ITA Sec. 43, 66
Child Sexual Abuse Material	POCSO Sec 11 (v) & (vi), 13 – 15 ITA Sec. 66E, 67 IPC Sec. 292, 354A(1)(iii), 354C
Sexual Harassment	POCSO Sec. 11 IPC Sec.354A, 509B

Besides reporting the incident on the concerned website, a complaint of cyberbullying against a child can be filed in the following ways:





01 Direct Reporting by Child



Reporting Forum

- National Cyber Crime Portal
- POCSO e-Box
- NCPCR eBaalnidan Portal
- Childline 1098



02 Teachers / School Committee



Reporting Forum

- Local Police
- POCSO e-Box
- NCPCR eBaalnidan Portal
- Childline 1098



03 Parents / Guardians / Trusted Adults



Incident in School



Report to School
Management



Outside School



Collect Screenshots
and evidence



Report on
Platform



Reporting Forum

- National Cyber Crime Portal
- POCSO e-Box
- NCPCR eBaalnidan Portal
- Local Police or Cyber Police
- Childline 1098

6.4. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

As per the guidelines by CBSE, Schools are required to take proactive measures to prevent Bullying(https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/Circulars/2015/17_Prevention%20of%20Bullying%20&%20Ragging%20in%20Schools.pdf), the responsibility of preventing any undesirable aspect of bullying rests jointly and also individually on all stakeholders, which includes the head of the institution, teacher, non-teaching staff, students, parents and local community. A systematic response to the bullying problem is needed within the schools.

A Zero Tolerance for Bullying (How to share the message in schools)

The following actions must be taken by the school to prevent bullying in terms of messaging:

01

The message that “Bullying is strictly prohibited inside the school premises and no such act will go unnoticed or unpunished” may be clearly stated in the school prospectus and other guidelines circulated by the school.

02

Schools must create an amiable environment and positive school climate where learning can take place peacefully. They must build a trusting, respectful relationship among students, school administration and families. They should provide a confidential way for students to report about any incident which is of concern to them.

Procedures and Structures for Addressing a Case of Bullying

The following actions must be taken by the school management in terms of procedures and structural changes:

01

Appointment of a Counsellor towards addressing the occurrence of acts of bullying is essential both in the case of non-residential and residential schools. Residential schools especially due to the amount of time spent together by students, make it essential that Counsellors and Wardens in boarding and residential schools need to be sensitised to the changing dynamics of student interaction. They should be empathetic and approachable so that students can confide in them. The school management may appoint Counsellors, School Doctors, Senior Teachers and Parent representatives. They must address the cases of bullying in a non-threatening/polite manner to the victim, their parents and also to the accused Bully. In case of government schools - options from schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, Counsellors from Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) can be accessed. Sharing the Minutes of Meetings with parents during PTM is essential for keeping parents informed.

02

Children should be aware of the presence of counsellors/ teachers to whom they can reach out and share their bullying experience. Complete confidentiality should be maintained about the incident. Teachers should inform the parent, and let them know that investigation will be done and action will be taken, meanwhile the child should be provided counselling.

03

Additionally, structures and procedures must be established to provide accessible, confidential, secure and effective means of reporting incidents of bullying, for victims and for bystanders who are aware of it taking place and to identify and manage incidents of bullying, including appropriate counselling and sanctions/ punishments on those engaged in bullying.

04

An Anti- Bullying Committee (ABC) may be constituted in school, comprising of Vice- Principal, a Senior teacher, School Doctor, Counsellor, PTA representative, School Management representative, Legal representative, Peer Educators, and some relevant members not related to the school to ensure neutrality In the redressal process. The minutes of the meeting shall be shared with School Management Committee and with the Parents Teachers association. The roles and responsibilities of the Committee would include



development and review of School Bullying Prevention Plan,



development and implementing bullying prevention programmes.



developing training programmes for staff, students, and parents,



creating awareness through various programmes



being vigilant and observing signs of bullying and responding quickly and sensitively



names and contact numbers of members of the committee should be clearly displayed everywhere in the school premises, etc.

05

It is recommended that there be a graded response system to address the cases of bullying and a clear cut process needs to be followed by schools as there might be cases which deserve utmost attention and stringent action. The responsibility and authority of school administration must be defined. The implications of neglect must also be clearly defined.

06

School's decision, taken after following process of fair investigation, should not be ordinarily challengeable. Comprehensive guidelines may be developed for School Management which includes the various actions and penalties which may be taken by the School.

07

Based on observations and understanding the seriousness of the misconduct, some measures like Warnings, Counselling and Training programs to prevent such behaviours can be taken.

* Any kind of action to support prevention of bullying should be supported with counselling for the victim and the child who has bullied.



Post Case Identification - Steps to be taken

The following actions must be taken by the school management after a case of bullying has been identified:

01

It is the responsibility of the school that the post-bullying atmosphere is calmed down. The school must be cautious that the victim or the child who displayed bully behaviour is not branded and he/she might be given opportunities for change. It is important to engage all students, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents in the effort against bullying on a continual basis, as part of the moral and administrative fabric of the school. Most importantly the victim should be provided counselling services.

02

Children should have the right to report bullying in any safe space, whether it be at school or with their parents, regardless of the location. If the bullying involves the same set of school children from the same school, regardless of jurisdiction, it is the responsibility of the school to address the issue and take appropriate action. The school will be held accountable for addressing bullying within their community.

03

Regardless of whether the children involved attend the same school, different schools, or are not in school at all, it is crucial that children have the right to report incidents of bullying to counsellors, teachers, or their parents. If children are being bullied outside of school, parents should be provided with sufficient information from school authorities to help support their child, or they should have access to information on Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) within their jurisdiction to seek immediate help or support.

In any case where a child is a victim of bullying, schools, CWCs, or parents should take immediate action by providing counselling services to the affected child and report the case to the regulatory authorities like SCPCRs, NCPCR, to the CWC or directly to law enforcement agencies.



7. STRATEGIES : PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND CYBER BULLYING

7.1. IN SCHOOL

01

Set Policies & Rules³

The message, “ Bullying is strictly prohibited inside the school premises and no such act will go unnoticed or unpunished” may be clearly stated in the school prospectus and other guidelines circulated by the school.⁴ It must also be posted around the campuses to serve as a reminder to students. School staff can help prevent bullying by establishing and enforcing school rules and policies that clearly describe how students are expected to treat each other. Consequences for violations of the rules should be clearly defined as well.

Schools must make sure school rules and policies are consistent with state laws and the school district rules and policies. It is important to include school staff, parents, and students when developing rules and policies and train school staff on enforcing school rules and policies.

-  Include awareness programs for the students and staff on the emotional and legal consequences for both the victims and the bullies through short films, role plays, etc.
-  Train students on empathy, understanding emotions, and responsible online behaviour.
-  Emphasise the importance of creating a safe and supportive school environment, promoting empathy and respect among students and staff.
-  Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) programs into the curriculum, focusing on developing skills such as empathy, conflict resolution, assertiveness, and emotional regulation.
-  Encourage students to intervene and support victims, promoting a culture where bystanders actively speak out against bullying and cyberbullying.

(3) <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/rules>

(4) https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/Circulars/2015/17_Prevention%20of%20Bullying%20&%20Ragging%20in%20Schools.pdf

-  Ensure that schools have access to qualified counsellors who can provide emotional support to students who have experienced bullying or cyberbullying.
-  Train counsellors to address the psychosocial consequences of bullying and cyberbullying effectively, providing trauma-informed care and evidence-based interventions.
-  Implement peer support programs where older students can mentor younger students, fostering positive relationships, and providing a supportive environment.

02 Establish a Reporting System⁵

To establish an efficient reporting system, schools can have clear procedures for reporting, and install complaint boxes in different areas of the school. Furthermore, schools can use anonymous reporting tools like suggestion boxes or hotlines where students can send text messages or leave voicemails.

03 Create a Holistic approach⁶



Get everyone on board

This means getting the entire school - teachers, administrators, and the students, to agree to make the school a bully-free zone. Staff indirectly involved in the school, such as bus drivers, need to support and receive training on anti-bullying measures.



Promoting Inclusion

Creating an anti-bullying program may involve lessons enabling children to learn more about other kids, especially those who come from different backgrounds, identities, ethnicities, and cultures, or different learning styles or abilities.



Engage Parents as Partners

Facilitating regular and effective communication between schools and parents to create awareness and sensitize them on the zero-tolerance policy against bullying in schools; processes and redressal mechanisms; and disciplinary actions taken in incidents of bullying to prevent parental denial.

(5) <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/rules>

(6) MoE Guidelines on school safety and security

04**Create a school safety team**

Schools can create **Anti-Ragging Committees** and **Anti-Bullying Committees** ideally made up of an administrator, counsellor, teachers, parents, and responsible students and identifying a lead person to deal with bullying prevention and school safety.⁷

05**Create greater surveillance⁸**

Schools must look into enhancing the monitoring of spaces by additional staff/adults, using enhanced security techniques including CCTVs and closely monitoring bullying “hot spots” in and around the school establishment.

06**Safe schools are characterised by the following features:**

- ✓ A zero-tolerance policy for bullying prevention
- ✓ CCTV coverage of all areas including nooks and corners of the school is suggested.
- ✓ For schools having CCTV, monitoring CCTV footage every week and storage of CCTV footage for atleast 30 days
- ✓ Regular good touch bad touch sessions with children
- ✓ Regular training and sensitization of all staff
- ✓ Background and Police verification of all support staff and in case of doubt, for teaching staff .

(7) Guidelines for prevention of bullying and Ragging in Schools, CBSE

(8) Manual on Safety and Security in Schools, NCPCR

7.2. IN PLAYGROUNDS, CAFETERIAS, BUSES

In order to monitor and prevent bullying,

- schools can assign teachers/supervisors to the playground, buses and cafeterias along with attendants.
- additionally, at least one teacher should be interacting with the kids during each recess.
- teachers and attendants should take students from schools to bus lines. This will ensure proper decorum in the school bus.
- there should be at least one teacher/staff to accompany students during their rides on school buses. Staff to be trained to identify bullying and report to the concerned committee in school.
- transport should also have posters that share numbers children can reach out to if they are bullied.
- additionally, the play areas should be designed in a way that keeps children of different age groups separated on the playground.
- installation of CCTV cameras in playgrounds, cafeterias, and buses is suggested, to identify and monitor any bullying behaviour.

The activities in the playground should also be organised in a manner that the students are not conflicting with each other. Schools should ensure that there are plenty of supplies and resources for the students since scarcity can often lead to bullying behaviours as children may fight over limited resources.



7.3. AT HOME



Parents or guardians must ensure that they discuss various activities that happen at school regularly. In case of an instance of bullying, guardians/parents must -

- create a safe space for the child to share how the incident made them feel.
- create a list of safe contacts for the child, which may make the child feel protected and safe in case of such incidents.
- additionally, parents/guardians can ensure that there is a safe space or corner within the home where the child could relax and feel safe.
- their rooms and shared spaces at home can be decorated with posters containing positive messages and images. Teachers and head teachers must promote creating safe spaces for children at home.

Since family members are in constant contact with the child, it is important for the family members to understand the big picture and learn about bullying, its signs and impacts.

This can also help them to create a safety plan with their children that includes constructive strategies like having a buddy system. In order to protect children from cyberbullying, parents/guardians must also regularly monitor their children's online activities. This will help them understand any behavioural changes that are noticed in their children. It is important to provide children with nurturing and safe spaces at home that encourage them to spend time with positive friends, take part in activities that they enjoy, and reassure them that it is safe to open up about any negative experiences at home.

7.4. ONLINE SPACES

01

Need for awareness and confidence to report matters

It is imperative that children are made aware of the right to seek redressal available to them against perpetrators of cyber bullying. The child must feel confident to inform his/her caregivers or trusted adults or teachers. It is therefore a need of the hour to make children aware of the provisions available to them.

Confiscation of personal devices is never a long term solution for dealing with cyberbullying. It would only create fear in the minds of children, preventing them from confiding in their parents. Instead, efforts must be made to teach children to trust the system and to create awareness of legal redressal measures so that children are made aware of where to report in case they encounter an uncomfortable experience online.

02

Training

Students need to be educated on digital safety and online etiquette through mediums of workshops, lectures or any formal training. These forums can also help children orient towards tolerance and empathy in the digital world, strengthened through social-emotional learning.

03

Focusing on mental health

Studies have found a link between cyber abuse, symptoms of depression and a general dissatisfaction with life. Cyberbullying degrades a child's self-esteem and generates feelings of loneliness, maladjustment, causing a victim to feel victimised much after the incident of abuse takes place. It is therefore imperative to create resilience among students through cyberbullying prevention initiatives, using social and family support and confidence building. This encouragement could contribute to developing resilience among students, supporting recovery from trauma.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND CAREGIVERS

8.1. ENCOURAGE DISCLOSURE - FOR COUNSELLORS AND TEACHERS

Teachers and counsellors can help support the child by providing a safe space for them to talk about bullying. It is important that they actively listen to the child. They should maintain proper body language that conveys that they are listening to the child and can help them. Reassuring and believing what the child has to say is crucial. They must tell the child that they (teachers and counsellors) will do everything to ensure the child's safety. Conveying statements such as "You were right to tell me", reassuring them for speaking out and letting the child know that it was brave of them to share about difficult subjects (no matter how minimal) will assist them in their healing journey.



Throughout the process, it's important for teachers and counsellors to be honest with their concern for children. Open and general questions may help children to describe and elaborate on their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. On the other hand, leading questions and repetitive questions can often colour their responses, and make them feel that they are being pushed to respond in a certain way. Letting them express themselves completely without trying to fill in words, or finishing their sentences or making assumptions, will contribute to making them feel safe. The child should feel cared for and reassured that sharing these experiences would in no way alter their relationships negatively.

Once the teachers or counsellors know about the situation, they must distinguish between what the child has actually said and the conclusions they reach. They must take proper steps to ensure the physical safety and psychological well-being of the child. It is important to not let personal bias take over, and ensure accuracy while reporting bullying.

Primary caregivers such as parents, teachers, and counsellors may be provided periodic training to enable them to identify the early and tell-tale signs of bullying, which will empower them to adequately support children who disclose such incidents.

Hearing a Disclosure

-  Don't presume they were bullied by just one person
-  Don't presume that they are no longer in contact with their abuser(s)
-  It may have been a traumatic experience, so accept
-  Acknowledge the disclosure and accept what they say
-  Do not try to gather all the details
-  Assess - is it an issue that they need help with?
-  Assess - is this the right time to deal with it?
-  Check who would they like to receive help from?
-  Recording brief details accurately
-  Responding to their confidentiality requests in case records

At the end of the disclosure

-  Reassure the child that it was right to tell you but do not promise total confidentiality
-  Let them know what you are going to do next and how important it to act
-  Immediately seek help, and report to the authorities for support
-  Write down accurately what the young person has told you.
-  Records should be detailed and accurate.
-  Sign and date your notes.
-  Keep all notes in a secure place for an indefinite period.
-  These are essential in helping school/ Social Services/ the Police decide what is best for the child, and as evidence if necessary

Few helping words

- 📌 'I believe you 'I am going to help you'
- 📌 'I will help you 'I am glad that you told me
- 📌 'You are not to blame 'You did the right thing by telling me
- 📌 Say I cannot keep this a secret, but I won't tell anyone except for those who must know, to help (doctors, police)

Things not to say or do

- 📌 Don't confront the offender in the loved one's presence.
- 📌 Don't blame the child.
- 📌 Do not make promises you cannot keep

Avoid these statements

- 📌 'You should have informed your experience to someone earlier when it happened'
- 📌 'I can't believe it! I'm shocked!'
- 📌 'Oh that explains a lot'
- 📌 'No not...he's a friend of mine'
- 📌 'I won't tell anyone else'
- 📌 'Why? How? When? Where? Who?' doubt the child's disclosure



9. DOs AND DON'Ts : SOME QUICK TIPS

9.1. BULLYING

9.1.1. DOs For Teachers

-  Listen and focus on the student - Learn what's been going on and show you want to help.
-  Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
-  Know that kids who are bullied may struggle with talking about it - Consider referring them to a school counsellor, psychologist
-  Show kids that bullying is taken seriously
 - Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated.
 - Model respectful behaviour when addressing the problem.
 - Be non-judgemental and accepting



-  Use consequences to teach - Consequences that involve learning or building empathy can help prevent future bullying. The child who bullied can:

- Lead a class discussion about how to be a good friend.
- Write a story about the effects of bullying or benefits of teamwork.
- Role-play a scenario or make a presentation about the importance of respecting others, the negative effects of gossip, or how to cooperate.
- Do a project about civil rights and bullying.
- Read a book about bullying.

-  Help students understand bullying - Students who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Encourage kids to speak if they are bullied or see others being bullied. Teachers can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.



Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully.



Give tips, like using humour and saying “stop” directly and confidently.



Discuss what to do if those actions fail, such as walking away.



Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.



Show others how to be kind and respectful.

- Kids learn from adults’ actions.
- By treating others with kindness and respect, adults show the kids in their lives that there is no place for bullying
- Even if it seems like they are not paying attention, kids are watching how adults behave



Advancing social and emotional learning in classrooms

- Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves teaching skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship management.
- SEL improves students' emotional well-being, self-regulation, classroom relationships, and kind and helpful behaviour.
- It reduces a range of problems like anxiety, emotional distress, and depression; reduces disruptive behaviours like conflicts, aggression, bullying, anger, and hostile attribution bias;
- It improves academic achievement, creativity, and leadership.





Classroom meetings provide a forum for students to talk about school-related issues. These meetings can help teachers stay informed about what is going on. Make sure:

- Kids feel free to discuss issues without fear.
- Start the conversation.
- Concentrate on specific issues, such as bullying or respectful behaviour.
- Use open-ended questions or prompts, such as:
 - ▶ Share an example of a student who helped someone at school this week.
 - ▶ Without naming names, share an example of someone who made another student feel bad.
 - ▶ What did students nearby do? What did you do? Did you want to do something different—why or why not?
 - ▶ If you could describe the perfect response to the situation, what would it be? How difficult or simple would it be to accomplish? Why?
 - ▶ How can adults help?
 - ▶ End the meeting with a reminder that it is everyone’s job to make school a positive place to learn

9.1.2. DON'Ts for Teachers/School Management and Authority



Don't Dismiss



Don't make it Worse

- Sadly, there are some instinctive responses that can actually worsen bullying situations.
- Some teachers are tempted to step in to stop a situation by asking a child who is obviously being taunted, “Are you okay? Is s/he bothering you?”
- While intended to give the vulnerable child a voice, this type of on-the-spot intervention leaves the bullied child with virtually no choice but to say, “No, I’m okay.”



Don't Use Peer Mediation

- While school-based peer mediation programs can teach valuable skills for conflict resolution and respectful problem-solving, in bullying dynamics, it can become a platform for peer domination.
- When kids who bully gain the opportunity to outtalk and outwit their less articulate targets in front of trained peer mediators, school counsellors, and teachers, they are empowered.
- Vulnerable kids are further diminished.



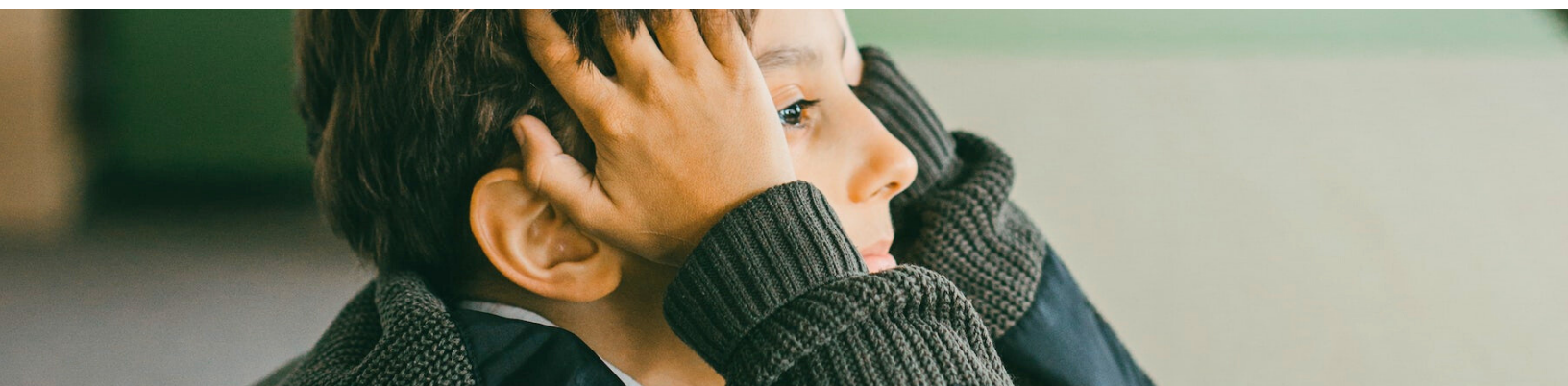
Don't Label

- Bullies and victims come in all genders and ages, shapes and sizes.
- They come from troubled families and nurturing ones, wealthy backgrounds and low socio-economic statuses.
- Stop placing them in harmful, self-fulfilling categories such as “problem-child,” or “bully” and begin to view them as young people who deserve to be taught better ways to behave.



Don't Deny

- Do not turn a blind eye to the problem of bullying.
- When there is denial of the problem, kids cannot be safe.
- They cannot learn and they cannot develop skills for managing the conflict that is an inevitable part of being human.
- Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences.⁹ Suspending or expelling students who bully does not reduce bullying behaviour. Students and teachers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or expulsion is the consequence.
- Conflict resolution does not work. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
- Group treatment for students who bully doesn't work. Group members tend to reinforce bullying behaviour in each other.



(9) <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/support-kids-involved>

9.2. CYBERBULLYING

9.2.1. DOs for Teachers/School Management and Authority

-  Schools must make efforts in ensuring that their staff is digitally literate. Understanding the risk involved while accessing virtual platforms help teachers in turn teach students about digital etiquette.
-  Raise awareness about online risks and dangers, the psychological and legal consequences of bullying online.
-  Conduct gender sensitization training for staff and students each academic year.
-  Train and encourage students to report inappropriate online interactions they encounter to their parents, teachers or counsellors.
-  Encourage children who have witnessed offences among their peers to report these offences, even if it hasn't directly affected them.



-  Initiate surveys that allow children to speak about offences anonymously. This would encourage children to be open about what they have experienced online.
-  Establish internet safety protocols within educational institutions.
-  Set boundaries with students and teach students of boundaries.
-  Listen without bias and judgement. Avoid blaming, accusing or belittling them when they approach you with a problem . Be especially protective of children with learning difficulties, special needs or disabilities.
-  Respect the child's privacy.
-  Invest in strong network security systems and set up automatic antivirus softwares and operating systems.



Encourage Children to¹⁰

- Be respectful in all online interactions.
- Create strong passwords and frequently change them to prevent misuse by another.
- Communicate only with known people
- Block any person trying to bother them and report them.
- Read privacy settings carefully on social networking sites
- Be vigilant about posting photographs, videos and sensitive information on websites as they leave digital footprints.
- To report any unauthorised activity on their accounts
- To use secure and legal sites to play games, read, watch content, etc.
- Teach children how to report bullying online on the concerned platform.
- Talk to trusted adults regarding any bullying incident
- Use only verified softwares and programs

9.2.2. DON'Ts for Children (What Teachers/School Management and Authority Should Encourage)

Given that teachers and parents play a significant role in the lives of the students, it is necessary to **exercise supervision when children access the internet. Teachers, parents and caregivers must encourage children to exercise the following cautions-**



Do not reveal passwords to anyone other than parent or guardian.



Do not reveal personal information like age, address, phone number, school name, etc. online.



Do not post a friend's information online, which could put them at risk.



Do not post anything that would hurt others feelings.



Do not forward anything they read on social media without verifying it from a trusted source.



Do not leave an account unattended after logging in. Always remember to log out of accounts.



(10) Safe Online Learning in times of COVID-19, by NCERT and UNESCO

-  Do not share images of self, videos or audio clips with personal or inappropriate content to self or anyone.

-  Do not use personal devices - USBs or harddrives on public computers or networks.

-  Do not open suspicious links and attachments on social networking sites.

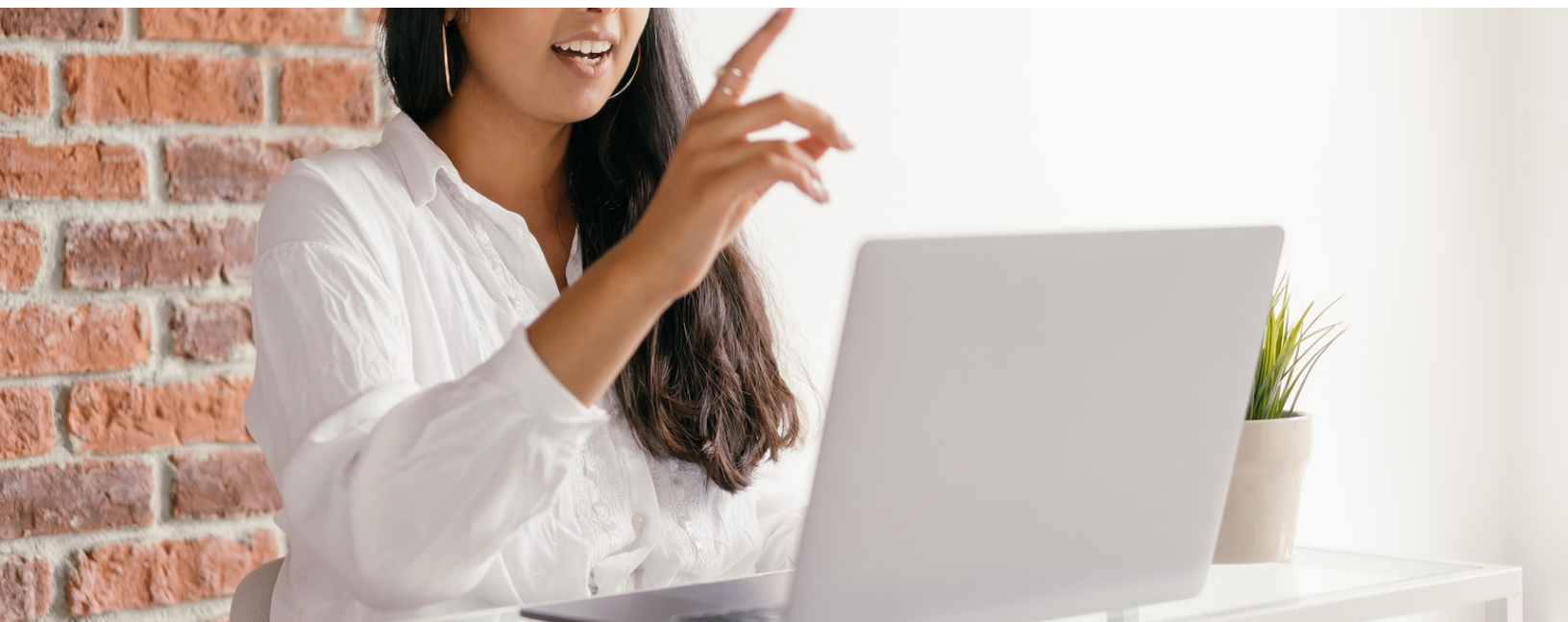
-  Avoid making friendships with strangers on social media platforms

-  Do not respond to bullying, obscene or offensive messages but save the evidence to share with trusted adults.

-  Do not engage in risky behaviour online like sharing or writing hateful material, posting or distributing sexual images.

-  Do not create fake profiles for yourself or others on any social networking site.

-  Do not indulge in abusive language and name calling while on online gaming platforms.



BULLYING

AFFECTS EVERYONE

VICTIMS



Child refuses to attend school - claims to have headaches, stomach pains, poor appetite, and loss of sleep

Child has lower grades after losing interest in schoolwork.

Child doesn't mix much with friends.

Child has mood swings: depression, irritability, unhappiness, anger.

Child may lose personal belongings to the bullies.

Child may have cuts, scratches or bruises.

BULLIES



Child has bad grades.

Child disrespects adults.

Child may be involved in wrongful activities like vandalism, dropping out of school, smoking, taking drugs or alcohol.

Child is most likely to be caught for criminal behavior.

BYSTANDERS



Child feels angry and helpless for not knowing what to do.

Child has nightmares about being the next target.

Child feels guilty for not taking action.

Child is afraid of certain areas in school.