

A person wearing a blue, green, and orange plaid shirt is holding a white smartphone in their right hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Cyberbullying

## On-line Harassment

25 percent of teenagers report that they have experienced repeated bullying via their cell phone or on the internet.

More than 80 percent of teens regularly use cell phones, making them the most popular form of technology and therefore a common medium for cyberbullying.

[Supporting Your Child](#)

**Cyberbullying** is harming, or attempting to harm someone or someone's reputation or friendships through the use of text messages, phone calls, blogs, chat rooms, emails, social media, photos, or any other electronic means.

As a parent you may be totally unaware of the cyberbullying your child is experiencing. The bullying can be emotionally devastating to the child given the viral ability to share and distribute electronic content via the Internet. The following do and don't tips provide parents with guidance on how to deal with cyberbullying.

## **DON'T . . .**

- respond to cyberbullies or retaliate;
- assume the cyberbully's online identity is true;
- forget to contact your school;
- allow the child to spend excessive time online;
- leave a computer in your child's bedroom.
- over react by blaming your child or telling your child to ignore it.

## **DO . . .**

### **Explain what cyberbullying is:**

It is surprising how many kids actually do not know when harmless teasing crosses over to more serious cyberbullying. Unfortunately, once that line is crossed the bullying can be emotionally devastating to the victim. Talk frequently to your child about his or her online activities.

Explain to a child that cyberbullying means using email, instant messaging, social network sites, cell phones, and the Internet to . . .

- Send and receive mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.

- Post sensitive, private information and/or lies about another person.
- Pretend to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
- Intentionally exclude someone from an online group.

Encourage your child to tell you if he or she is a victim of cyberbullying or are receiving or being exposed to inappropriate content about others. Be sure to tell your child that you will not take away her or his electronic privileges if you are told about a concern. Let your child know that you are simply concerned about her or his well-being.

## **Make the appropriate response to cyberbullying - send a non-threatening email which . . .**

1. Asks for the negative messages to stop.
2. Informs the person that you will be sending all future communications to parent/s, school, and police.

**Note:** If two students are sending aggressive behavior back and forth to each other it is not typically considered “cyberbullying.” Instead, it might be referred to as “online aggression,” “conflict” or “flaming.”

## **Two Ways to Make a Report of Bullying**

### *Offline (in person)*

- Report to teacher (in person or in writing) or other staff members in the building.
- Report directly to the assistant principal (AP) (in person or writing).

### *Online*

1. Students:
  - Download the “STOPit” app and enter the code *Frisco#1*.
  - Select your school and make your report.

2. Parents:
  - Go to your student's campus website.
  - Click on your "STOPit" icon.
  - Make your report.

Once you submit your online report the message will be sent to the campus administrators.

## **What happens after a report is made?**

1. The AP will contact the parents of students involved to inform them of this report and begin the investigative process. During this process, the AP will interview all students involved in the incident.
2. When necessary, interim steps will be taken to ensure safety of the targeted student while the investigation is taking place.
3. The student who was targeted is encouraged to report any retaliation or continued mistreatment now or in the future to the AP, his/her parents, and/or the police (when necessary) immediately.
4. After the investigation is complete and a plan of action has been determined, the AP will contact the students and parents involved in the report to address the findings.
5. Appropriate consequences will be given to the student committing the bullying behavior. (Note: the AP is not allowed to share consequences with the parents of the targeted student.)
6. The targeted student will be offered strategies on dealing with bullying.
7. In order to provide extra support, the AP will inform the counselor of the incident.
8. Staff members (specials teachers, bus drivers, etc.) will be involved on a need to know basis.

## The police should be contacted in the following situations:

- When the message encourages suicide.
- Incites violence through group bullying.
- Extortion
- Obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages
- Harassment, stalking, or hate crimes
- Sexual exploitation
- Releases or threatens to release intimate visual material.
- Involves assault or harassment (repeated negative e-communications)

*If your child is a target of cyberbullying make sure you keep electronic and printed copies (when possible) of all the communications. This will be important when you contact the school, police, and even an attorney.*

*If your child is experiencing cyberbullying he or she may be bullied offline as well. You will need to investigate what is going on and address all forms of bullying your child is experiencing.*

*Many Internet services will shut down an offensive account and even block the source computer from using their service. Also, if the police are involved, they will use this information to find the aggressive student even if he or she is using a fake name and profile.*

## Educate children on the importance of privacy

It is vital you educate and inform your children as to what is appropriate content to post and share, not only of themselves, but also of others and to keep his or her personal information private.

# New Law on Cyberbullying

Texas Senate Bill 179 makes cyberbullying a crime when a student:

- ❑ Encourages someone to commit suicide.
- ❑ Incites violence through group bullying.
- ❑ Releases or threatens to release “intimate visual material” without consent.
- ❑ Continues to bully someone after the police have warned him or her to stop.

If campus administrators discover a student has sent a message containing any of these four behaviors the message will be shared with the police for further investigation.

Cyberbullying

of this magnitude is classified (at minimum) a Class B misdemeanor.

The law also gives the courts the power to:

1. Order a student to stop cyberbullying or face criminal charges (Injunctive Relief)
2. Institute legal proceedings against (sue) the student’s parents if they do not make their child stop the cyberbullying.
3. Issue a temporary restraining order. This is similar to the school’s “Stay Away Plan,” except it is enforced by law.



Student Services-Guidance  
and Counseling

469-633-6583  
[www.friscoisd.org](http://www.friscoisd.org)

Adapted from material by Actions Parents Can Take to Stop Cyberbullying by Jules Polonetsky, Future of Privacy Forum.