

TALKING ABOUT BULLYING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

FOR USCRI FIELD TEAMS

2023

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NOTE FOR USCRI FIELD TEAMS

The following information should be shared with Afghan families, parents/caregivers, and children and adolescents. When working with Afghan children and youth, it will be important to take the child's age and development into consideration so that the information is presented in an age-appropriate manner.

Afghan refugee children and youth can become prime targets of bullies for a variety of reasons, including being different in appearance, dress, behaviors, gender roles, food preferences, religious practices, and not being able to express themselves clearly due to language barriers. These cultural differences can cause Afghan refugee students to be noticed and targeted by bullies. Moreover, Afghan refugee students may not understand that they are being bullied. They may not understand verbal teasing or insults due to language comprehension issues. Due to acculturation challenges, Afghan refugee students may not recognize that bullying victimization and hateful actions towards them are unacceptable in American schools, and therefore conclude that bullying is a normal way of life in the U.S. Therefore, Afghan refugee students may be less likely to report bullying victimization. Furthermore, research and anecdotal evidence suggests that refugee youth are more likely to be victims of bullying compared to U.S.-born students due to prejudicial beliefs, racism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiments.

It is also important to keep in mind that Afghan refugee students may be perpetrating bullying. Afghan refugee students may bully because of a desire for affiliation or to belong or they may have developed strong survival skills, including the ability to fight back when threatened or attacked, whether real or perceived. Just like other students who bully, Afghan refugee students may bully because of prejudicial beliefs about certain religious, racial, or ethnic groups.

Refugee children and youth are already at a higher risk for mental health issues, but bullying exacerbates their acculturation challenges which can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, depression, and anxiety, as well as result in greater stress, poor academic performance, fewer friends, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems. Schools may contribute to or exacerbate matters by ignoring, reinforcing, or normalizing the bullying of migrant and refugee students.

It is important that Afghan refugee families, parents/caregivers, and children/youth be educated on bullying, the different types of bullying, their right to a safe and inclusive school environment, and the importance of reporting incidents of bullying to adult or school personnel. Afghan parents/caregivers should be educated on identifying signs of bullying, how to best respond to and support their child, and working with the school to advocate for their child.

Schools and educators are in a key position to provide an inclusive and culturally safe school environment and respond swiftly to incidents of bullying. However, many educators may not be aware of the cultural barriers that place refugee children at a greater risk of being bullied. Schools and educators should be on the lookout for signs of bullying victimization in refugee students and should be aware that strategies used to reduce bullying of U.S.-born students cannot be generalized to refugee students. Schools and educators are in the best position to educate Afghan refugee students about bullying, the school's anti-bullying policy, and how students should respond when being bullied or witnessing bullying.

Words in Pashto and Dari that mean/are related to bully/bullying:

Pashto: Zowrawal (خوړول), Poskhand (پسځند), Tahkeer (تحقير)

Dari: Azeyat (اذيت), Reshkhand (ریشځند), Tahkeer (تحقير), Sarzanesh (سرزنش)

What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone is hurt by unwanted words or actions, usually more than once, and has a hard time stopping what is happening to them.

When someone tries to make you feel less about who you are as a person, and you are not able to make it stop.

Bullying is unwanted, hurtful behavior that is carried out by someone who has more power (real or perceived), which is used to control or harm others. Power can mean kids who are older, physically stronger, have access to embarrassing information, have more peer influence, or are part of a group that is singling out an individual.

There are 3 potential roles in a bullying situation:

1. **TARGET:** Person who is being bullied.

- Bullying can happen to **ANYONE**.
- Typically, students who are perceived to be different in some way – whether it is height or weight, clothes they wear, religion, immigration status (refugee, asylum seeker, humanitarian parolee), ethnicity, or gender – are at an increased risk of being bullied.

2. **PERSON WHO BULLIES:** Person whose actions cause hurt or harm.

- Bullying is an action.
- Students who bully can be of any age, size, gender, grade, or ethnicity.

3. **WITNESS or BYSTANDER:** Person who sees or knows of the behavior.

- Almost all kids see/witness bullying happen at some point.
- They may not be the ones bullying or the ones being bullied, but witnesses are important because their reactions can directly influence the bullying situation.
- When watching a fight, there may be some who see what is happening and then walk away; others who continue watching but say nothing; and those who cheer on the violence. Each response can affect what happens in a bullying situation.



What are the types of bullying?

There are many different types of bullying. Some bullying is obvious, while other types of bullying might be harder to identify. All types of bullying can happen in the classroom or school hallway, on the bus, walking to and from school, in the locker room, while at lunch or playing at recess. It can also happen online through social media, text messages, photos or videos shared via cell phones, tablets, or computers. When technology is used to bully someone, it is called cyberbullying.

<p>Physical Bullying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pushing or shoving• Hitting• Kicking• Biting or pinching• Hair pulling• Inappropriate touching• Spitting• Taking or breaking someone's things• Making rude or mean gestures	<p>Verbal Bullying is saying or writing mean things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teasing, taunting, making fun of someone, laughing at someone• Name-calling• Threatening to cause harm or intimidating• Demeaning jokes• Starting rumors or telling lies about someone
<p>Social involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaving someone out on purpose• Telling other children not to be friends with someone• Spreading rumors about someone• Embarrassing someone in public• Telling lies in order to hurt someone's reputation	<p>Sexual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unwanted physical contact or abusive comments• Demeaning/hurtful words about someone's gender or sexuality• Spreading rumors of sexual nature that harm a person's reputation• Sharing personal information about relationships• Posting inappropriate photos online
<p>Racist/Religious/Ethnic/Cultural/Immigrant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making racial/religious slurs/insults (i.e., terrorist)• Mocking someone's cultural customs or religious practices (i.e., food, clothing/dress, family traditions, praying, etc.)• Making hateful comments about someone's belonging (i.e., "Go back to where you came from")	<p>Cyberbullying is using technology (social media, text/SMS, gaming platforms, instant messaging to hurt or harm someone with unwanted and aggressive behavior, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sending mean text messages• Posting unkind statements online• Sharing pictures that are not yours to share• Liking or sharing posts about something hurtful• Spreading rumors or gossip online

Are You Being Bullied?

Bullying can happen to anyone, and it is not always easy to recognize. Below are some signs that you may be experiencing bullying:

- Do other students make mean comments about you?
- Have you ever been called hurtful names?
- Are you teased for how you look or act?
- Do you feel alone or isolated at school?
- Has anyone ever spread mean or untrue rumors about you?
- Are you ever purposely excluded from a group?
- Have you ever felt that someone you thought of as a friend is trying to control you?
- Has someone ever touched you in a way that felt inappropriate, demeaning, or threatening?
- Has anyone ever mocked or mimicked the way you talk or act?
- Has anyone ever damaged your belongings?
- Do other students physically hurt you on purpose?
- Are you ever afraid to go to school?
- Do you ever get anxious about how you are treated by other kids at school?
- Have photos of you been posted online without your permission?
- Has anyone ever pretended to be you on a social media site?
- Have people ever posted mean things about you online, or commented in a mean way on things you post?

Do You Bully?

Bullying is about behavior, not a label that the person wears. Kids bully for a lot of different reasons. It might be because of peer pressure, wanting to feel in control, fear, insecurity, not having positive adult role models, or even being bullied themselves. If you are bullying, it is time to stop. Your behavior is something that you have the power to change. Do any of the following apply to you?

- Some people deserve to be teased.
- Making fun of others does not hurt them.
- I enjoy feeling more powerful than others.
- I like making kids and adults do what I want.
- Getting a laugh when I hurt others makes me feel good.
- People push me around so I am going to do it to others.
- I feel better about myself when I make others feel worse about themselves.
- If kids are afraid of me, they will not pick on me.
- I do not care if other people get hurt.
- Being mean is no big deal.
- I will do what it takes to fit in, even if it means doing something that I do not really want to do.
- It is okay if other kids are intimidated by me.
- People always respect someone who has power and control over others.
- I say and do what I want, and if others are hurt by it, that is too bad.
- It does not bother me when I see other kids getting picked on.

If any of the above apply to you, the first step is to talk with an adult you trust at home, at school, or in your community. Share what is going on and ask for their advice and help. You can use the following link to develop an action plan with a trusted adult to change your behaviors and situation:

<https://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf>

Harm

Bullying hurts, in all its forms! If you are being bullied, you may experience:

- Being afraid to go to school
- Being afraid to ride the bus or walk to school
- Being afraid to use the school bathroom
- Being afraid of being alone in the school hallway or any other area of school
- Sadness
- Hurt
- Loneliness
- Anxiety and worry
- Feeling bad about yourself, like no one likes you
- Physical illnesses
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Thoughts about ending your life

What To Do?

The first thing to remember is that bullying is NEVER okay, cool, or acceptable. NO ONE deserves to be bullied for any reason. If you are being bullied, you should know that it is NOT your fault.

Second, when you are being threatened, intimidated, hurt, or harmed, it is a big deal. When you are being bullied, it might feel like no one cares or will understand or that there is no one that can help. But there are people who care and can help. It might not be easy but know that you can reach out and ask for help. You do not have to go through this on your own.

Tell an Adult

It might not be easy, but if you are being bullied, it is important to tell an adult. This can be your parents, guardian, or other family member(s). The adult can also be someone at school, like a teacher, coach, principal, school counselor, or someone else you trust. Sometimes the first person you tell might not be able to help you, but do not give up! Keep telling until you connect with someone who can help you.

1. You may be thinking...

- Will anything change if I tell?
- Would I be a tattletale/snitch?
- I do not want to get anyone in trouble.
- I do not want to burden my parent(s) with my problems.

Know that bullying is a big deal, and you have the right to speak up and be heard. When you tell an adult that you are being bullied, you do so to protect yourself from getting hurt not to get someone else in trouble. In fact, telling an adult about bullying is a smart thing to do.

2. Who should you talk to?

- Parent
- Teacher
- Coach
- Family member
- Counselor

- Mentor
- Religious leader, like an Imam

If things do not change or you need more help, talk to another adult you trust.

3. What do you say?

“I think someone might be bullying me or someone I know. Will you help me?”

“I want to tell you about something that happened, can we talk more?”

“Somebody did something that made me feel _____ (sad, hurt, mad, embarrassed, ashamed, worried, scared).”

“I am going through a situation that I can’t fix on my own and I need your help.”

“What can be done so that I can feel safe?”

It can be hard to tell an adult about something emotional, serious, or scary. Know that your feelings are important and that it is your story to tell. What you have to say matters. NO ONE should ever be bullied.

Some More Tips:

- Do not get angry! When you are being bullied your first reaction is to get angry with the person who is bullying you. Do you know that is exactly what the bully wants you to do? Bullies want control – over you and your feelings. Getting angry will not solve the situation ... it will only make it worse! And getting angry will make the bully feel even more powerful.
- Getting physical or bullying back DOES NOT Work! Do not push, hit, kick or punch a bully. If you get physical with a bully, the bullying will probably get worse. And the adults may see you as part of the problem.
- Never believe what a bully is saying. Bullies love attention and are just trying to get a reaction from you.
- Never start a discussion or argue with a bully.
- Keep out of the bully’s way, if and when you can.
- Use the buddy/friend system. There is safety in numbers. A bully is less likely to approach you if you are with friends. You can also be a buddy to someone who is being bullied.
- If you feel safe to do so, here are some more ways you can handle a bully:
 - Walk away when the bully approaches you. Try and imagine you are walking away from a stranger. Both you and your body language will show that you do not care.
 - Yell STOP and walk away. Keep walking and do not turn around no matter what they say.
 - When a bully calls you names or insults you, look them in the eyes, LAUGH and walk away without any additional conversation.
 - When a bully calls you names or insults you, you can use one of the following lines and then walk away:
 - Whatever!
 - Why are you talking to me?
 - I do not even know you.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Students in every state have rights in a bullying situation. However, every state addresses bullying differently. Some states have specific laws, while others have policy or legislation that outlines student rights in a bullying situation.

It is important for you to know

Some laws and policies specifically outline that the students who:

- Are bullied should be provided support and strategies designed to keep them safe and prevent further bullying.
- Do the bullying should be given consequences which are appropriate for the situation and circumstances.
- Witness bullying should have training on what to do when they see bullying, and the role they can play in creating a safe school and community.

It is your right to be safe at school

Every student should feel safe at school. If you do not, seek help from your parents or another adult. Remember:

- Tell them about the bullying situation
- Let them know that if you could stop this on your own, you would not be asking for their help
- Remind them that there are laws or policies outlining the school's responsibility in handling bullying situations
- Get their help to review the school's policy and determine how it applies to your situation

State Anti-Bullying Laws & Policies

For more information about the anti-bullying laws and policies or specific states, visit the following:

Florida: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/florida>

Pennsylvania: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/pennsylvania>

Texas: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/texas>

Washington: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/washington>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

- Think before you post. If you are upset, sad, or angry, wait to post or respond. Give yourself some time to cool down so you do not do something that you cannot take back. When you make comments about someone, keep it positive. Before saying something negative, think about how you would feel if someone said that about you.
- Protect yourself. Never share your passwords, private photos, or personal data/information. Remember, when you share something online, it can be shared with anyone, including your parents, teachers, and classmates.
- Cyberbullying is extra hurtful: it's public, spreads quickly, and is 27/7.
- It can be hard or even impossible to remove content once it is online.
- Your posts and photos live online forever and might be seen by parents, teachers, coaches, college admissions, and more.
- DO NOT respond to and do not forward cyberbullying messages
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web (all social media platforms have reporting procedures) and cell phone providers.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying.

Know Your Rights:

- In many states, schools are required to address cyberbullying in their bullying prevention policy. Some state laws also cover offcampus/out-of-school behavior that creates a hostile school environment. Check your school's bullying prevention policy.
- Students have additional legal rights if they are part of a **protected class based on race, color, religion, age, disability, sex, citizenship, veteran status, genetic information, and national origin**. In these cases, bullying is also considered **harassment** if it is related to your status as part of a protected class. If you see or experience harassment, talk to a trusted adult.

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

NOTE FOR USCRI FIELD TEAMS

Using the above information, educate parents/caregivers about bullying, types of bullying, signs of being bullied, the effects of being bullied, and how children/youth should respond to being bullied. Educate parents/caregivers on an unfortunate reality: Students from refugee backgrounds are at an increased risk of bullying victimization and discrimination because refugee children may wear different clothing, eat different food, practice a different religion, struggle with understanding and speaking English, and have a different culture and customs. It will be important to educate parents/caregivers about norms and expectations surrounding bullying in the U.S. In the U.S., bullying is not acceptable, is not tolerated, and all states have school bullying prevention legislation that reflect this. Furthermore, although no federal law directly addresses bullying, in some cases, bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment - when bullying is based on race, national origin, sex, age, disability, or religion – which is covered under federal civil rights laws. Emphasize to parents/caregivers that every child has the right to education in an environment that is safe and inclusive. Lastly, parents/caregivers should be made aware of the important role that they have in protecting their children from bullying and advocating on behalf of their children to ensure a safe and supportive school environment. This last point is particularly important to communicate, as parents/caregivers may have different cultural expectations about their role and involvement with their children's school.

Common Misconceptions About Bullying

Misconception	Facts
Bullying is the same as conflict or arguing.	<p>Conflict is a disagreement or argument in which both sides share their views. Conflict happens between two people who are equal in the relationship but have different points of view. Generally, both sides want the issue to be resolved. Children will stop and change their behavior when they realize it is hurting someone.</p> <p>Bullying is negative behavior directed by someone exerting power and control over another person with the goal of hurting, harming, or humiliating. Children who bully will continue their behavior even when they know it is hurting someone.</p>
Bullying is a natural part of childhood.	Bullying is often considered a natural part of childhood because it is such a common experience. But the fact that something is common does not mean it should remain common. Physical or emotional aggression toward others should not be a normal part of childhood.
Children and youth who are bullied will almost always tell an adult.	Adults are often unaware of bullying because many children and youth do not report it. Boys are less likely than girls, and older children are less likely than younger children to tell adults about bullying. Children may be reluctant to report bullying because they fear retaliation by the children doing the bullying. They also may fear that adults won't take their concerns seriously or will deal inappropriately with the situation.
Bullying will stop if it is ignored.	Ignoring bullying will not make it go away. In fact, ignoring bullying often makes the situation worse because it sends a message that the child being bullied is unable to do anything about it and gives satisfaction and a sense of power to the person doing the bullying.
Bullied children and youth need to learn how to deal with bullying on their own.	Some children and youth have the confidence and skills to stop bullying when it happens, but many do not. Children and youth need help from adults to know how to deal with bullying. Bullying is a form of victimization and peer abuse. Adults have critical roles to play in helping to stop bullying, as do other children who witness or observe bullying.
If my child is being bullied, it is okay for them to fight back.	If your child is being bullied, you should discourage them from fighting back. If your child fights back, the bullying will likely become much worse, and the school may see your child as part of the problem.

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center: <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/parents/definition-impact-roles.asp>

Three Areas of Concern to Parents/Caregivers Parents need to understand the impact of bullying, so they know how important it is to prevent and address it.		
1. Education – Bullying can negatively impact a child's access to education and lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding school and higher rates of absenteeism/skipping school • Poorer grades • Inability to concentrate • Loss of interest in academic achievement • Increase in dropping out of school 	2. Health – Bullying can lead to physical and mental health problems, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches and stomachaches • Problems sleeping • Low self-esteem/confidence • Increased fear, anxiety, and worries • Depression/sadness • Isolation/feeling excluded and alone 	3. Safety – Bullying impacts students' sense of well-being and can lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-isolation • Increased aggression • Self-harm (cutting, burning, etc.) and suicidal ideation/thinking about ending one's life • Feeling alienated and excluded at school • Fear of other students

If Your Child is Being Bullied

1. Talk with your child

- Regularly check in with your children, regardless of whether they are being bullied or not, and ask them about how they are doing and feeling and challenges or problems they may be facing. These regular conversations with your children will help you better identify when problems surface and foster more open communication between you and your children.
- Listen without making judgmental comments and provide safety and support so your child can openly talk about what is going on.
- Learn as much as you can about the situation: how long your child has been bullied, who is involved, and what steps have been taken. The course of action you decide to take will depend on the severity of the situation, the age of your child and other important factors.
- Make sure your child knows:
 - It is not his/her fault. He/she is not to blame.
 - Your child is not alone. You are here to help.
 - It is adults' responsibility to make sure the bullying stops.
 - Bullying is never okay, and children have the right to be safe.
 - No one deserves to be bullied. Children deserve to be treated with respect.
 - Children have the right to feel safe at school.

2. Support and empower/enable your child

- Talk to your child about ways you can support him/her and actions/strategies he/she can use (such as talking to teachers or practicing assertive responses to bullies).
- Support your child in developing problem-solving skills that will empower them to create an action plan.
- There are certain reactions parents/caregivers should **avoid**:
 - Telling your child to stand up to the bully without helping him/her identify options to effectively respond to the situation.
 - Taking matters into your own hands. When a child tells his/her parent(s) about bullying, he/she is looking for the parents to guide them to a solution that makes them feel empowered. Involve your child in the process of identifying the next steps/course of action.

3. Learn about your child's rights.

- Each state has different laws and policies on bullying, along with requirements on how schools should respond.
- You can also find out about your child's school's policy on bullying by contacting your child's school.
- It is important to know that in some cases, when bullying is based on race, ethnicity, skin color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion, this is considered harassment and schools are legally obligated to address it. When a violent crime or threat to commit such crime is motivated by bias against a person or group with specific characteristics, then it may be a *hate crime*. A *hate crime* is any crime motivated by bias against race, color, religion, national origin (including speaking another language), sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

4. Think through who else should be involved.

- It can be helpful to document the steps that you plan to take or have already taken. Written records provide a history of incidences and responses, which can be very helpful when addressing the issue with schools or law enforcement. In the U.S., there is a saying that can be helpful to remember: If it is not in writing, it never happened/does not exist.

- It can be helpful to figure out who else should be involved that can help your child. For example, contacting your child’s school, school counselor, or other health professionals.
- In situations in which parents decide to report the bullying of their child, they may need to meet with various school members. To prepare parents for working with the school, the following website has tips, recommendations, and resources: <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/parents/working-with-school.asp>

Cyberbullying: What Parents Should Know

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to intentionally harass, hurt, embarrass, humiliate, or intimidate another person. Use the information above, under Types of Bullying, to further describe what cyberbullying is to parents/caregivers. There is a potential for cyberbullying whenever children use technology to interact. Parents should be educated on establishing guidelines for their children’s use of technology. For example:

- Children should be reminded not to do or say anything online that they would not do or say in person. Children should not reveal anything online that they would NOT tell a stranger.
- Children should never share their email or social media account passwords with anyone, other than their parent(s).
- Ensure that children’s social media accounts are private and that they do not “friend” people they do not know.
- Establish whether parents want to moderate the content their children share and post online.
- Set hours that technology can and cannot be used.
- Children should immediately report experiences of cyberbullying to parents.
- Parents can be educated on the safety features offered by wireless and internet service providers or social media that help block or manage cyberbullying. For example, privacy settings and parental controls.

For more information for parents, visit/download: <https://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-23.pdf>

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Bullying & Cyberbullying Resources

STOMP Out Bullying: www.stompoutbullying.org

Kids Against Bullying: <https://pacerkidsagainstabullying.org/>

Teens Against Bullying: <https://pacerteensagainstabullying.org/>

If you are feeling hopeless, helpless, or thinking of harming yourself or ending your life, call or text 988 to speak to someone who is available 24/7 to help.

If there has been a crime or someone is in immediate danger or risk of harm, call 911 or go to your local hospital emergency room.