

What is Bullying?

Bullying is commonly defined as intentional, repeated harmful acts, words or other behavior, such as name calling, threatening and/or shunning, committed by one or more children against another.

- Expressing harmful acts or words that are intentional.
- Harmful acts or words are repeated.
- The acts are harmful and they can include a range of acts, words and other behaviors.
- The acts are committed by one or more persons against another.

Bullying May Be Physical, Verbal or Emotional in Nature

- **Physical bullying** includes punching, poking, strangling, hair pulling, biting, excessive tickling, and intentionally damaging personal property.
- **Verbal bullying** includes such acts as hurtful name-calling, teasing and gossip.
- **Emotional bullying** includes behaviors such as rejecting, extorting, humiliating, blackmailing, rating/ranking of personal characteristics, manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing and peer pressure.

Criminal Acts Most Often Associated with Bullying

- **Threats** means a communication that threatens to kill or do bodily injury to a person or any member of his or her family and places the person in reasonable fear of death or bodily injury.
- **Harassment** means to repeatedly annoy or attack a person or group in such a way as to cause anxiety or fear for safety. Several different types of harassment are against [Virginia Law](#).
- **Extortion** means obtaining property from another person by using or threatening to use violence or other criminal means to cause harm to a person, a person's reputation or a person's property.
- **Assault and Battery** means physical, harmful contact.
- **Robbery** is defined as taking, with the intent to steal, of the personal property of another, from his or her person or in his or presence, against his or her will, by violence or intimidation.

- **Hazing** means to recklessly or intentionally endanger the health or safety of a student or to inflict bodily injury on a student in connection with admission into a group.

Bullies

Studies have found that bullying in childhood may be an early sign of the development of violent tendencies, delinquency and criminal activity. One study found that boys identified as bullies in middle school were four times as likely as their non-bullying classmates to have three or more criminal convictions by age 24.

Bystanders

- May be afraid to associate with the victim for fear of lowering their own status or fear of retribution from the bully and becoming victims themselves.
- May fear reporting bullying incidents because they do not want to be called a “snitch.”
- May experience feelings of guilt or helplessness for not standing up to the bully on behalf of their classmate.

Harm from Bullying

Bullying has often been dismissed as normal part of growing up. That isn't the case. Bullying and the harm that it causes are seriously underestimated. Bullying *is* a big deal.

Victims of Bullying

- Grades may suffer because attention is drawn away from learning.
- Fear may lead to absenteeism, truancy or dropping out.
- If the problem persists, victims sometimes feel compelled to take drastic measures, such as vengeance in the form of fighting back, bringing a weapon to school or even suicide.

Is Your Child a Bully?

It is important for all of us to recognize the signs that someone is either being bullied or is bullying others. Recognizing warning signs is the first step in taking action to halt the bullying. Not every child who is being bullied by others will seek help. Start with talking with a child who may show warning signs. Warning signs can also point to other issues and problems, including, but not limited to depression or substance and self-abuse.

How Can You Help?

Did you know that statistics show that an adult was notified in only 40% of all bullying incidents? Did you know that most children do not tell an adult that they are the victim of bullying? Although children often feel helpless, they may want to gain control of their feelings and situation on their own. They fear being viewed as a tattletale or unable to take a stand on their own. Often times the child is experiencing a humiliating experience. In addition to fearing backlash, children may not want adults to know what's being said about them, true or false. Children may also be afraid of adults judging them or being punished for their weakness; feel that no one really cares or could understand; fear of rejection by their peers; and fear of losing support from their friends.

Bullying affects everyone. Step up and get involved if you witness an act of bullying. Be involved with child and help share positive interaction with others. For additional information, please visit www.stopbullying.gov.

Code of Virginia

§ 18.2-152.7:1. Harassment by computer; penalty.

a. If any person, with the intent to coerce, intimidate, or harass any person, shall use a computer or computer network to communicate obscene, vulgar, profane, lewd, lascivious, or indecent language, or make any suggestion or proposal of an obscene nature, or threaten any illegal or immoral act, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

§ 18.2-427. Use of profane, threatening, or indecent language over public airways or by other methods.

Any person who uses obscene, vulgar, profane, lewd, lascivious, or indecent language, or makes any suggestion or proposal of an obscene nature, or threatens any illegal or immoral act with the intent to coerce, intimidate, or harass any person, over any telephone or citizens band radio, in this Commonwealth, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

"Over any telephone" includes, for purposes of this section, any electronically transmitted communication producing a visual or electronic message that is received or transmitted by cellular telephone or other wireless telecommunications device.

§ 18.2-429. Causing telephone or pager to ring with intent to annoy.

A. Any person who, with or without intent to communicate but with intent to annoy any other person, causes any telephone or digital pager, not his own, to ring or to otherwise signal, and any person who permits or condones the use of any telephone under his control for such purpose, is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. A second or subsequent conviction under this subsection is punishable as a Class 2 misdemeanor if such prior conviction occurred before the date of the offense charged.

B. Any person who, with or without intent to converse, but with intent to annoy, harass, hinder or delay emergency personnel in the performance of their duties as such, causes a telephone to ring, which is owned or leased for the purpose of receiving emergency calls by a public or private entity providing fire, police or emergency medical services, and any person who knowingly permits the use of a telephone under his control for such purpose, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

§ 18.2-386.2. Unlawful dissemination or sale of images of another; penalty.

A. Any person who, with the intent to coerce, harass, or intimidate, maliciously disseminates or sells any videographic or still image created by any means whatsoever that depicts another person who is totally nude, or in a state of undress so as to expose the genitals, pubic area, buttocks, or female breast, where such person knows or has reason to know that he is not licensed or authorized to disseminate or sell such videographic or still image is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. However, if a person uses services of an Internet service provider, an electronic mail service provider, or any other information service, system, or access software provider that provides or enables computer access by multiple users to a computer server in committing acts prohibited under this section, such provider shall not be held responsible for violating this section for content provided by another person.

B. Venue for a prosecution under this section may lie in the jurisdiction where the unlawful act occurs or where any videographic or still image created by any means whatsoever is produced, reproduced, found, stored, received, or possessed in violation of this section.

C. The provisions of this section shall not preclude prosecution under any other statute.