

UCAN NEWSLETTER

SIGNS OF BULLYING



- ➔ Unexplainable injuries
- ➔ Lost or destroyed clothing/belongings
- ➔ Frequently feeling sick
- ➔ Changes in eating/sleeping
- ➔ Declining grades
- ➔ Avoidance of social situations



working with the schools

**MEET WITH THE
SCHOOL STAFF**

**LISTEN MORE
THAN YOU SPEAK**

MAKE A PLAN

TIPS FOR PARENTS WHEN WORKING WITH THE SCHOOLS

As parents, we know how challenging it is to know that your child has been bullied and you feel as though you can't do anything about it. We don't want you to feel that way which is why we are here to help. We have provided tools that will help you talk with your school about the situation, be productive and have your child understand they are not in this alone.

For more help, please contact us at (901) 262-8642 or email us at ucanmakadiff@gmail.com.



Meeting with School Staff

School staff spend a lot of time with their students and are often in a position to see how they interact with peers, notice patterns in behavior, and recognize classroom dynamics. Establishing a collaborative relationship with the staff at your child's school is an important step in advocating for your child. It's important to connect with those who have contact with your child at the start of the year so that you are comfortable communicating information and any concerns. Be sure to check in with them often, this can even be done through email. By establishing this relationship, and building a partnership, you will be able to share not only your educational questions, but also talk through any concerns about social interaction that might involve bullying.

In the situations in which you need to report the bullying, you may need to meet with various school members. This could include the principal, vice principal, school counselor, social workers, school police officers, and teachers. The best way for you to be an advocate for your child is to be well prepared for these meetings.

When meeting with school staff, try to:

- Be ready to state a problem clearly.
- Have ideas for a solution.
- Find and bring specific data to support your position.
- Try to listen to the ideas and solutions of others first.
- Make a list of your priorities and concerns before a meeting.
- Make a written list of questions you may have.
- Know who will be at a meeting and what their roles will be.
- Make sure you know the purpose(s) of the meeting.

Beginning a Meeting

- Arrive early enough to sit where you will feel most comfortable and effective.
- Establish rapport: Tell a short, interesting story about your child. Handshakes, "small talk," and smiles can open a meeting on a positive note.
- Seek common ground—start with things that team members agree on.
- Make sure there is an agenda and that it includes your items.
- Find out how much time has been scheduled for this meeting. Is it enough?

During a Meeting

- Identify and focus on your goal—hold yourself accountable.
- Show respect and expect it from others.
- Manage your emotions. Cool heads and warm hearts make the best decisions.
- Be specific and clear.

- Acknowledge that you understand that teachers have multiple and complex roles.
- Use praise and say thanks whenever possible.
- Rephrase what you hear to ensure you understood correctly.
- End a meeting by summarizing the outcomes of the meeting to make sure you understood correctly, and it is clear who will do what by when.
- End a meeting on a positive note whenever possible. Even if you've disagreed, you may be able to say, "I think we understand each other's perspectives more clearly now."

Listen More Than You Speak

Communication is a two-way process that involves listening as well as speaking. Other people may have valuable information and insights that you need to hear. You may never hear that information or those insights if you don't listen.

- Listening gives you information or data to use. Your own thoughts and opinions are not enough.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Listen to see if the speaker is expressing an opinion or if data is being presented.
- Whether you agree or not, try to understand clearly what others are saying. You may want to repeat what you've heard to make sure you understood it correctly.
- Let your body show you are listening—make eye contact and lean forward.
- Take notes on what you hear or invite a friend to do this for you.
- Don't interrupt. Allow the speaker to finish; don't assume you know what the speaker will say.
- Don't "argue mentally." You may miss some data or the real message while thinking of what you will say next.

Ask Questions

- Ask what, who, when, where, and how questions.
- Be careful of "why" questions:
 - Asking why to understand someone's reasoning can be helpful. Example, "Why hasn't my son been separated from the student bullying him?"
 - Asking why to find someone's motivation is not. Example: "Why haven't you separated my son and the student bullying him?"
 - Questioning motives usually leads to defensiveness, not problem solving.
- Phrases that may help:
 - "Tell me more about..."
 - "Please explain ..."
 - "Would you please rephrase that so I can understand?"
 - "How will I know this plan is working?"
 - "What will the school propose to do about...?"
 - "What do you suggest we do about...?"
 - "I think I heard you say...Is that correct?"

- “That is interesting. Tell me more so I’m sure I understand your view.”

When You Are the Speaker

Be as clear as possible so that others will understand what you have to say. These are some important communication tips for you to consider.

- Be honest about what you know and what you don’t know.
- Don’t blame. Focus on solutions instead.
- Limit criticism. With each criticism, defensiveness increases and listening decreases.
- Give positive feedback and praise as often as possible.
- If you are interrupted, you may want to say in a polite manner, “Excuse me, I am not finished.”
- Use “You could…” rather than “You should…”
- Consider using humor, although it’s not for everyone or for all situations.
 - Humor can help build rapport and break down barriers.
 - It can reduce stress and conflict.
 - When using humor, make it brief, spontaneous, and relevant.
- If you have a hard time saying what you mean, write your thoughts and ideas down and then read or pass them out at the meeting.
- Keep the emphasis on the child. Focus on what the child needs not on what you may want.
- Realize that being heard is not necessarily the same as getting what you want.
- Paraphrase (restate what you think you heard someone else say) to make sure you understood clearly.

Written Communication

There are times when the most effective form of communication is in written form. Written communication methods can include:

- Phone log—in addition to the date and name of person you talked with, write down a summary of the conversation
- Meeting follow-up notes and thank you letters
- Formal letters:
 - Should be sent to the person who has the authority to make a difference
 - Be brief, business-like, and respectful
 - Focus on one or two issues
 - Set a deadline for reply
 - Keep a copy for yourself

Make a Plan

Here is an outline of a possible plan for working with your child’s school to address bullying:

- Describe the problem clearly.
- Encourage input from all members of the team.
- Brainstorm (without evaluating the ideas).
- Choose a solution by consensus (all agree).
- Develop a plan. Define who is responsible for an action and when will it be done.
- Put that plan in writing.
- Create a timeline and criteria to evaluate success.
- Follow up.