

# Belmont's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan:

## What middle school students need to know

In May of 2010, the state of Massachusetts took steps to protect all students from unwanted, aggressive behavior by passing anti-bullying legislation. The Massachusetts anti-bullying law prohibits bullying on school grounds, buses, and activities and requires that schools take steps to report and respond to bullying. The town of Belmont and the Belmont Public Schools developed a plan to educate students about bullying and to let you know what you should do if you experience or witness bullying behaviors at school. It is the expectation of the Belmont Public Schools that every student, parent, and staff member is familiar with the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

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**BULLYING** is aggressive behavior that is intended to physically or emotionally harm another person. Bullying differs from normal conflict in that:

1. It is deliberate and targeted
2. It involves an imbalance of physical or psychological power
3. It is repetitive

Bullying behavior is deliberate, which means the harm inflicted on one student by another student is done on purpose. There is also a perceived imbalance of power between the students involved. This difference in power may exist because one student feels that he or she is bigger, older, more popular, smarter, or better than another student in some way. Because of this difference in power, it is difficult for the person being bullied to stand up for him or herself, which may result in a repeat of the aggressive behavior.

There are several different **types of bullying**:

<p><b>1) Physical-</b> hitting, pushing, shoving, damaging someone else's property</p> 	<p><b>2) Verbal/Written-</b> teasing, name-calling, threatening harm</p> 
<p><b>3) Social-</b> spreading rumors, excluding others on purpose, breaking up friendships</p> 	<p><b>4) Cyber-</b> using the internet or cell phones to cause harm</p> 

**RETALIATION** is any form of intimidation, payback, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. *Like bullying behavior, acts of retaliation will not be tolerated and are subject to responsive and/or disciplinary action.*

### Who is involved in bullying or retaliation?

The person who *causes* the harm or hurt is called the **aggressor**

The person who is hurt is called the **target**

People who watch bullying happen but do not say or do anything to help the target, or stop the aggressor, are called **bystanders**.



### I think I am being bullied or someone I know is being bullied. What should I do...?

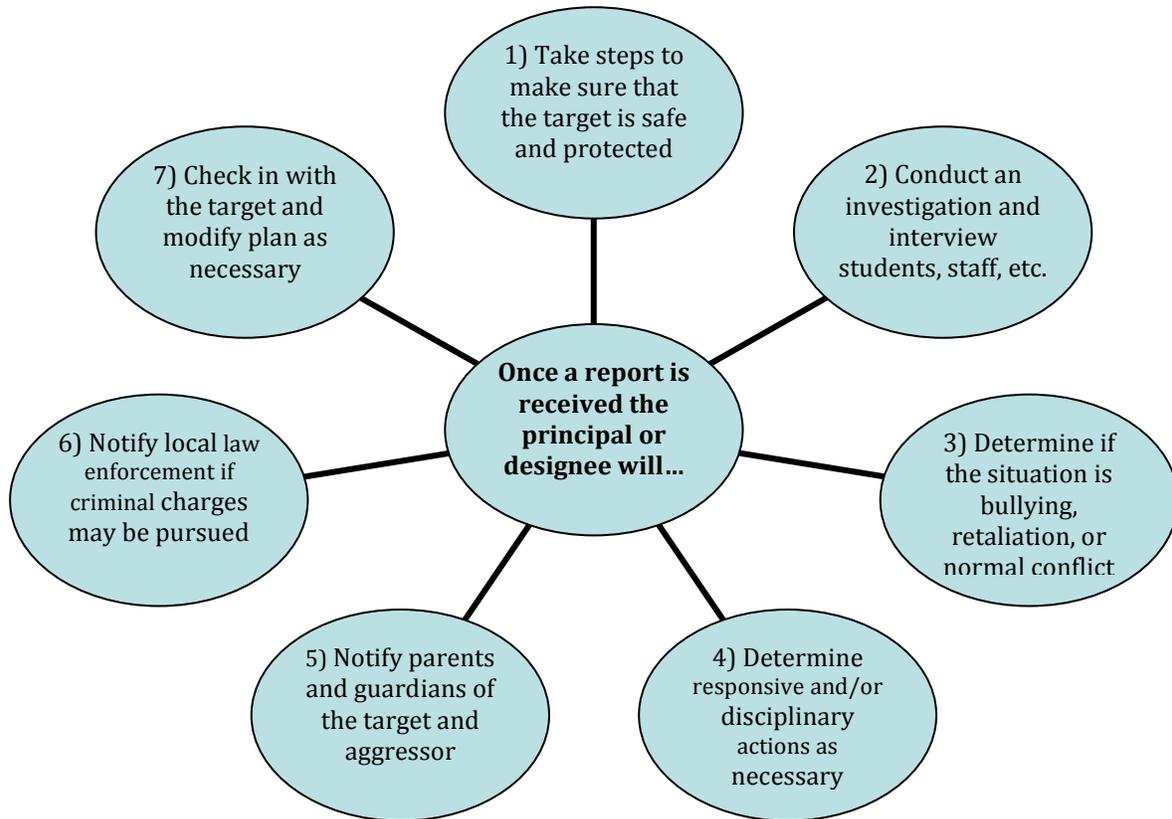
- Tell an adult you feel comfortable talking to. Your parent, teacher, guidance counselor, principal, assistant principal, and coach are all examples of adults who can listen to what you're experiencing and help you respond to the situation. This is not something you should handle by yourself.
- Complete a Bullying Incident Reporting Form. Forms are available online and in school in the main office, the guidance office, and the nurse's office. This is something you can complete on your own or with one of the adults mentioned above. You do not need to include your name on the reporting form, but it is helpful if you do. You should submit the reporting form to the main office or the guidance office once it is completed. It is important to note that the principal or assistant principal at your school will investigate all reported incidents of bullying and retaliation, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor based solely on an anonymous report.

## Bullying vs. Conflict

It is important to understand that not all situations that students share with adults are examples of bullying. They may be examples of a more equal type of CONFLICT, like an argument or a disagreement. In an argument or a disagreement BOTH students or groups of students feel they can stand up for themselves and work together to resolve an issue when they are ready. Sometimes, like bullying, a conflict between students requires an adult's help to resolve.

If you would like to talk to someone at school about your situation, stop by the guidance office and schedule a time to speak with your counselor. You can also pick up an incident report form in the main office, the nurse's office, or the guidance office. Incident report forms should be submitted to the main office or the guidance office.

## What happens after I report alleged bullying or retaliation to my school?



## What can I do to help? Everyone is a bystander at some point.

- Treat everyone in your grade and in different grades with KINDNESS and RESPECT. You may not like what someone says or does all of the time, but you should always treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- Consider how your words and actions will affect other people before you say or do something. Taking a moment to think about how what you say or do could make someone feel could avoid unnecessary hurt.
- Support your peers. If you see someone do something unfair or unkind to someone again and again, don't allow it to continue. Reach out in friendship to the targeted student immediately or at another time. Report the incident to an adult; anonymous reports are investigated. If you feel comfortable, let the aggressor know that their actions are not okay and should stop. As a bystander, you can make a big difference.

## Questions:

If you have any questions or concerns about bullying or conflict, please talk to your parent or guardian, teacher, guidance counselor, or another adult that you trust. We will do our best to help you. *It is everyone's responsibility to stop bullying in our schools.*

