MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED.
PARENT CHECK-LIST

☐ FIRST, TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Your emotions may be high when you find out that your child is being bullied or cyberbullied, and that is normal, but please remember that your child may also upset and scared too. They are looking to you as their place of comfort and support. They will monitor your reactions when they tell you what is currently happening or has happened. Believe it or not, children do worry about the perceived pressure that they put on us as parents. All of this means to first take a deep breath and monitor your tone of voice when talking to your child.

☐ GATHER INFORMATION

Talk to your child about what is going on, thank them for opening up to you about the situation, and then calmly listen. Specifics of the situation might include:

- Who is involved?
- What has happened?
  - Verbal?
  - Physical?
- Social/Relational?
- Cyberbullying?
- What days and times were you bullied (include all incidents)?
- Where did the bullying take place?
- Did you tell a trusted adult in the school? If yes, who?

☐ CONFIRM BULLYING IS TAKING PLACE

Bullying is an aggressive behavior that involves an imbalance of power. Bullying is repeated over time and can take many forms, such as hitting, punching, or shoving (physical bullying); teasing, taunting, name-calling, or sexual remarks (verbal bullying); intimidation using gestures, spreading rumors, or social exclusion (psychological or social bullying).

Your child may be experiencing harassment if bullying behaviors are based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion.

☐ CREATE A WRITTEN RECORD

It is helpful to build a timeline outlining information about the bullying incidents, the dates of those events, the individuals involved, and your child’s account of the event. If applicable, be sure to include any screen shots/pictures, medical records/reports if there was treatment for physical injuries as well as any psychological assessments from a mental health, (police) reports, or tape recordings (depending on the state you live in and situation).

*Note: Tape recordings may be inadmissible in a court hearing depending on the state you live in.

☐ WORK WITH YOUR CHILD

Sometimes children are fearful of adult intervention because they believe (justifiably) that it will “make things worse.” Validate those concerns and listen nonjudgmentally to any feelings your child is experiencing. Additionally, talk about what can be done to help make school a safer, more comfortable learning environment for them. Discuss with your child what bullying is and practical ways handle these situations when they occur. Consider role playing.
PROTECT YOURSELF & YOUR CHILD ONLINE

If your child is being cyberbullied, be sure to block or limit this online aggressor’s means of contact by putting privacy settings in place and blocking phone numbers/users. Should the behavior continue, consider changing your child’s email address, account/user name, or phone number. Report all abuse to online services providers.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

As a parent, please avoid taking the situation online. By posting about your child’s situation on your own personal social media, you may unknowingly worsen the situation.

WORK WITH YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL

If the situation cannot be safely resolved by the child, then you may need to talk to the school. Be sure to include your child in this decision and discuss how much involvement they’d like to have. When meeting with the school, you’ll want to follow the chain of command, typically in this order:

1. Child’s Teacher
2. Child’s School Counselor
3. Assistant or Grade Level Principal
4. Superintendent
5. Board of Education

If your child is experiencing harassment, you can get additional support through the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division

*Note: Parochial or private schools do not have the same chain of command as a traditional public school.

Consider the following steps before, during, and after your meeting at the school:

1. PRIOR TO THE MEETING:

Write a letter or email to the appropriate person regarding your child’s current bullying situation with a request to meet in person. Be sure to outline all efforts to help your child, while being assertive about your child’s needs.

2. PREPARE FOR THE MEETING:

Organize all information and pertinent questions and decide if anyone else will be asked to attend the meeting (ex. spouse, friend, teacher, and/or counselor).

3. DURING THE MEETING:

Ask this primary question: What can be done to keep your child safe in school physically and emotionally so he/she can learn?

Explain the impact this is having on your child (I.E. he/she does not want to come to school, stomach aches, or any other new behavior). Discuss any and all work you have done with your child. Depending on the situation and your child, he/she may be able to write a letter sharing some of their feelings.

Share all recorded information including documentation (including your timeline of events), witnesses, doctor’s notes, psychological assessments, police reports, cyberbullying online report, etc.
Either bring a copy of the schools written bullying policy or ask for it there.

Bring your state’s laws and/or policies.
• Your states laws can be found online at StopBullying.Gov: www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html

Work together, to determine an appropriate plan of action with school staff to ensure your child has support while at school. Your child’s opinions and inclusion when making this plan matter!

Keep written records at this meeting including who was present, what was discussed, any decisions, outcomes, plans and solutions to ensure accountability.

4. AFTER THE MEETING:

Send a follow-up letter or email that summarizes the discussion and any actions resulting actions.

Should the situation not improve or worsen after several weeks (or after the determine amount of time required to put supports in place), you may decide to move up the chain of command (i.e. from the principal to superintendent).

WORKING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OR LEGAL AID

If your child has been physically assaulted or has been seriously threatened, contact the police immediately. Be sure to keep a written record of all offenses committed against your child and any time you have contacted the school in case you contact law enforcement officials.

If the problem persists or escalates and school is unable to stop the bullying, you might consider consulting an attorney.

WORKING WITH HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

If there are any signs that the child is hurting themselves or poses a threat to their own safety, consider counseling for the child. A child’s health is priority.

• Parents can start by asking for a referral from the child’s pediatrician or search online
• School and MMF staff can provide parents with community agency information

If you see any warning signs in your child, please take them seriously and seek professional help immediately, call 9-1-1 or contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Warning signs that your child might be in psychological crisis, might include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERBAL CUES</th>
<th>BEHAVIORAL CUES</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL CUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Life isn’t worth living”</td>
<td>Getting affairs in order (ex. paying a debt)</td>
<td>Unrelenting low mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’d be better off dead”</td>
<td>Giving away prized possessions or money</td>
<td>Pessimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel there is no way out”</td>
<td>Signs of planning a suicide (ex. buying a weapon)</td>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My family would be better off without me”</td>
<td>Making funeral plans</td>
<td>Desperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Next time I will take enough pills to do the job right&quot;</td>
<td>Increase in self-destructive or violent behaviors (ex. drinking alcohol/drug use)</td>
<td>Anxiety, psychic pain, and inner tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You can take my (prized collection/valuables) - I don’t need this stuff anymore&quot;</td>
<td>Social Withdrawal</td>
<td>Rage or anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I won’t be in your way much longer”</td>
<td>Increased impulsivity &amp; taking unnecessary risks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>