

## **A GUIDE TO ASSIST PARENTS**

**WHOSE CHILDREN ARE FACING  
VIOLENCE OR BULLYING ISSUES  
AT SCHOOL**



Fédération  
des comités de parents  
du Québec

## The Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees

The Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees has been representing the voice of parents in dealing with decision-makers and education partners for more than 40 years. It advocates for the rights of parents and their children attending public primary and secondary schools to receive quality education in a safe and healthy environment. The Federation promotes the dissemination of knowledge among parents so they can become competent and indispensable contributors to the school system.

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY A GUIDE?

The school community is responsible for implementing an anti-bullying and anti-violence plan to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all students and school staff. In spite of all the efforts and all the informations and resources available, children and parents still find themselves in situations where bullying occurs.

This guide is intended to help parents know what to do, how to react and where to turn when a child is involved in a bullying situation at school. Its purpose is to disseminate resources and good practices to facilitate the resolution and prevention of problematic situations of violence or bullying in a collaborative context with the school environment.

This guide provides useful and necessary information for parents to support them in:

- identifying situations of violence or bullying
- reporting a situation
- supporting their child
- implementing prevention measures.

A shared common language, relevant and clear information about roles and a better understanding of processes are essential to facilitate the resolution of a situation of violence or bullying while respecting the needs of those involved.

BULLYING CAN TAKE MANY FORMS. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO KNOW HOW TO IDENTIFY THE SIGNS INDICATING THAT YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED, BUT ALSO TO KNOW HOW TO DISTINGUISH THESE SITUATIONS FROM WHAT CONSTITUTES A CONFLICT IN ORDER TO REACT PROMPTLY AND ADEQUATELY.



Information in this first chapter is derived mainly from the website of the Ministry of Education (MEES) “Act to Stop Violence and Bullying at School”, available at the following address: <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/contenus-communs/school-administrators-public-and-private-schools/bullying-and-violence-in-the-schools/act-to-stop-violence-and-bullying/>

## a. What is Violence?

According to section 13, paragraph 1.3 of the Education Act (EA), violence is defined as “*any intentional demonstration of verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual force which causes distress and injures, hurts or oppresses a person by attacking their psychological or physical integrity or well-being, or their rights or property.*”

Violence involves an interaction between at least two people, an unequal balance of power between the perpetrator(s) of the aggression and the person against whom the actions, words, attitudes, or violent acts are directed.

Whether it occurs between students, between adults or between students and adults, violence at school creates an unhealthy climate. It leads, among other things, to mistrust, insecurity, a diminished sense of belonging to the school, low self-esteem, anxiety, and withdrawal. And this is without factoring in absenteeism, academic failure, dropping out on the part of students and lack of involvement on the part of adults.

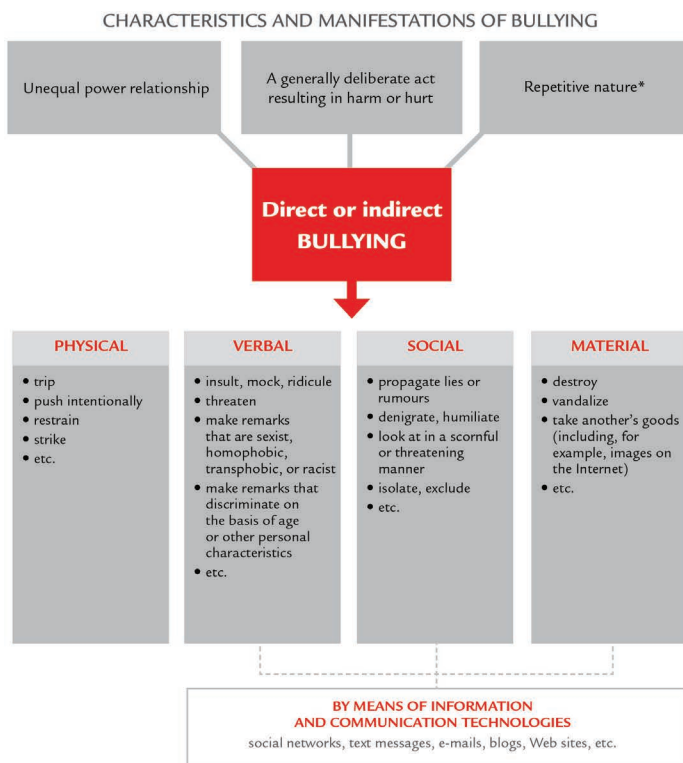
**IN ORDER TO PREVENT ACTS OF VIOLENCE FROM TURNING INTO BULLYING, IT IS IMPORTANT TO INTERVENE AS SOON AS THESE BEHAVIOURS FIRST APPEAR.**

### Examples of Violence:

- A Grade 6 student physically attacks a Grade 4 student to show their friends that they are capable of making the other child cry.
- A student breaks another student's glasses in revenge.
- A student throws a glass of water in a cafeteria monitor's face.

## b. What is Bullying?

Section 13, paragraph 1.1 of the Education Act (EA) defines bullying as “any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes.”



**HARMFUL EFFECTS FOR THE PERSON TARGETED, WHICH COULD ALSO AFFECT OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED AND HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR ENVIRONMENT**

\* Depending on the context, a single—objectively serious—gesture could also be associated with acts of bullying without being repetitive in nature (i.e. assault causing injury, armed assault, or death threat).

Image taken from the *Concerted Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Bullying 2015-2018* (Government of Quebec, 2015, p. 13)

Retrieved at: <https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/plan-action-intimidation-2015-en.pdf>

Bullying can be direct or indirect. Direct bullying occurs in the presence of the person being bullied, for instance:

- Making fun of the person in front of others.
- Shoving the person repeatedly.
- Taking or damaging the person's property.

Indirect bullying, on the other hand, occurs in the person's absence. These behaviours are highly detrimental even though they may be difficult to perceive, for instance:

- Excluding the person from the group
- Isolating the person especially by denigrating them to others
- Spreading rumours or nastiness about the person behind their back, for example through graffiti or on social networks.

Bullying can occur in cyberspace (texting, instant messaging, email, social networks, etc.). This is called cyberbullying.

Bullying is a form of violence and can be experienced in any setting: at school, at the playground, on the street or in the mall, and even at home between siblings. Bullying is a gesture, intervention, or comment, usually repetitive, that threatens, hurts, humiliates or causes frustration to another person. Bullying can cause distress to the victim.

In a bullying situation, a person is under the control of another person or group and has difficulty defending themselves. Bullying is not just a fight between friends, a one-time event or teasing that everyone enjoys.

Bullying can turn everyday activities, like walking to school or eating lunch in the cafeteria, into complete nightmares. Young people who are bullied, as well as those who adopt these behaviours, are vulnerable to behavioural, emotional, and academic problems.<sup>1</sup>

1 Espelage & Swearer. (2003). Research on School Bullying and Victimization: What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go From Here? *School Psychology Review*, 32(3), 365-383. Repéré à: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02796015.2003.12086206>

Schwartz & Gorman. (2003). Community violence exposure and children's academic functioning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 163-173. Repéré à: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.1.163>.

### Examples of Bullying<sup>2</sup>:

- A group of students pick on a student on a daily basis by stealing their lunch box or personal belongings. The student does not report them for fear of reprisals.
- Recurring and discriminatory comments are made online or in person about a student who is perceived to be different. These spiteful comments lead to anxiety in the victim, fits in the face of their powerlessness, withdrawal to avoid the attacks, or voluntary or forced isolation.
- A student regularly receives texts that belittle them. The student no longer wants to go to school so as to avoid those who are sending these messages. The student wants to drop out of school.
- Students make fun of one of their teachers for being overweight in an online video. The teacher suffers the consequences in their personal life.
- A group of students often mock a student with Down syndrome when the student gets off the bus.
- A coach at the arena repeatedly insults and threatens a young referee during an inter-school field hockey game. Some parents follow suit and rub it in. The young referee becomes increasingly nervous and hesitant.

It is also possible that the person may not be fully aware that they are being bullied. For instance, a student with a disability may have difficulty expressing their distress. These actions, whether deliberate or not, with or without intent to harm or injure, can still be experienced as bullying by the target person and can have a negative impact on their integrity and self-esteem.

### What is Conflict?<sup>3</sup>

Conflict is an opposition between two or more people, students, or adults. Conflict is neither good nor bad; it is the way in which it is handled that can lead to violence or bullying. This opposition occurs when these people do not share the same point of view. Conflict generally opposes people with equal strength and power.

In a conflict, people feel free to argue, to give their opinions and points of view. None of the people involved perceives a threat to their integrity and none indicates a willingness or gives the impression of wanting to dominate the other. While discussions may be vigorous, exchanges generally remain respectful.

It is important that each party listen to the other and try to find a solution to prevent the conflict from escalating into violence or intimidation. If no resolution of the conflict is apparent, those involved or those who witness a disrespectful relationship should inform a member of the school staff to seek support.

### Examples of Conflicts:

- Two students have a lively discussion about the choice of cardboard color for their poster
- Two groups of students argue about whether Côté's goal was valid
- A parent opposes a student on the governing board because they strongly disagree on the relevance and cost of a school outing.

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2 Ministère de la Famille. Examples of bullying situations in different environments.  
Retrieved at: <https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/en/intimidation/definition/Pages/exemples-situations-intimidation-differents-milieux.aspx>

3 Centre de services scolaires des Draveurs. How to differentiate: Bullying, violence, and conflict?  
[https://oiseaubleu.cssd.gouv.qc.ca/application/files/7616/0407/9991/Comment\\_distinguer.pdf](https://oiseaubleu.cssd.gouv.qc.ca/application/files/7616/0407/9991/Comment_distinguer.pdf)



**Examples of questions to ask yourself in order to distinguish conflict from actions that may lead to violence or bullying<sup>4</sup>:**

1. Is either party trying to get the upper hand at all costs?
2. Is either party using some form of physical coercion to subdue or discredit the other in order to achieve their ends?
3. In this type of relationship, has a power struggle developed with the use of threats, fear, humiliation, and exclusion?
4. Are they feeling apprehensive, afraid, anxious, distressed?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, these may be behaviours, if repetitive, that could lead to bullying. Assess the severity of the incident in terms of its impact and duration over time.

**d. Where is School?**

Children are considered to be in school when they are receiving services provided by the school service centre and its facilities under the Education Act, i.e.:

- Inside the school
- On the exterior grounds
- In school transportation services arranged by the school board (public transit, bus company, etc.)
- In food and accommodation facilities organized by the school service centre
- On the daycare and early childhood education premises, even if these are not located in the school

- During extracurricular activities offered by the institutions
- During periods of supervision of students in all services offered by the School Board and its institutions under the Education Act.

While the web is not in itself a physical space attached to the school, it remains a place where young people meet and socialize. What was started online can affect school life and greatly impact students involved and all witnesses. Nowadays, it is common practice for the school to intervene in problems that spread over the web when they affect students' lives at school, just as it must intervene wherever it is responsible for the students' well-being.

**e. How Do I Tell if My Child is Involved in a Violent or Bullying Situation?**

It is important to know how to recognize the signs and intervene with your child when they experience, witness, or engage in violence or bullying. Keep in mind, however, that these signs are only **indicators**. Your child may not show any of these signs. Or it may not be related to violence or bullying at school, but if it is, encourage your child to talk. Good and regular communication about their experiences is your main asset to follow them in what they are going through at school or elsewhere.

**i. My Child is Experiencing Violence or Bullying**

Here are some signs that may indicate that your child is facing violence or bullying:

- Your child is showing symptoms of anxiety or depression. Your child seems sad, unhappy, and easily irritable.
- They suddenly lose interest in activities they used to enjoy.

<sup>4</sup> Cainrduff, K. (2014). Is it just bickering or is it bullying?  
Retrieved at: <https://www.nannysecours.com/developpement-de-lenfant/simple-chicane-denfants-intimidation/>

- Their self-esteem now seems low: they feel like a loser at school, they compare themselves to others and believe others are better than them.
- They are reluctant to go to certain places such as school, the mall, or the playground.
- They cease all activities on the Internet and social networks abruptly.
- Academic performance drops inexplicably.
- They often tell you that they feel sick, that they do not want to go to school.
- They have suicidal thoughts, urges to run away, or drop out of school.

Parents must act positively towards their child when faced with a situation of bullying or violence<sup>5</sup>. Here is what you can do:

- Stay calm, your child needs reassurance.
- Take the time to listen to your child.
- Ask them to describe the situation to you in detail.
- Write down the facts they tell you.
- Do not blame your child.
- Reassure your child that you will be there for them in this situation.
- Encourage your child to report the abuser(s). Let them know that there is nothing wrong with doing this and that it takes courage to do it.
- If possible, encourage them to stay with friends they can count on. They are less likely to be bullied and will be better able to defend themselves in a group.
- Show that you are supportive and that you will work together with the school to find a solution.

If you see your child being bullied online, tell them:

- To stop responding to bullying messages immediately. The person who is bullying them expects just that.
- Avoid sending an insulting or threatening message, as it could backfire and get your child into more trouble.
- To block the addresses of people who bully them. From social networks to email addresses and phone numbers, it is possible to block people, addresses or numbers.
- To report the situation to an adult they trust at school (e.g., principal, psychoeducator, teacher, daycare staff).
- To trace the origin of the bullying messages.
- To save all bullying messages they receive, whether by e-mail, text message or instant messaging, in order to build a file if necessary.
- To report messages to the sites where they are received.




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<sup>5</sup> See the appendix for a list of resources for parents on this topic.

## ii. My Child Witnesses Violence or Bullying

If your child confides in you and reports a situation of violence or bullying that they have witnessed, it is important to have a discussion with them about the role they can play in helping a peer who is going through this type of situation.

You also have a role to play. Listen carefully to your child and advise them on what to do, for example:

- Tell your child that it is normal for them to feel uncomfortable in this situation and that it is okay to talk to you about it.
- Explain that people who bully usually need an audience. Without an audience, they have less power.
- Discuss with them the important role they have to play in this situation and that their reactions may encourage or discourage the perpetrator of bullying or violence.
- Let them know that they can intervene directly if they feel that other witnesses will support them or, if not, that they can ask an adult to intervene.
- Offer to support the young person who is being bullied; invite them to a friend's group, show support, reassure them, etc. This will help.
- Suggest that he or she tell an adult at school whom they trust (e.g., teacher, psychologist, psychoeducator, special care counsellor, coach, supervisor, janitor, etc.).
- Remind them that they can always go to the school principal to report violence and bullying.
- Ask whether they would like you to accompany them in this process.
- Discuss the importance of always refusing to forward or send an image, video or message that is offensive to someone.

- Remind them that it is important to report acts of violence and bullying they witness, even if they are not directly involved, and that this does not make them a "tattletale". The young person who is subjected to this violence could be very grateful and they will be acting as a responsible citizen.

## iii. My Child is Being Violent or is a Bully

Here are some signs that may indicate that your child is engaging in violence or bullying:

- The child has a strong need to dominate.
- Lack of interpersonal skills (impulsiveness, low empathy, poor emotional control, etc.).
- Tends to use aggression to resolve conflict.
- They misinterpret certain social situations: for example, they perceive hostility where there is none.
- They show little remorse and have trouble showing compassion.
- Often conveys a false image of self-assurance and confidence.

If the school contacts you to tell you that your child is being violent or is being a bully, you must listen to the facts that are brought to your attention. Your discussions with the staff and your collaboration will help ensure that the problem is dealt with quickly. Find out what resources are available at school and in the community for help.

Here is what you can do to intervene positively to help your child:

- Stay calm and listen to what your child has to say.
- Let your child know that you are taking the situation very seriously.
- Discuss with your child the seriousness and consequences of their actions or words for them and for the person who is experiencing them.

- Impose a consequence that you feel is appropriate to the situation.
- Work with school staff to resolve the issue quickly.
- Offer the help they need.
- Work with them to see how they can express their feelings and address their needs without harming others.
- Discuss any examples of bullying they see on television, in a movie, video game, etc., and the impact this has on people in order to build their compassion.
- Remind them of the importance of being respectful of people regardless of diversity (e.g., sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical appearance, or religion).
- Remember that your own behaviours are examples for them.



For assistance, see the attached list of resources, guides,  
and community organizations.

TACKLING BULLYING AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS IS A COLLECTIVE AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. EACH PUBLIC OR PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION HAS THE OBLIGATION TO ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO COMBAT BULLYING AND VIOLENCE.



### a. Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Plan

On June 12, 2012, the National Assembly passed the Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools<sup>6</sup>. This Act defines the responsibilities and duties of students, parents, school staff, principals, governing boards, School Boards and the Student Ombudsman. The fight against bullying and violence in schools is a collective and shared responsibility. Every public and private educational institution has an obligation to adopt and implement an anti-bullying and antiviolence plan.

This plan is an essential document in the efforts of all schools in Quebec to stop violence and bullying. It includes measures to prevent bullying in the school and actions to be taken to intervene to deal with a situation, whether it is witnessed by a student, teacher, other school staff, parent or any other person (Education Act, section 75.1).

The school principal, with the participation of school staff members, has the obligation to develop the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan and submit it to the School Board for approval. A document explaining the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan must also be provided to parents. It is usually available on the school's website.

The anti-bullying and antiviolence plan must include the following information:

- The preventive measures taken by the school to:
  - fight all forms of bullying or violence motivated by, but not limited to, racism, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, homophobia, disability, or physical characteristic
  - avoid repetition of problematic behaviour
  - promote the establishment and maintenance of a healthy and safe learning environment
  - encourage parental collaboration in the fight against bullying and violence.
- Intervention methods for:
  - Reacting to a statement, report or complaint from a child, parent or caregiver concerning a display of violence or bullying
  - Applying disciplinary measures based on the seriousness of the incident
  - Supporting and guiding the students involved
  - Maintaining confidentiality.

<sup>6</sup> Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools.  
Retrieved at: <http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2012C19A.PDF>



- An assessment or overview of the situation, based on the school's analysis of the situation and the data compiled during the previous year:
  - Violent or bullying behaviour
  - Effectiveness of interventions
  - Reports and complaints filed by parents
  - The number of interventions by the Student Ombudsman
  - Recommendations for the coming year.

#### CHECKLIST

Learn about the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan at your child's school. It is usually available on the school's website. If it is not, ask your school office for it.

### b. How Do I Report to the School?

If the situation arouses a lot of emotion in you, be sure to calm down before contacting the school. Always:

- Pay attention to your child's behaviour
- Avoid intervening directly with the other students involved
- Avoid any act of retaliation or revenge that could backfire on your child
- Avoid making accusations to discredit the school or school personnel in front of your child
- Be prepared to collaborate with the teacher and the school.

You may disagree with the school's way of doing things, in which case express your opinions by remaining calm and suggesting other strategies. Together you will have a better chance of solving the problem.

When you learn that violent or bullying behaviour has occurred, you must act immediately. The harmful consequences of violence and bullying for your child's development require that you act immediately upon learning about it. Report the incident to your child's teacher or the school staff responsible at the time of the incident as outlined in your school's anti-bullying and violence plan.

Knowledge and understanding of common goals at the outset of communication, a positive, solutions-oriented attitude, a lack of blame and blame-seeking, mutual respect and shared responsibility foster adult collaboration for the benefit of the child<sup>7</sup>.

After asking your child about the facts (who, when, since when, where, how, etc.), you can:

- Talk to the adult (teacher, school staff, coach, or anyone else) who may be aware of the situation and can help your child deal with it.
- Arrange a follow-up meeting with that person so that you can monitor progress and adjust if necessary.
- Write down the names of the people contacted, the dates, the content of the exchanges and the commitments made, including yours.

Adults who work at the school must intervene when the safety and well-being of the children are at stake<sup>8</sup>.

School staff must use the same approach with all students, paying particular attention to students with special needs due to their disability or the adaptation or learning difficulties they face<sup>9</sup>.

7 Beaumont, Lavoie et Couture. (2010). Les pratiques collaboratives en milieu scolaire. Retrieved at: [https://cires.ulaval.ca/sites/default/files/guide\\_sec\\_nouvelle\\_version.pdf](https://cires.ulaval.ca/sites/default/files/guide_sec_nouvelle_version.pdf)

8 MÉES. Bullying and violence at school. Educators. Intervene. You are part of the solution. Retrieved at: <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/current-initiatives/bullying-and-violence-in-the-schools/act-to-stop-violence-and-bullying/educators/intervene/>

9 Beaumont, C., Lavoie, J. et C. Couture. Idem.

### **c. When and How Do I Report to the School Principal?**

The principal should be notified if a situation persists or worsens after it has been reported to the teacher or school staff responsible at the time of the incident.

Refer to your school's anti-bullying and antiviolence plan. You will find information there to guide you in how to report it.

To report to the administration, the parent may:

- Call the administration
- Request a face-to-face meeting
- Complete the school report form

The important information to provide is:

- Your child's name, age, grade, teacher's name
- The names of the children involved, the events, the acts committed
- The names of the adults responsible for supervision
- The locations where events took place and when the situation began
- The steps taken before reporting the situation
- The measures that have been agreed upon and implemented by the school and by you since the report
- Your suggestions and requests for help in resolving the problem and those of your child
- Any other steps you have taken or are considering taking, if applicable.

**GOOD PRACTICE:** Keep a record of all information regarding your exchanges with the school and keep a copy of all documents you have sent and received from the school.

When an incident is reported, the following actions **should** be taken by the administration:

- Deal with all bullying and violence reports and complaints in a timely manner (Education Act, s 96.12).
- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained at every stage of the handling of all reports and complaints of bullying and violence (Education Act, s. 75.1, 6).
- Consider the welfare of the students directly involved (Education Act, art. 96.12).
- Communicate immediately with the parents of affected students to inform them of the measures set out in the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan (Education Act, art. 96.12).
- Inform parents of their right to request the assistance of the person designated by the School Board for this purpose (Education Act, s. 96.12).
- For each bullying and violence complaint, send a brief report to the Director General of the School Board, outlining the nature of the events that occurred and the follow-up (Education Act, s. 96.12).

The administration **could** also, among other things:

- Mandate a trained school staff member to intervene in these situations.
- Meet with the young person who is experiencing violence or bullying and offer them the necessary support and guidance depending on the context.
- Implementing protective measures while ensuring that they receive support so that they can learn to react appropriately to these difficult situations (e.g., making friends, clearly expressing disagreement, asserting themselves, developing their talents to strengthen their image among peers).
- Intervene with the person(s) who is (are) bullying, ensuring that they receive support to help them develop more appropriate and respectful behaviours.

- Meet with witnesses and offer them support and guidance depending on the situation: teach them intervention strategies for acting as witnesses, without putting themselves in danger.
- Involve parents in seeking solutions for their child.
- Follow up on interventions according to the school's established procedures.
- If necessary, put in place an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for students who are experiencing, witnessing, or committing violent behaviour or bullying.
- Use the professional resources of the school and the community for the students involved.

A meeting with the administration will allow parents to help find solutions. Collaboration between the school and the parents is necessary for a quick and effective resolution of the situation. It is important to make every effort to stay in communication with the school, because it is your child's well-being that is at stake.

If you believe that a teacher may have committed **serious misconduct** in the performance of their duties or acted in a **manner that reflects poorly** on the honour or dignity of the teaching profession with respect to your child, contact the Minister of Education: <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/home/>

#### d. How Do I Make a Complaint with the School Board?<sup>10-11</sup>

It may not be possible to agree or implement the measures agreed upon with the school. If actions are not taken by the school or fail to stop the violence or bullying, or if communication with the administration about the situation does not work after several attempts on your part, you can make a complaint to the School Board.

Each School Board has a number of different avenues that can be used to deal with bullying and violence and to ensure that the complaint process is followed. The School Board must, among other things, appoint a person to be responsible for the complaint review process. This person may be the secretary general, or another person designated to handle complaints. Their role is to ensure that the rights of students or their parents are respected and that their complaints are dealt with diligently.

To find the person responsible for the complaint examination procedure, consult the *Regulation on the complaint examination procedure or the complaint examination procedure* from your School Board. Each School Board has the obligation to make this document available to the public that will guide you through the next steps. You will find it on the website of your School Board. If it is not there, make a request to administration.

10 Regulation respecting the complaint examination procedure established by a school board. Retrieved at: <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cr/l-13.3,%20r.%207.1>

11 Inspired by the Regulation respecting the complaint examination procedure, CSS des Chênes. <https://www.cssdeschenes.gouv.qc.ca/documents/notre-organisation/politiques-reglements/REG-05.pdf>

It is possible to communicate verbally or in writing with the person responsible for complaints. Like the complaint to the administration, your complaint should contain information that will enable the person in charge to obtain the information necessary for their review, including:

- the full name, address, and telephone number of the complainant
- the identification of the school against which the complaint is being made
- a fairly accurate statement of the facts
- the reasons supporting the allegation of violation of the complainant's rights.

- The School Board must ensure that the complainant, upon request, receives assistance in the formulation of the complaint or in any action related to it.
- The complainant has the right to be accompanied by a person of their choice at any stage of the complaint process.
- The School Board must take the necessary steps to ensure the confidentiality of the complainant's process and to avoid any form of reprisal against the complainant.

Following the complaint, the person responsible for handling complaints will analyze the different elements of the complaint and give the concerned parties an opportunity to present their observations. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the review of their complaint within the maximum time limit established by the procedure or regulation in effect at each School Board.

The complainant will also receive a notice reminding them of their right to contact the Student Ombudsman, if they are dissatisfied with the review of their complaint or the outcome of the review, and informing them of the documents or information necessary to quickly access the Student Ombudsman's services.

## e. How Do I Make a Complaint to the Student Ombudsman?<sup>12</sup>

The parent may also contact the Student Ombudsman at any point during the complaint process. Usually, it is recommended that a complaint be forwarded to the secretary general of the School Board or the person responsible for complaints before it is forwarded to the Student Ombudsman. The Student Ombudsman may also intervene **at any stage of the complaint review process** when they feel that their intervention is necessary to prevent harm to the complainant.

The Student Ombudsman first assesses the admissibility of the complaint and determines the legitimacy of the complaint. The Student Ombudsman will contact the complainant and the person that is the subject of the complaint to allow them to present their own observations and information on the situation. The Student Ombudsman will then **advise** the Board of Directors on the merits of the complaint and propose appropriate corrective measures.

It is important to note that the Board of Directors is not bound by the recommendations of the Student Ombudsman. It is up to the Board of Directors to decide whether or not to act on the Student Ombudsman's recommendation and to inform the complainant in writing.

### CONTACT DETAILS OF THE STUDENT OMBUDSMAN

Each School Board has their own Ombudsman. This person is appointed by the Board of Directors and is separate from the School Boards. Contact information for the Student Ombudsman can be found on the School Boards' websites. Links to contact the Student Ombudsman for each School Board are provided in the appendix.

<sup>12</sup> Regulation respecting the complaint examination procedure established by a school board. Retrieved at: <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cr/l-13.3,%20r.%207.1>

## f. What Other Recourse is There if the Situation Persists?

Apart from the recourses provided for in the Education Act, legal recourse may be taken in situations of intimidation or violence. Consult a lawyer to assess the relevance of taking legal action against the person(s) involved.

You may also file a complaint with the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse **if you believe that your child is being harassed or discriminated against** under the Charter of Human Rights. You will find more information and how to reach the Commission on the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse website:

<http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca/fr/plainte/Pages/default.aspx>.



If you feel that your child's safety is at risk or that your child is a victim of a criminal act (harassment, sexual assault, threats, assault, extortion, etc.), do not hesitate to contact the police by calling 911.

This is your recourse, regardless of the school's interventions to counter violence and bullying. Even when in doubt, do not hesitate to call the police.

The police officer will process the complaint received by analyzing the information collected to determine if it is an offence under the Criminal Code:

- If it is not a criminal offence, the bullying may be addressed through a school's anti-bullying and anti-violence plan and managed by the school principal.
- If it is a criminal offence, the police officer will continue the investigation in accordance with applicable laws.

The police may also refer you to school resources or a community organization for further support. The police may also organize preventative meetings at the school when there is a problem. For more information on police presence in schools, please refer to the Frame of Reference for Police Presence in Educational Institutions in the Appendix.



THE FAMILY, AS WELL AS THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, MUST COLLABORATE AND INTERVENE EFFECTIVELY BY IMPLEMENTING POSITIVE PRACTICES IN THE SUPPORT OF YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND BULLYING.



### a. How to Intervene Effectively in Situations of Violence or Bullying?<sup>13</sup>

Mobilization of all concerned is necessary to stop violence and bullying. Punishment alone will not teach children better social behaviours: make sure that interventions involve more than punishment. The school also has the responsibility of socializing the students and ensuring that they learn positive social skills.

#### i. With a Child Who is a Victim of Violence or Bullying

Being subjected to violence or bullying can make your child feel helpless, among other things. It is therefore important to empower your child by making them aware of their strengths and abilities and encouraging them to act. This empowerment does not have to be directly related to the bullying situation. It is a matter of involving young people in rewarding activities through which they can regain confidence and assert themselves. For example:

- By participating in extracurricular activities
- By getting involved in a school group
- By developing their talents or passions
- By developing positive relationships with other young people.

It should be noted that if the situation has been going on for some time, it is normal for the child to delay reporting. The more the child has been affected by the situation, the longer it will take them to recover.

#### ii. With a Child Who Commits Acts of Violence or Bullying

Treating a young person who commits acts of violence or bullying as a delinquent or persecutor is detrimental to their progress to acting differently. It is best to separate the child from their behaviours and focus on their **inappropriate actions**. Explain to the child that their behaviour is unacceptable and that their acts of violence or bullying are harmful not only to others but also to themselves.

Blaming or purely punitive approaches should also be avoided. Punishment alone does not teach better behaviour. It is important to focus on positive preventive practices that help children meet their needs (e.g., acknowledgement, self-esteem) without harming anyone and develop compassion for their peers.

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from "Video Clip 4 - Intervening Together" from the Ministère de la Famille's training on bullying.

The following are effective coaching approaches that are recommended:

- An educational approach, for example:
  - Showing the child appropriate behaviour
  - Explaining how to manage conflict
  - Giving the child strategies to assert themselves when they are upset.
- Behavioural change, for example:
  - Involving the child in welcoming a new student into the classroom.
- Restorative justice, for example:
  - Encouraging the child to invite the person they have voluntarily excluded to join their team for a game or work together.

## **b. School-Family Collaboration**<sup>14</sup>

Collaboration between school and family requires a relationship based on trust, mutual respect, acceptance, equality, openness, and willingness to listen. Working together makes it possible to achieve common goals such as the child's well-being and educational success.

It is crucial to develop a trusting relationship with school staff before a problem situation arises. Parental involvement<sup>15</sup> and smooth collaboration with the school must be encouraged.

Here are some ways to help build a relationship of trust with the school, long before difficulties arise:

- Meetings, formal or informal, with school personnel such as:
  - Impromptu "hallway" meetings
  - Telephone calls
  - Report card meetings
  - Volunteering at school, in the classroom or on field trips.
- Carrying out projects that make you feel welcome at school<sup>16</sup>.
- Participating in various parent training sessions offered by the school.
- Participating in the Parent Participation Organization or on the governing board<sup>17</sup>.

Such relationships, established in a supportive environment, should give you the confidence to express yourself freely without feeling judged. It is under these conditions that complementarity and complicity can develop between you and the staff who work with your child.

### **MOST IMPORTANTLY, WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW IS THAT**

- Parents are essential, since they are the ones who ultimately make the decisions concerning their child.
- Parents are valuable collaborators.
- Their actions contribute to fostering a positive school climate for their child's development.
- School-family coherence facilitates interventions with children and better assurance of positive results for the child.

14 Ministry of Education. "Act to Stop Violence and Bullying at School". <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/contenus-communs/school-administrators-public-and-private-schools/bullying-and-violence-in-the-schools/act-to-stop-violence-and-bullying/>

15 Beaumont, C., Lavoie, J. et C. Couture. (2010). Idem.

16 Beaumont, Lavoie et Couture. (2010). Idem.

17 Paquin, M. et M. Drolet. (2006). La violence au préscolaire et au primaire: les défis et les enjeux de la collaboration entre l'école et les parents. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

PREVENTION ACTIVITIES PROMOTE A POSITIVE, CARING, AND SAFE SCHOOL CULTURE. THEY ALSO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BULLYING INCIDENTS.



### a. What is a Safe and Healthy Environment?

In order to create and maintain a healthy and safe environment, each school must prepare two documents that specify the actions to be implemented:

- Rules of conduct and safety measures
- The anti-bullying and antiviolence plan (discussed previously)

Rules of conduct and safety measures are proposed by the school principal and approved by the school's governing board, which includes parents. The rules of conduct and safety measures are presented to the students during a civic education activity that the school principal must organize annually in collaboration with the school staff. They are also forwarded to the students' parents at the beginning of the school year (Education Act, s. 76).

The rules must include:

- The attitudes and behaviors to be adopted by the student in all circumstances
- The gestures and exchanges that are prohibited at all times, regardless of the means used, including those taking place via the Internet and when using school transportation
- The disciplinary sanctions applicable depending on the seriousness or repetitive nature of the prohibited acts.

In a healthy and safe environment, preventive measures are established to:

- Inform young people
- Enable them to break the silence in a safe manner
- Support them and allow them to regain control over their lives
- Strengthen social skills through activities that encourage and foster respect and civic mindedness (theatre, sports, music).

**DID YOU KNOW THAT** the rules of conduct, often referred to as "the Code of Conduct", are often found in the school agenda and on the school website? And that they are most effective when children are involved in their development? Read them and discuss them with your child.

### b. What Prevention Initiatives Could be Undertaken ...

#### i. At School

Each year, in order to ensure a healthy living environment free of any form of violence or bullying, the school:

- Must organize activities for students to raise awareness of citizenship and respect, as well as to prevent violence and bullying, etc. (EA, s. 76)

- Must inform parents and students of the procedures for making a report or complaint (Education Act, s. 75.1)
- May include the signing by students and their parents of a declaration of commitment to respect the rules of conduct
- May seek the active collaboration of parents for the betterment of the community and the prevention of violence and bullying in the school.

## ii. By the Students

Students also have a role to play in helping to maintain a healthy and safe school environment. Thus, the Education Act (EA ss. 18.1 and 18.2) states that the student must:

- Behave in a civic-minded and respectful manner towards school staff and peers
- Contribute to a safe and healthy learning environment
- Participate in school activities related to citizenship, bullying and violence prevention and intervention
- Take care of school property.

## iii. By the Governing Board

The governing board has a role to play in creating a healthy and safe environment in the school. It must adopt the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan and keep it up to date. The governing board ensures that the document explaining the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan distri-

buted to parents is clear and easily accessible (Education Act, s. 75.1). The governing board also approves the rules of conduct and safety measures proposed by the school principal (Act, s. 76).

The following are examples of what parent members of the governing board can do to work with the school to prevent and respond effectively to situations of violence and bullying:

- Ensure that all parents receive a copy of the anti-bullying plan, including its annual assessment
- Ensure the availability of a translation for allophone parents
- Present and explain the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan at the general meeting
- Ensure that parents are aware of the proper steps for dealing with incidents
- Involve all parents in the analysis of the school's situation with respect to bullying and violence and in the evaluation of the anti-bullying and antiviolence plan, using surveys, for instance
- Provide training for parents
- Involve community partners
- Provide a system for anonymous reporting by telephone, email, or post office box
- Publicize the free support offered to all parents by the advisory services of the Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees.





Preventing and reducing violence and bullying requires everyone's involvement. Students, parents, teachers, professionals, support staff, daycare staff, drivers, crossing guards, school principal, the School Board... all have a key role to play in preventing violence and bullying at school. The collaboration of all of these people is key to successful intervention and prevention measures.



# BULLYING

## AVAILABLE RESSOURCES

### FOR ADDITIONNAL SUPPORT

- (In French) Ligne Parents – 1 800 361-5085 – [www.ligneparents.com](http://www.ligneparents.com)
- Kids Help Phone – 1 800 668-6868 – <https://kidshelpphone.ca>
- Tel-Jeunes – 1 800 263-2266 – <https://www.teljeunes.com/Home>
- NeedHelpNow.ca - cyberintimidation – <https://www.aidezmoisvp.ca/app/en/index>
- Sport'Aide – 1 833 211-AIDE (2433) – <https://sportaide.ca/en/need-help/>
- Interligne – 1 888 555-1010 – <https://interligne.co/en/>
- Finding a CLSC – <https://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/clsc/>

### TO LEARN MORE

- Ministère de l'Éducation  
<http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/current-initiatives/bullying-and-violence-in-the-schools/>
- Ministère de la Famille  
<https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/en/intimidation/Pages/index.aspx>
- Éducaloi  
<https://educaloi.qc.ca/en/web-guide/bullying-law/>
- PrevNet - Canada's Healthy Relationships Hub  
<https://www.prevnet.ca/bullying>
- Canada's National Tipline for Reporting the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children  
<https://www.cyberaide.ca/en/>
- Education Act  
<https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/l-13.3>
- Contact Information for Student Ombudsmen  
<https://www.quebec.ca/en/government/ministere/education/contact-information-for-the-ministry/complaints/contact-information-for-student-ombudsmen>
- Sûreté du Québec  
<https://www.sq.gouv.qc.ca/en/the-surete-du-quebec/>
- Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de jeunesse  
<https://www.cdpcj.qc.ca/en>
- (In French) Chaire de recherche Bien-être à l'école et prévention de la violence  
<https://www.violence-ecole.ulaval.ca>
- (In French) Cadre de référence sur la présence policière dans les établissements d'enseignement  
[http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/dpse/adaptation\\_serv\\_compl/presencepoliciere.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_compl/presencepoliciere.pdf)

## EXAMPLES OF ANTI-BULLYING AND ANTI-VIOLENCE PLAN

- Sunshine Academy, Lester B. Pearson School Board  
[https://sunshineacademy.lbpsb.qc.ca/Portals/sunshine\\_new/Documents/ABAV-Plan.pdf](https://sunshineacademy.lbpsb.qc.ca/Portals/sunshine_new/Documents/ABAV-Plan.pdf)
- Lake of Two Mountains High School, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board  
<https://ltmhs.ca/files/ABAV%202021-2022%20Final.pdf>

## OTHER RESSOURCES FOR PARENTS

- Fondation Jasmin Roy  
Information Guide for Parents on School Violence and Bullying  
<https://fondationjasminroy.com/en/initiative/information-guide-for-parents-on-school-violence-and-bullying/>
- Cyberbullying Hurts: Respect for Rights in the Digital Age (Guide for Parents)  
<http://fr.scribd.com/doc/116568800/CyberBullyingParentGuide-e-pdf>
- Keeping kids safe from bullying, cyberbullying, relationship violence and child abuse  
<https://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/violence-bullying-and-abuse-prevention/parents>
- Ami Québec, a Montréal-based organization that supports families of people suffering with mental illness.  
<http://amiquebec.org>

# AN EXAMPLE OF AN ANTI-VIOLENCE AND ANTI-BULLYING COMMITMENT STATEMENT AND TO RESPECT THE NORM OF CONDUCT

## Commitment Against Violence and Bullying

- We reject bullying and violence.
- We want a school where every person is respected.
- We demand that everyone does their part to help.

### Therefore,

We, the students of the school "*name of school*", We, the parents of the school "*name of school*", We, the staff of the school "*name of school*", We, the staff of the daycare "*name of daycare*", We, the community members,

### We are committed to act :

- by adopting respectful behaviours;
- by adhering to the values of tolerance, openness to others and acceptance that characterize Quebec society;
- by implementing solutions to prevent violence and bullying;
- by denouncing acts of intimidation and violence.

**In witness whereof, I have signed at "*city*", on this "*date*".**

---

Signature





Fédération  
des comités de parents  
du Québec

2263, boulevard Louis-XIV  
Québec (Québec) G1C 1A4  
Telephone: 418 667-2432  
Toll free: 1 800 463-7268  
Fax: 418 667-6713  
Email: [courrier@fcpq.qc.ca](mailto:courrier@fcpq.qc.ca)  
[www.fcpq.qc.ca](http://www.fcpq.qc.ca)

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