

Dignity for All Students Act: What Can Parents Do?

The Dignity for All Students Act implemented in July 2012, states that all students in public schools are entitled to safe and supportive environment free from discrimination and harassment. No student shall be subjected to harassment, discrimination, or bullying by school employees or by students on school property or at a school function. Bullying is a serious issue that every school in the nation faces. The Cheektowaga-Sloan Union Free School District has policies and procedures for addressing and intervening in instances of bullying. Parents play a key role in preventing and responding to bullying. Below are some quick facts and tips for parents.

What is bullying?

Although definitions of bullying vary, most experts agree that bullying involves:

- **Imbalance of Power:** people who bully use their power to control or harm and the people being bullied may have a hard time defending themselves
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** actions done by accident are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm
- **Repetition:** incidents of bullying happen to the same person over and over by the same person or group

What are the signs that a child is being bullied?

While bullying victims may try to hide what is going on there are a variety of ways to tell if your child being bullied. Symptoms include: depression, anxiety, safety concerns, sadness, aggression, academic issues, low self-esteem, lack of peer relations, and substance abuse.

According to StopBullying.gov, other warning signs may include:

- Comes home with damaged or missing clothing or other belongings
- Reports losing items such as books, electronics, clothing or jewelry
- Has unexplained injuries
- Complains frequently of headaches, stomachaches, or feeling sick
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams
- Has changes in eating habits
- Are very hungry after school from not eating their lunch
- Loses interest in visiting or talking with friends
- Is afraid of going to school or other activities with peers

What do I do if I suspect that my child being bullied?

- First, focus on your child. Listen and tell your child you are concerned and that you want to help. Be supportive and gather as much information as possible about what is happening (e.g. who? What? When? Where?). Write down as many details as you have. Address issues as soon as they arise.
- Work with your child's school. Contact your child's teacher, a school counselor or the principal and share concerns and provide specifics on how your child is being bullied. It is important that school personnel at all levels are aware of the situation in order to intervene in cases of student misbehavior
- Contact a Dignity Act Coordinator at your child's School:
 - JFK High School:** Mrs. Shedler x.1114 or Mrs. Guglielmi x. 1115
 - JFK Middle School:** Mrs. Shedler x.1114 or Mrs. Bracci x. 1135
 - Woodrow Wilson:** Mrs. Wilton x. 2115
 - Theodore Roosevelt:** Mrs. Bernas x. 3005