

How to Prevent and Respond to Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is harmful to Oregon youth and their communities. Unlike other types of bullying, the threatening, intimidation, harassment, and humiliation of cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day and reach youth anywhere. This is why [Oregon law](#) treats it as seriously as other threats of violence or harm.

What is cyberbullying?

- Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets.
- Cyberbullies often use hurtful words or share embarrassing pictures or videos through social media channels, chat rooms, video sites, texts, or emails.
- Cyberbullying involves sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It may include sharing personal or private information or images.
- Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.
- The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:
 - Social media, such as TikTok, X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube
 - Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile devices
 - Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
 - Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit
 - Email
 - Online gaming communities

What to do if you are a target of cyberbullying

- Don't blame yourself.
- Talk to a trusted adult.
- Don't retaliate with more cyberbullying. Bullies are often seeking a reaction.
- Block bullies on social media and [block texts](#) from them.
- Keep a record of cyberbullying. Proof of cyberbullying on your phone and/or computer can be used to prove that you are being harassed or threatened.
- Report offensive social media posts to the social media company.

- If you are being harassed by text by anonymous numbers, screenshot the text, block the number, and look it up in a reverse phone lookup app.

What to do if you witness cyberbullying

- Do NOT share posts, texts, images, or videos that hurt others.
- Support the person who is being bullied. Let them know that it's not their fault.
- Take a stand against cyberbullies and report their behavior. Most social media sites have made it easy to report posts that are inappropriate.

How to protect yourself from cyberbullying:

- Be careful with what personal information you share online. Be aware that anything you share privately via text or private message can be shared publicly.
- Don't let other people use your smartphone. Your digital devices contain personal information and social media accounts and passwords.
- Use [two-factor authentication](#).

What parents can do to protect their children and teens from experiencing cyberbullying

- Pre-teens and teens often don't share what is happening in their lives. Pay attention to any changes in your youth's mood, attitude, sleeping and eating patterns, and behavior.
- Make sure your child/teen feels loved and supported. Even more importantly, make regular time to listen to what is happening in their lives.
- Teach your child/teen how to protect their online information. Go over setting up stronger privacy settings and two-factor authentication in social media accounts and make sure they know how to report posts that they find hurtful and cruel.
- Have open and frank discussions about bullying and cyberbullying. Be clear about your expectations about how they protect their online information, and that you are there to provide support when help is needed. Communicate that concerns of bullying or cyberbullying can be brought to you at any time.
- If your child/teen experiences cyberbullying, encourage them to not retaliate, and calmly work with them to develop a plan of action.
- If the problem continues help your child/teen collect evidence and discuss how to report offensive posts, images, and videos to the social media company, and the proper authorities.
- Report and block harassing phone numbers in a [community phone book](#).

What parents can do to prevent cyberbullying

- Have open conversations about bullying and cyberbullying. Be clear that it is harmful, and unacceptable.
- Give clear instructions regarding how to respond to cyberbullying including not sharing or reposting information about others.
- Encourage "offline time." Schedule a disconnect period each day that may include family meals or relaxation time.
- Make sure your child/teen is aware that their "digital reputation" matters, and that cyberbullying can have long-term personal and legal consequences.

Additional Resources

- [Cyberbullying Research Center](#) Resource with tips on digital dating abuse, standing up to and responding to cyberbullying, and more.
- [What is Cyberbullying?](#) Resource describing cyberbullying and providing resources for prevention and reporting.
- [ConnectSafely](#): A nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy, and security.
- [Selfies, Social and Screens: Navigating Virtual Spaces for Youth - Mental Health America 2023 Back-to-School Toolkit](#): A compendium of resources for school staff and parents regarding virtual environments, and mental health implications.
- [Cyberbullying Research Center](#): Provides a compendium of resources for educators, parents, youth, and communities.