



Cyberbullying Proactive Checklist

Proactive Steps to Protect Against Cyberbullying

Create a Proactive Game Plan

Create a proactive game plan to address cyberbullying. Foster a deeply connected, loved, and supported environment where people feel safe to report when they are victims of cyberbullying. Proactive plans should include the following:

- A safe environment where victims are not blamed or punished for reporting that they are being cyberbullied
- Understanding of what constitutes cyberbullying
- What evidence to collect and how
- A copy of the school's full harassment, intimidation, and bullying policy
- Knowledge of how to file a written complaint and cyberbullying report with the school principal or administrator (verbal isn't enough)
- Knowledge of how to report cyberbullying to law enforcement
- A game plan for collecting evidence and backing it up locally and in the cloud
- Knowledge on how to file a complaint with the Ohio Department of Education if the report is not taken seriously

Identify the Warning Signs

Identify the warning signs that someone is being cyberbullied:

- Noticeable increases or decreases in device use, including texting.
- Exhibiting emotional responses (laughter, anger, upset) to what is happening on their device.
- Hiding their screen or device when others are near, and avoids discussion about what they are doing on their device.
- Social media accounts are shut down or new ones appear.
- Avoiding social situations, even those that were enjoyed in the past.
- Becoming withdrawn or depressed, or losing interest in people and activities.

Respond to Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying, and the response should begin by taking the same approach to address it as physical bullying:

- Support the person being bullied
- Address the bullying behavior of a participant
- Show that cyberbullying is taken seriously





Because cyberbullying happens online, responding to it also requires additional steps. If you think that someone is involved in cyberbullying, there are several things you can do:

- **Notice:** Recognize if there has been a change in mood or behavior and explore what the cause might be. Try to determine if these changes happen around the use of digital devices.
- **Talk:** Ask questions to learn what is happening, how it started, and who is involved.
- **Document:** Keep a record of what is happening and where. Take screenshots of harmful posts or content if possible. Most laws and policies note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records help to document it.
- **Report:** Most social media platforms and schools have clear policies and reporting processes. If a classmate is cyberbullying, report it to the school. You can also contact apps or social media platforms to report offensive content and have it removed. If someone has received physical threats, or if a potential crime or illegal behavior is occurring, report it to the police.
- **Support:** Peers, mentors, and trusted adults can sometimes intervene publicly to positively influence a situation where negative or hurtful content posts about someone. Public Intervention can include posting positive comments about the person targeted with bullying to try to shift the conversation in a positive direction. It can also help to reach out to the person who is bullying and the target of the bullying to express your concern. If possible, try to determine if more professional support is needed for those involved, such as speaking with a guidance counselor or mental health professional.

If you're a victim of cyberbullying, know;

1. **You are not alone:** Cyberbullying may make you feel isolated, stressed, anxious, depressed, and alone, but you are not. There are people that love you and care about you. There are pets that rely on your smiles, love, care and pets. Half of young people feel the same way you do as victims of cyberbullying themselves. You are not alone. Do not suffer in silence. Do not isolate yourself out of fear of repercussions. If you observe cyberbullying, do not allow it to go unchecked.
2. **It is not your fault:** Cyberbullying has much more to do with the bully's own unresolved personal issues and social skills than anything a victim might have done. Bullies often target victims because they perceive them as a threat, seek power through aggression, desire revenge, have unresolved past trauma, or are even sadists. The problem with bullying, including cyberbullying, lies with the bully, not the victim.

