

# Reminder note for parents of a student victim

## Parents of a student victim

### How do you recognize the signs that your child is being bullied?

A victim of intimidation or bullying will not necessarily show any physical injury. To be able to act, you have to stay attentive and tuned into your child to recognize the signs of intimidation.

- Does your child seem anxious and depressed (sad, unhappy, vague, easily annoyed, hopeless, etc.)?
- Does he or she suddenly lose interest in favourite activities?
- Is he or she suffering from low self-esteem, (doesn't fit in well at the school, sees others as better in comparison)?
- Is he or she afraid of going to certain places, such as school, the shopping mall or the playground?
- Has your child suddenly stopped using the Internet?
- Have school marks been lower for no apparent reason?
- Does your child often complain of feeling sick, and doesn't want to go to school?
- Has he or she expressed suicidal thoughts, the urge to drop out or to run away?

*These signs can also be present in victims of other forms of violence, like homophobia or racial discrimination.*

### As a concerned parent, you must do something.

**If you find out that your child is a victim of intimidation:**

- Stay calm, your child needs comfort.
- Take the time to listen.
- Ask the child to describe the incident in detail (you can take notes).
- Don't blame the child.
- Be reassuring and show the child you're on their side on this matter.

### How should you intervene on behalf of your child?

- Speak to your child's teacher, to the school office or to a school staff member, to a trainer or to any intervener who can be informed about the situation and who can help your child to resolve the problem. Act immediately.
- Encourage your child to identify his or her aggressor(s). Tell your child that there is nothing bad about naming names, that it takes courage to do this and is necessary to fix the problem and that any report will remain confidential
- Show that you're on their side and you're going to help your child to find a solution.
- Tell your child to avoid any reprisals or acts of vengeance which could backfire.
- If possible, encourage the child to stick to friends he or she can rely on. As part of a group, he or she is less likely to be bullied and will more be capable of defending himself or herself.
- Whenever possible, recommend avoiding places that are convenient to bullies.
- Remain attentive to the behaviour of your child and, after a few days, get back in touch with the interveners you previously contacted.
- If the situation causes distress in the daily functioning of your child, ask for a meeting with the school administration to discuss the situation.
- Don't wait for the situation to degenerate and make matters much worse

***At any time, you can contact the school administration to report an incident, whether your child is involved or not.***

## **Take measures to protect your child from cyberbullying.**

With the increased use of cellphones and wide accessibility to the Internet, intimidation very often occurs in cyberspace. You still have to act to help resolve the situation.

- Encourage your child to keep in touch with friends, not just online but in the real world.
- As best as you can, keep an eye on your child's online activities.
- Put the computer in a common area (in the lounge say, rather than in the child's room).
- Check if your child is afraid to go on the Internet or if his or her online access suddenly stops.
- Recommend that your child avoids places that are convenient for cyberbullies such as chat rooms, online games, etc.
- Keep in mind that children under 13 have no right to their own Facebook page.

## **If you notice that your child is a victim of cyberbullying, say to him or her:**

- **STOP** immediately responding to any messages of intimidation. Indeed, the cyberbully wants the victim to respond.
- **AVOID** sending an insulting or menacing reply, because it could come back to haunt you.
- **BLOCK** the address contact information of anyone threatening you. That includes on social networks, email or cellphone, where you can delete or individuals, addresses or numbers.
- **TALK** about the situation with an adult you can trust (e.g. parent, principal, teacher, psychologist, coach, caretaker, supervisor).
- **TRACK** the address (es) where threatening messages originate.
- **SAVE** all the threatening messages that you receive, whether by email, text or instant message.

*If you believe that the safety of your child is threatened or that he or she is a victim of a criminal act (harassment, sexual assault, threats, extortion, etc.), do not hesitate to contact the police. This is a recourse always open to you, whatever the steps the school has taken to counteract the bullying.*