



# DASA (Dignity for All Students Act) NEW

YORK STATE'S *DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT* (THE DIGNITY ACT) SEEKS TO PROVIDE THE STATE'S PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION, INTIMIDATION, TAUNTING, HARASSMENT, AND BULLYING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY, A SCHOOL BUS AND/OR AT A SCHOOL FUNCTION.

## BULLIES AND THEIR VICTIMS

**Watch for warning signs that your child might be the victim of bullying. Here are some questions to ask yourself:**

- Does my child fear going to school? Is my child anxious about school? Has my child been out sick a lot? Does my child often complain about not feeling well as a way of avoiding school?
- Have I noticed bruises on my child? When I ask my child about the bruises, what is the response?
- Does my child have friends? Who are the friends? Have I seen the way that they interact? Is my child submissive or withdrawn with other children?
- Does my child seem unhappy or insecure? Does my child talk about “nobody liking her” or “not having any friends?” Does my child talk about wanting to hurt someone or get back at someone?
- Does my child seem to have low self-esteem or self-confidence? Does my child have difficulty being assertive?

**Talking about being bullied may be a difficult thing to do with your child. Here are some suggestions:**

- Do not confront the suspected bully or bullies on your own. Your first instinct may be to protect your child and address the suspected bully directly. This may only serve to escalate the situation, and ultimately make things worse.
- Ask your child what takes place in school, what happens when there is free time, how they are feeling. Talk with your child about different aspects of school and how they feel about it.
- Provide your child with the opportunity to resolve the conflict on their own. Role-play with your child and discuss ways they can respond to a bully. Some possibilities might include walking away, telling an adult, or asking for help from peers.
- Teach your child that telling on those who bully is not considered tattling, and that everyone is a victim when the bully is allowed to treat others badly. Let your child know that by reporting bullying help will come and that support will come from you and from the school staff.
- Encourage your child to talk with friends about bullying. Bullies rarely target kids in groups, so maintaining a peer group that is unified may be helpful in avoiding being the target of bullying behavior.
- Report any incidents of bullying behaviors, even if your child is not the target of such behavior, to school officials. Engage school officials' help in monitoring and addressing these behaviors. This will show your child that you and others are committed to stopping all such behaviors.
- Seek outside help. Addressing bullying behavior and its consequences is a difficult task. Your school's psychologist, counselor, or social worker may be able to offer additional suggestions or work with your child in dealing with bullies.

**Watch for warning signs your child may be engaging in bullying behavior. Here are some questions to ask yourself:**

- Has my child ever been accused of being a bully at school or elsewhere?
- Has my child gotten into trouble for fighting (physically or verbally) with other children at school?
- Does my child become easily frustrated when he does not get his way? Is my child defiant or oppositional?
- Who are my child's friends? How does my child interact with others? Have I witnessed my child with other children? Is she dominant or aggressive?
- What does my child do with spare time? What are my child's hobbies?
- Does my child speak about other children as "stupid" or use other negative terms to describe others? Does my child talk about certain children "deserving" bad things to happen to them or showing little concern for others in bad situations?

**What you can do if you suspect your child is bullying others:**

- Become familiar with the anti-bullying policy at your child's school. Discuss school rules and behavior expectations with your child. Ensure that your child understands what behaviors are acceptable and what behaviors are unacceptable.
- Talk to your child, calmly and in a non-confrontational or accusatory tone about their bullying behaviors. Your child may be experiencing social or emotional difficulties that are difficult to handle. Some children may feel pressure to participate in bullying behavior in order to fit in with peers or to avoid being bullied themselves.
- Find out exactly what it is that your child has been doing. What has your child been accused of doing? What does your child *admit* to doing?
- Explain to your child why bullying behavior is unacceptable. Attempts should be made to explain how bullying affects others (victims, bystanders, school climate).
- Establish rules regarding aggressive behavior. Explain to your child that there will be consequences for these types of behaviors, such as losing privileges (consequences should be nonphysical in nature). Implement nonphysical consequences consistently when rules are violated.
- Report any incidents of bullying behaviors to school officials, even if your child is the one engaging in those behaviors. This teaches children that they are accountable for their own behavior. Engage school officials' help in monitoring and addressing these behaviors. This will show your child that you will not tolerate such behavior, and that you want to help your child avoid it.
- Seek outside help. Dealing with bullying behavior is difficult. Your school's psychologist, counselor, or social worker may be able to offer additional suggestions or work with your child to change behavior.
- Teach your child some alternatives to aggressive behavior such as asking for help, respecting others, and showing tolerance for those who are different. Praise your child for using alternative, appropriate behavior.