

Cyberbullying

The BSA policy on bullying says,

“Bullying is prohibited in Scouting. All forms of bullying violate the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Bullying is incompatible with the principles of Scouting and should be taken seriously whenever and wherever it occurs. Unit leaders should understand how to prevent bullying and be prepared to deal with it proactively and thoughtfully.”

- Bullying of any type, including cyberbullying, can devastate the target whether a lone bully participates or others witness or join the attack.

What is bullying?

- *Bullying* is harassment or aggressive behavior intended to intimidate, dominate, coerce, or hurt another person (the target) mentally, emotionally, or physically. It is **not** “just messing around,” and it is **not** “part of growing up.” Bullying is a form of victimization, not conflict. It is no more a “conflict” than is child abuse or domestic violence.

Forms of bullying:

- Verbal: name-calling, belittling, taunting
- Social: spreading rumors, destroying or manipulating friendships, excluding or ostracizing the target
- Physical: hitting, shoving, kicking, using physical coercion, intimidation through gestures
- Criminal: assault; sexual aggression
- Cyberbullying: using digital technology such as social media, cell phones, etc., to engage in the above kinds of behaviors.

What is cyberbullying?

- This rapidly growing form of bullying uses the power of the Internet, cellular networks, and social media to harass the target. According to NetSmartz, a BSA partner, types of cyberbullying include:
 - Flaming and trolling: sending or posting hostile messages intended to “inflame” the emotions of others
 - Happy-slapping: recording someone being harassed or bullied in a way that usually involves physical abuse, then posting the video online for public viewing
 - Identity theft/impersonation: stealing someone’s password and/or hijacking their online accounts to send or post incriminating or humiliating pictures, videos, or information
 - Photoshopping: doctoring digital images so that the main subject is placed in a compromising or embarrassing situation
 - Physical threats: sending messages that involve threats to a person’s physical safety
 - Rumor spreading: spreading gossip through email, text messaging, or social networking sites

Bullying prevention resources from the BSA:

- All BSA youth handbooks feature a section on youth protection that includes a discussion on cyberbullying and other forms of bullying. Parents and Scouts are supposed to read and discuss this material together.
- The *Troop Leader Guidebook* is a two-volume manual that replaces the *Scoutmaster Handbook*. Volume 1 contains a three-page appendix on bullying, including cyberbullying, plus bullying prevention resources.
- The BSA Web page on bullying prevention includes 11 PDF documents on various types of (including cyberbullying), bullying prevention, support for bullied children, and obligations bullying to report bullying.
- The BSA Social Media Guidelines set forth policies for appropriate use of social media in a Scouting context, including Internet safety and online youth protection guidance designed to prevent cyberbullying through unit websites, Facebook pages, etc.

Cyber Chip Cyberbullying Prevention Tool:

- The BSA has partnered with NetSmartz to develop the Cyber Chip, which aims to teach good Internet use and Internet safety. Cyber Chip is required for every Cub Scout rank, plus the Boy Scout ranks of Scout and Star. All Scouts should earn the Cyber Chip for their age.
- There are several versions of Cyber Chip requirements, based on the Scout's age: two versions for Cub Scouts (grades 1–3 and 4–5) and two for Boy Scouts (grades 6–8 and 9–12). The U.S. Scouting Service Project website has Cyber Chip workbooks for all ages. A workbook for Cub Scouts includes both sets of Cub Scout requirements in the same book. A similar workbook exists for Boy Scouts.
- Consider printing and distributing the following two sections to be shared within the units. Also, consider mentioning them briefly during the discussion, if time permits.

Signs that your child may be a victim of cyberbullying:

- The target of cyberbullying may obsess over what is posted, become depressed, avoid school or social activities, or have suicidal thoughts. In extreme circumstances, cyberbullying can lead to suicide. Parents and adults should talk with youth about their online activities and stay alert to signs of cyberbullying. Signs of cyberbullying include:
 - Avoiding the computer, cell phone, and other technological devices or appearing stressed when receiving an email, instant message, or text
 - Withdrawing from family and friends, or appearing reluctant to attend school and social events
 - Avoiding conversations about computer use
 - Exhibiting signs of low self-esteem including depression and/or fear
 - Declining grades

Exhibiting poor eating and/or sleeping habits Ways to address cyberbullying:

- Tell your child not to respond to rude emails, messages, and comments.
- Encourage the child to speak up immediately if he or she is the victim of cyberbullying. Assure that a young person has a trusted adult—whether parent, teacher, or Scout leader—in whom to confide.
- Block cyberbullies by using available privacy controls such as blocked-sender lists and call-blocking.
- If harassment is via email, social networking sites, IM, or chat rooms, instruct your child to “block” bullies or delete your child's current account and open a new one.
- If harassment is via text and phone messages, change the phone number and instruct your child to only share the new number with trustworthy people. Also, check out phone features that may allow an incoming number to be blocked.
- Do not erase the messages or pictures. Save the evidence, such as email and text messages, and take screenshots of comments and images. Also, take note of the date and time when the harassment occurs.
- Contact your Internet service provider (ISP) or cell phone provider. Ask the website administrator or ISP to remove any Web page created to hurt your child.
- Get your child's school involved. Learn the school's policy on cyberbullying and urge administrators to take a stance against all forms of bullying.
- Make a report to www.cybertipline.com.
- If the cyberbullying is criminal or you suspect it may be, contact the police. Areas falling under the jurisdiction of law enforcement include threats of violence, extortion, obscene or harassing phone calls or messages, harassment via stalking or hate crimes, child pornography, sexual exploitation, and taking a photo or video image of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy.