



# Bullying of Persons with Autism and Related Disorders: Facts and Intervention Strategies

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## House Keeping

- To reduce background noise during the webinar, please put yourself on 'mute' through your phone or computer.
- Due to the size of our group, I will not be answering questions during the webinar. Instead, **please type in your questions** into the 'chat' box on your screen. I will review/answer all questions at the end.
- If you experience any technical problems at any point during the webinar, the problem is likely to be on your end, so you will need to follow-up with your technology support person.
- The Webinar will end promptly at 4:30. If you would like to speak with me after the webinar, please e-mail me at [rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu) to set up a time to speak by phone.

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## Learning Objectives

- Increase understanding of...
  - Bullying background and key concepts.
  - Bullying and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
  - Interventions for bullying and bullying prevention.
  - Cyberbullying Vs. Traditional Bullying.

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# BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANT FACTS

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## What is Bullying?



Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. A Student (child) is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students

**Note: Bullying may include physical or verbal acts and frequently a mix of the two**

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## How Prevalent is Bullying?

- Data vary widely based on research method used
  - According to the National School Safety Center (NSSC) bullying is the most enduring and under-reported problem in U.S. schools
  - Bullying can be considered the most prevalent form of youth violence and may escalate into extremely serious forms of antisocial behavior.
  - Self-report studies in which students were asked directly if they have been bullied found that 80% of 8-12 grade student reported that they had been bullied at least one time and 90% of 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade student also reported being bullied at least one time.
  - Nansel et al. found that 13% of students were aggressive bullies, about 11% were passive victims, and 6% were bully victims.

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## Concept of Power Asynchrony

- Concept that bullying is always directed by a stronger student against a weaker student.
- Examples:
  - A physically stronger student may punch or kick a student who is too physically weak to counteract
  - A student higher in social status might harass a lower status student
  - Verbal harassment directed from a more articulate to a less articulate student
  - Manipulation of social relationships for the purpose of hurting another person by interfering with his or her ability to build and maintain needed and desired relationships (e.g., a friendship with a particular child)



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## Key Concepts Related to the Conceptualization of Bullying

- Form of Aggression
- Power imbalance (either physically or psychologically)
- Means to establish dominance or maintain social status

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## Signs a Child May Be a Victim for Educators

- Missing belongings (e.g., coat)
- Not eating lunch
- Torn clothing
- Unexplained bruises
- Illness
- Few or no friends
- Appearing unhappy or depressed
- Avoiding school activities, especially lunch or recess

**Researchers have estimated that only a low percentage of bullying acts are witnessed by educators (i.e., 15% or less)**

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## Signs a Child May Be a Victim for Parents



- Deterioration of school work
- Taking different route/transportation method to school
- Fear of going to school
- Isolation or staying in his or her bedroom
- Cutting classes
- Few or no friends
- Never or infrequently being invited to parties

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## Is this Bullying?

Liam is a child with autism. He does not have the ability to understand when other children are making fun of him. He thinks everyone is his friend. His classmates post unflattering pictures of him online and often ask him to do things that make him look foolish.

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## FACTS ABOUT BULLIES

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## Four Types of Bullies

- Physical Bullies
- Verbal Bullies
- Relational Bullies
- Reactive Bullies

Some researchers also talk about bullying experienced by children but committed by adults. For example, a relative or family friend who enjoys teasing or playing practical jokes

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## Personal Attitudes/Behaviors of Bullies

Children who bully may:

- Want power
- Have a positive attitude toward violence
- Have quick tempers
- Have difficulty conforming to rules
- Gain satisfaction from inflicting injury and perceive “rewards” (e.g., prestige, material goods) from their behavior
- Have positive self images

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## Family Characteristics of Bullies

- Research suggests that the families of bullies are often troubled
  - Parents described as hostile, rejecting, and indifferent to their children
  - Parents may have a permissive parenting style
  - Minimal supervision of whereabouts and community activities
  - Parents of bullies tend to use power-assertive techniques to manage behavior (e.g., physical punishment followed by a long period of ignoring the child)
  - Many bullies imitate the aggressive behaviors they see at home to obtain their goals (i.e., observational learning).

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### Signs That a Child Might be Fairly Labeled a Bully

- Constant teasing of other children
- Intimidating, making fun of, ridiculing others
- Acts of physical aggression towards other people
- Picking on children smaller and weaker than themselves
- Being hot-tempered, easily angered, or impulsive and having low frustration tolerance

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## BULLYING AND AUTISM

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### Autism Spectrum Disorders Bullying Facts

- Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders are at particularly high risk for the victimization from bullying. Generally, studies have found that victimization from bullying is higher among persons with ASD as compared to children without disabilities; perpetration rates are approximately the same
  - Recent published study found a prevalence of 44% of persons with ASD
  - Teacher-reported bullying among adolescent with ASD is 30%
  - Self-report of high functioning individuals with AS is 17%
  - Peer report of bullying of adolescents with ASD is 7%
  - Parent report of bully of adolescents with ASD is 94%

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## Autism Spectrum Disorders Bullying Facts, cont.

- Relationship to Aggression
- Relationship to ADHD/ADD
- Relationship to age with younger children more likely to be bullied

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## Why are children with ASD more likely to be bullied?

- Failure to develop friendship appropriate to the child's developmental level
- Impaired use of non-verbal behaviors such as eye gaze, facial expression, and body language
- Lack of social and emotional reciprocity and empathy
- Impaired ability to identify social cues and social conventions
- Difficulties with conversation skills
- Unusual prosody in their speech
- Unusual dominant interests in play activities
- Anxiety related to changes to expected routines in the school schedule

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## Bullying Forms Specific to Children with ASD

- Children with ASD may be more socially naïve, trusting, and eager to be part of the group
  - A bully might suggest that a child with ASD make an inappropriate or bizarre statement /question in class
  - Children with ASD might not delay the response to a bullying; thus, increasing the likelihood that they will be caught and punished
  - Difficulty discriminating intentions to be friendly and bullying (age-appropriate humor designed to build a friendship)

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## What Makes an Effective Anti-Bullying Program?

- Clear definition of bullying
- Consequences for bullies
- Reinforcement of acts of kindness and caring
- Ongoing staff development
- Training of students
- School-wide reinforcement program
- Cooperation and collaboration between school, parents, and the community

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## INTERVENTIONS FOR BULLYING

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## Examples of Classroom Activities

- Task students with re-writing the definition of bullying and the school's anti-bullying policy in their own words for different age groups
- Create a school magazine, in your school or together with local schools
- Discuss with your students their ideas about the difference between bullying and other forms of social conflict, and why it's important to identify bullying
- Conduct and report on the findings of a survey of students and staff to find out how students and adults understand bullying - does everyone have the same idea of what bullying is?

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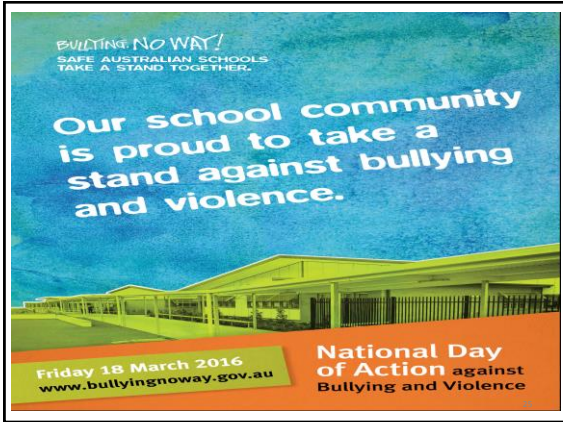
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### Student Tip Pocket Cards

Take a Stand Together is a free app that has tips and advice about bullying.

**Need help?**  
 Kids Helpline [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)  
 1800 551 800  
 Headspace [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)  
 1800 650 890  
 Online bullying [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

[www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

**Bullying – what can you do?**

**If it happens in person:**

- ignore them
- tell them to stop and then walk away
- pretend you don't care
- go somewhere safe
- get support from your friends.

**If it happens online:**

- avoid responding to the bullying
- block and report anyone who is bullying online
- protect yourself online – use privacy settings and keep records.

**If you see someone being bullied:**

- leave negative online conversations – don't join in
- support others being bullied.

**If it doesn't stop:**

- talk to an adult (parent, teacher) who can help stop the bullying
- keep asking for support until the bullying stops.

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### Bystanders Exercise

Bystanders: Those who watch bullying happen or hear about it!  
 Can you spot the bystanders in the pictures above?

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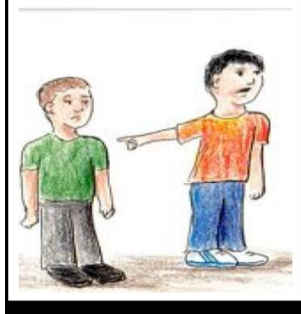
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## TATTLING

When you are trying to get someone "IN" Trouble!



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## TELLING

When you are trying to get someone "OUT" of trouble!

Example: Someone fell off the monkey bars and seems to be really hurt



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<b>Tattling</b>	<b>Telling</b>
<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Important</b>
<b>Harmless</b>	<b>Someone being hurt</b>
<b>Accidental</b>	<b>Purposeful</b>
<b>Could solve alone</b>	<b>Needs help to solve</b>
<b>Trying to get someone in trouble</b>	<b>Trying to help someone else</b>

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## Keys Facts About Paraprofessionals and Bullying

- They frequently witness bullying
- Students often report bullying incidents to them
- The majority of paraprofessionals report that they believe that it is their job to intervene
- They frequently self-report the needs be trained or the need for more training

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## Critical Questions for Paraprofessionals

- Aware of the district's policy on bullying?
- Been given a paraprofessional handbook?
- Discussed the bullying prevention program with your principal and teacher?
- Received training on ways to deal with bullying?
- Received training on how to reward (reinforce) acts of kindness and caring of students towards peers?

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## What Adults Should Do

Adults should

- Stop the bullying
- Support the child being bullied
- Name the bullying behavior
- Refer to the rules against bullying
- Impose immediate and appropriate consequences
- Empower children witnessing the bullying

Source: The Olweus Bullying Prevention Group, 2000

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## What Parents Can Do if Their Child is a Bully

- Provide social skill instruction. Be a good role model of kindness and accepting diversity amongst people
  - Someone bumps into you in line in a department store
  - You are driving your child, and a car cuts you off

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## What Parents Can Do to Prevent Their Child from Being a Bully

- Spend time with your child daily
- Know where your child is and with whom
- Make it clear that you do not tolerate this behavior, but that you still accept your child
- Arrange for an effective nonviolent consequence if your child continues to bully
- Reward good behavior
- Teach your child positive ways of solving problems and managing anger

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## Children Who Witness Bullying

Strategies for children witnessing

Bullying:

- Tell the bully to stop.
- Help the victim walk away.
- Recruit friends to help the victim.
- Befriend the victim.
- Get an adult.

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## Individual Strategies for Students with ASD

- Create a map of the child's world identifying places where a child is both vulnerable to, or safe from, acts of bullying
- Behavioral skills training to teach a child to discriminate bullying from acts of friendship
- Development of buddy system. High status peer with a social conscience monitor interactions with the child with ASD and privately report any issues
- Teach alternative skills such as reporting bullying to an adult or educator, walking away from bullying, or how to appropriately help a peer who is being bullied

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## Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)

- Most researched school-wide program first implemented in Norway
- School wide intervention
  - Restructuring the school environment to minimize the opportunities and rewards for bullying behavior
  - Shifting social norms to create expectations of inclusion and civility
  - Build a sense of community among students and adults in a school

**Program core components target school-, classroom-, individual-, and community-level interventions**

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## The Effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in Public Middle Schools: A Controlled Trial Bauer, Lozano, and Rivara, 2007

- A non-randomized controlled trial with 10 public middle schools (7 interventions and 3 controls)
- Comparison between Olweus program and less formal structured activities (controlled school encouraged to address issue).

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III. Discuss examples of not following school-wide rules in specific settings

*Examples might include:*

- Running in the Hallways or Cafeteria
- Throwing objects at another student
- Hitting, kicking, or restricting another's movement
- Talking behind someone's back
- Throwing another student
- While playing basketball, 4-square, or kickball
- Calling someone names

IV. Discuss why kids exhibit problem behavior outside the classroom

*The candle under a glass cup*

**Materials Needed:**

- Small candle
- Clear glass cup that can fit over the top of the candle
- Matches or lighter

**Procedure:**

1. Compare fire and problem behavior with the class (Light the candle)
  - Both can be bright and both can hurt
2. Explain how problem behavior needs your attention to keep going just like a candle needs oxygen to stay lit.
3. Discuss the main forms of peer attention
  - Arguing with someone that treats you
  - Laughing at someone being picked on
  - Watching problem behavior and doing nothing about it.
4. Explain how taking away peer attention is like taking the oxygen away from a candle (cover the lit candle with the clear glass cup, and watch as the flame slowly dies out).
5. Students can take away the peer attention that keeps problem behavior going by:
  - Telling someone treating you to "stop"
  - Walking away from problem behavior
  - Helping another student by saying "stop" or by walking away from problem behavior with them.
  - Telling an adult

1-2 Student Curriculum: BP/PBS 40

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Bully Prevention Introduction

*Objectives:*

- Establish rules and expectations for group discussions
- Teach 3-5 school-wide rules for outside the classroom
- Teach Social Responsibility Skills (Stop/Walk/Talk)
- Practice

**Procedure:**

- I. Establish rules for instruction based on 3-5 school-wide positively stated rules
  - Examples might include:*
    - Be Safe - Keep hands and feet to self during lesson
    - Be Respectful - One person speaks at a time
    - Be Responsible - Use what you learn!
- II. Discuss what school-wide rules look like outside the classroom
  - Examples might include:*
    - Saying nice things to other students
    - Walking in hallways or the cafeteria
    - Keeping your hands and your feet to yourself

BP/PBS: Student 41

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V. Teach Social Responsibility Skills (Stop/Walk/Talk)

*Describe the 3 steps for responding to problem behavior*

*Be sure to practice each step with the students and ensure that they are fluent. This should include at least 3 correct examples and at least 2 non-examples (When not to use the 3-step response)*

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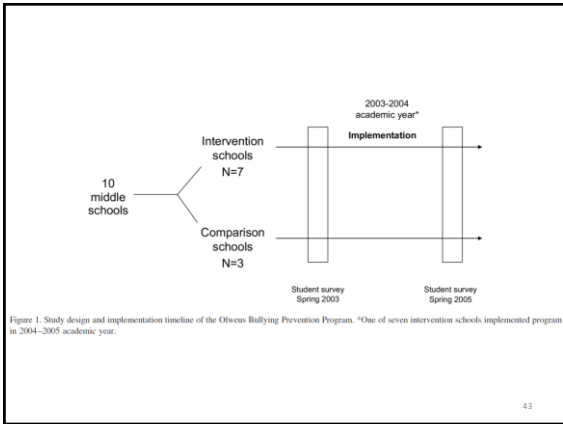
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Definitions of "Olweus Standards" for core component implementation*	
Component	Olweus Standard definition
<b>School-wide</b>	
1. OBPP survey	1. Administer survey & results shared with school
2. School assembly	2. Official implementation start date. Show commitment to bullying prevention, introduce concepts & school rules, raise enthusiasm
3. Student supervision	3. Schools should revise problem spots as identified, intermittently revisit protocol to ensure adequacy
4. Staff discussions	4. Hold regular meetings to discuss problematic issues, with goal of fostering collaboration in implementation efforts
5. Coordinating committee	5. Identify core group of people responsible for initial planning & oversight of implementation
6. School rules	6. Set common language & expectation for student behavior
7. Engaging parents	7. If engage parents, expectations & follow-through of consequences of student behavior at school can occur
8. Engaging students	8. In effort to change student attitudes and perceptions, involve students in activities to raise awareness. Target students who are otherwise known as bystanders
9. Tracking & identification of "hot spots"	9. Not by one-on-one experience with individual students per se, but by examining patterns of problem areas with intent to shift supervision as needed
10. Staff training	10. After coordinating committee trained, committee members train remaining adult staff
<b>Classroom</b>	
1. Class discussions	1. Regular & consistent discussions of schoolwide rules; teach skills to deal with bullying, foster empathy for others
2. Reinforcement of school rules	2. Teachers should feel comfortable in intervening in bullying incidents, either by actively stopping it themselves or at least identifying and reporting to administration/commisses
<b>Community</b>	
1. Raise community awareness	1. Public relations and foster OBPP-inspired program development based in the community

\* Schools rated on 4-point scale: 0=no implementation, 1=attempted but not to Olweus standard, 2=meets Olweus standard, 3=exceeds Olweus standard.

	<b>Victimization</b>
Primary Outcomes	1) I was called mean names, was made fun of or teased in a hurtful way.
	2) Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me.
	3) I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged.
	4) I was hit, kicked, shoved around or locked indoors.
	Response options: if hasn't happened in the past couple of months, it happened once or twice, 2-3 times a month, about once a week, several times a week
	<b>Student feelings towards bullying (attitude)</b>
Program Targets	1) When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you feel or think?
	Response options: that is probably what he or she deserves, I don't feel much, I feel a bit sorry for him or her, I feel sorry for him or her and want to help him or her.
	<b>Student perception of others' readiness to intervene</b>
General school experience	1) Do the teachers or other adults at school try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?
	2) Do other students try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?
	Response options: almost never, once in a while, sometimes, often, almost always
	<b>Student perception of safety</b>
General school experience	1) I feel safe in my classrooms.
	Response options: yes, no
	<b>Student perception of support</b>
	1) Students at my school care about each other.
	2) Students at my school want to be friends with one another
	3) Students have a sense of belonging in this school
	4) People (either adults or students) at my school help me when I have a problem
5) Adults at my school really care about each student	
6) The adults at my school treat all students fairly	
7) There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk with a teacher one-on-one	
	Response options: yes, no
	<b>School management</b>
	1) Most mornings I look forward to going to school
	Response options: yes, no

Figure 2. Survey questions.

## Teachers: Rules Against Bullying

- Children will not bully others.
- Children will try to help people who are bullied.
- Children will include others in activities.
- Children will tell an adult if someone is being bullied.

Source: The Olweus Bullying Prevention Group, 2000



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## Findings of Bauer, Lozano, and Rivara, 2007

- Modest effects from the Olweus Bullying Prevention program
  - Results varied by gender, ethnicity/race, and age of students
  - Students in the intervention schools were 21% more likely to perceive other students actively intervening on behalf of students being bullied
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade students were 21% more likely to feel sorry for bullying victims and want to help

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## Cyberbullying

### A Recent Survey of Teens Revealed

- Cyberbullying was experienced at least one time by 43% of teens, aged 13 to 17.
- Teens report that in 77% of the cases the cyberbully is someone they know.
- Girls claim to have been cyberbullied more than boys – 51% to 37%.

NCPC Cyberbullying Research Report, 2006

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## How is Cyberbullying Different from Traditional Bullying?

- Victims often don't know who the bully is or why they are targeted
- Viral – large number of people can find out about it very quickly
- Can be done from a distance and the bully doesn't have to see the person's response (impersonal)
- Many adults don't have technical skills to monitor or respond  
This may cause adults to be slow to respond which, in turn, gives the cyberbullying the belief that there are little to no consequences

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## Types of Cyberbullying

According to Nancy Willard, author of Cyber-Safe Kids and Cyber-Savvy Teens, there are seven forms of cyberbullying

- Flaming
- Harassment
- Denigration
- Impersonation
- Outing and Trickery
- Exclusion
- Cyberstalking

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## Tips for Teachers

- Discuss online behavior with your students – if you wouldn't say something in person, don't say it online
- Encourage students to report cyberbullying
- Teach students to think before they post and not to let their emotions get the best of them
- Warn students of the danger of responding when angry or upset

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## Tips for Teachers

- Keep anonymous comment box in classroom where students can report incidents of cyberbullying
- Have a classroom policy that addresses inappropriate computer and cell phone use
- Post class rules regarding acceptable internet behavior
- If you already have a school policy regarding cyberbullying, enforce it!
- Students need to know that all forms of bullying are wrong and that those who engage in harassing or threatening behavior may be subject to discipline

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## Resources

- Rochester Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder (RRCASD).
  - On-line educational resources, webinars, Information & Referral services.
  - Contact information:
    - Website: [www.golisano.urmc.edu/rrcasd-nyautism](http://www.golisano.urmc.edu/rrcasd-nyautism)
    - E-mail: [rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu)
    - Tele: 1-855-508-8485
- Autism Speaks: website: [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)
  - This site contains various toolkits and guides for home, school, work, safety, health/medical, etc.

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## Question & Answer

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Please see the Webinar Evaluation Survey email for information regarding a **Certificate of Attendance** for today's webinar.

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