

The background features a complex network of blue lines and arrows. Some lines are solid, while others are dashed. The arrows point in various directions, creating a sense of movement and connectivity. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on geometric patterns.

# The School-Home Connection: Communicating with Parents About Bullying

Presented by: Toni J. Torchia, PhD

Community Program Specialist for the Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention

Certified School Psychologist

Licensed Clinical Psychologist



University at Buffalo

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Bullying Abuse Prevention

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# Agenda

- 1) Identify essential considerations for phone calls with parents and guardians regarding bullying
- 2) Practice skills for handling potential negative responses from parents and guardians to improve collaborative problem solving and relationship building
- 3) Understanding the importance of recognizing personal feelings and potential biases during conversations about bullying



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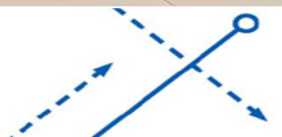
# UNDERSTANDING PARENTS IN BULLYING SITUATIONS:

When you think of working with parents in situations that involve bullying, what **adjectives** might you use to describe parents?



# Understanding Parent Perspectives When Addressing Bullying: A few Examples

- ❖ **School Related Concerns:**
  - ❖ Lack of communication by the school
  - ❖ Distrust of school by parents and parents by the school
  - ❖ Lack of Confidence in school policies
- ❖ **Parent Factors:**
  - ❖ Desire to be a 'good' parent
  - ❖ Helplessness regarding protection



# What is bullying?

- ❖ **What is bullying?:** Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated over time.
- ❖ **Bullying is NOT:** Teasing, being rude, conflict, or even mean behavior





# What's the Goal?

- ❖ **What is the goal of communications with parents about bullying:**
  - ❖ Establish a pattern of communication with a focus on collaboration, accountability, and support
  - ❖ Partnership between school and home is essential for immediate AND long-term safety as well as a positive school climate.



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# Key considerations for when you speak with

If possible, take a moment to check in on your own emotions before the meeting (Ex: Body scan, check in with a colleague)

Have a plan for the meeting (Ex: Should it be in person or by phone, what needs to be discussed, etc.)

Be timely, but have evidence

Express concern for the child

Ask for parents' ideas and help

Stay focused on the point and the BEHAVIOR

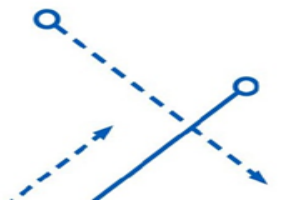
Be careful not to make promises

Plan to communicate again soon as possible

Document!

Self-reflection time:  
What might make these ideas difficult for you?  
Where have you struggled in the past with this or what do you anticipate being a struggle in the future?

Think and share!





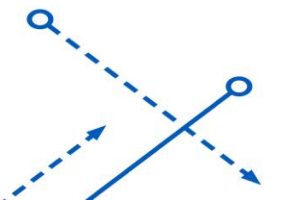
# Talking to Parents of a Bullied Student:

**Lead with Empathy:** Acknowledge their child's feelings and the stress of the situation. Don't blame the child or the parent.

**Be Willing to Listen:** Allow parents to share their concerns and work together to identify solutions.

**Provide Reassurance:** Clearly state that the child's safety is the school's top priority and explain immediate steps that can be taken.

**Develop a Realistic Action Plan:** Collaborate on solutions like reassigning seats, appointing "class buddies," or creating "safe zones".





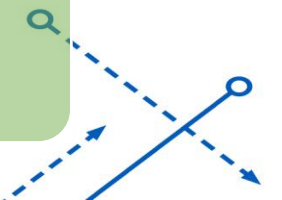
# Talking to Parents of a Student Displaying Bullying Behavior

**Avoid Labels:** Focus on behaviors instead of calling the child a "bully" to reduce defensiveness.

**Stick to Facts:** Describe the specific behavior and how it violates school policy without making assumptions about character.

**Maintain Privacy:** Do not reveal specific punishments of other children involved; focus exclusively on their child's plan moving forward.

**Seek to Identify Causes/Contributors:** Ask parents for their thoughts and explore ideas together.





# Talking to Parents: What to do When Parents Call You

Take parent concerns seriously

Be supportive, but recognize there is likely more information needed to make decisions

It's OK not to have all the answers or information.



# Role Play Activity

I am a teacher, and you (a parent) call me to tell me that **your child is being bullied** by students in **my class**. You are very **worried and upset**. We have a conversation about the situation.



- ❖ Example talking points for the parent:
  - ❖ Share a specific concern(s) or incident(s) your child shared with you.
  - ❖ Ask questions such as: *"What is being done to stop this from happening again?"*, *"How are you punishing the bully?"*
  - ❖ Express your emotions—it's okay to share that you are upset
- ❖ When done, we will all debrief the conversation.



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# Role play debrief

What did you think of the interaction? Do you have comments, questions or concerns about what you observed?



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# Role Play Takeaways

## Subjectivity:

- An individual's understanding of bullying is personal and emotionally laden.

## Interpretation:

- An allegation reflects an individual's specific interpretation and conceptualization of events.

## Problem Solving:

- Every allegation should be viewed as a *red flag* indicating a problem that requires a solution.

## Focus:

- Rather than debating whether a situation meets the technical definition of bullying, our primary focus must remain on ensuring the safety of the individuals involved.





# Managing Conflict and Potential Defensiveness

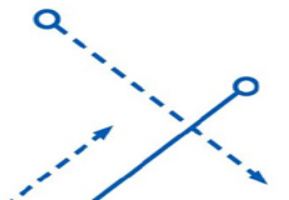
When tension escalates, apply OARS skills:

- O — Open-ended Questions - Invite the parent's perspective before problem-solving
- A — Affirmations - Acknowledge the parent's concern and care for their child
- R — Reflective Listening - Mirror back what you hear before responding to content
- S — Summaries - Close with a clear restatement of what was agreed upon

Additional considerations:

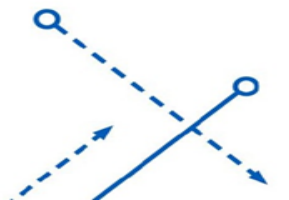
Match resistance with curiosity, not defensiveness

- Refer to documented evidence and consistent school policy when challenged
- It is appropriate to pause or reschedule if a conversation becomes unproductive
- Documentation note: Log key points from all parent contacts, including tone and agreed next steps



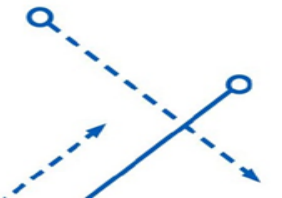
# Understanding Bias in Conversations About Bullying

- ❖ Bias affects whether teachers recognize bullying in the first place
- ❖ Bias affects whose parents' teachers call — and how
- ❖ Bias affects teacher self-efficacy to act
- ❖ The bias teachers bring to parents themselves  
teachers hold implicit associations about parent credibility, engagement, and intent that are shaped by race, class, language, and family structure.



## Understanding of Bias on Conversations About Bullying: Questions to Ask Yourself Before you Reach Out

- ❖ About the student:
  - ❖ Would I consider this behavior “serious enough” if a different student were targeted?
  - ❖ Would I frame this situation differently if the child’s identity were different?
- ❖ About the parent:
  - ❖ Am I extending the same presumption of good faith I would to any family?
  - ❖ Does my response reflect the situation — or my assumptions about this parent?





**REMEMBER...**

**CONVERSATIONS ABOUT BULLYING**

**AREN'T ABOUT WHO IS RIGHT OR WRONG:**

**THEY ARE ABOUT CREATING A SAFE AND**

**SECURE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT!**



# Resources

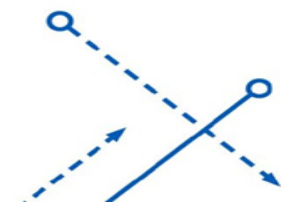
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