

Anti-bullying guide launched in York

Information provided
by parents
of bullying victims

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A new guide for parents will help address bullying in the school system.

The York Region and London Anti-Bullying Coalitions have released a parental guide to address the social problem in publicly funded schools in Ontario.

The 34-page guide took seven months to complete and includes a wealth of information provided by parents whose children have experienced bullying.

The release of the guide could not be more timely as Prime Minister Stephen Harper has publicly stated cyber-bullying should be associated with criminal charges instead of being a phrase used to imply children are simply misbehaving, she said.

"A lot of progress is being made on the cyber-bullying front, but

▶ The full guide is available at yorkregionanti-bullying.org/parentguide.

people fail to realize in-person bullying is still alive and well in our schools," York Region Anti-Bullying Coalition founder Karen Sebben said. "Unfortunately, the advice given by the experts isn't necessarily how it plays out for parents in reality."

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For example, many bully experts recommend parents and school administrators make a safety plan for students who experience long-term bullying, but she knows from her son's experience at a Newmar-

ket high school, administrators have to be willing participants or the advice isn't useful.

The guide book has been compiled by parents who have experience dealing with the school system where their child has been bullied or where their child has done the bullying.

For years, the coalition has lobbied the government to define the term bullying clearly, since it has become a catch-all phrase for everything from one-time name calling to assault, Ms Sebben added.

The guide begins with an extended definition, building from the province's definition, facts about and forms of bullying, conflict versus bullying and profiles of a bully, victim and bystander.

The guide continues to outline what expectations parents can have from schools, what they can do at home and suggestions on what to do if attempts to deal with the incidents are unsuccessful, such as keeping a log of who you spoke with and when.

It even goes one step further in providing a list of people you can

TAKING ACTION

What you can do for your child:

- ▶ Don't ignore the problem. Ask the school, family doctor or other trusted sources for help.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with board policy along with your school's policy.
- ▶ Stay connected with your child and validate their feelings.
- ▶ Explain to your child what bullying is and how to respond.
- ▶ Teach your child the importance of empathy.
- ▶ Set a good example.
- ▶ Look for warning signs.
- ▶ Talk to the school.

contact if the issue persists, such as your MPP, Ontario College of Teachers and the Human Rights

If your child is the bully:

- ▶ Report your child's difficulty to school staff.
- ▶ Support the consequences taken by the school at home.
- ▶ Discuss the short-term and long-term impact of their behaviour.
- ▶ Ask the school for assistance to help build supports to change negative behaviour.
- ▶ Help your child develop relationship skills.
- ▶ Support your child in learning how they can make restitution for the harm they have caused.
- ▶ Insist upon constant communication with the school and the steps they are taking so they can be reinforced and supported at home.

Tribunal.

It also lists legislation pertaining to bullying.

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