

May/June 2011

## SAFETY TIP

### Bullying

Children who are different are often the main targets of bullying. Unfortunately, the mere fact that a child is in foster care, struggling with the effects of abuse or neglect makes them different than their peers. Thus, making foster children prime targets for bullying.

Bullies pick on the people they think do not fit in, selecting them based on appearance, how they act (shy or withdrawn), race or religion, or because of sexual orientation. Bullying can take on many different forms:

1. **Physical** (hitting, shoving, stealing a person's belongings),
2. **Verbal** (insults, name-calling),
3. **Socially** (spreading gossip, excluding people on purpose)
4. **Cyberbullying** (using the internet, mobile phones or other digital technology to harm others).

Bullying is not a rite of passage. Getting a tougher skin will not make it go away.



The American Justice Department reports that 1 out of 4 children have been bullied and 1 out of 5 have bullied.

Children who are bullied find that their school work and health suffer. Studies also show that people who are bullied are at risk for low self-esteem, stress, depression and anxiety. Children should be encouraged to speak up if they are finding themselves with a bullying problem. If you suspect your child is being bullied, consider these steps:

**Provide comfort and support.** Children are often embarrassed and ashamed that this is happening to them. They do not want their parents to be disappointed in them, so they do not say anything.

**Offer Praise.** Speaking up about a problem is hard to do. Remind your child they are not alone and it is the bully who has bad behavior not them.

**Enlist Help.** Often friends or an older sibling can tell you how they dealt with teasing or they can offer insight as to what is happening at school. Help the child come up with a plan.

**Take it seriously.** Sometimes the situation will work itself out. Other times, you may need to do additional intervention if we hear things are getting worse.

#### Special Points of Interest

- [Warning Signs](#)
- [Tips for Kids](#)
- [Tips for Teens](#)
- [Suggestions for Parents](#)
- [Working with your child's school.](#)
- [Dealing with Bullying](#)
- [On-line bullying](#)