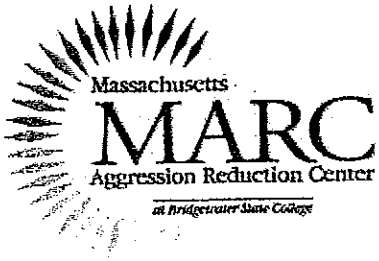


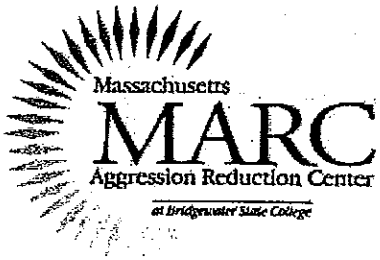
IS THIS BULLYING?
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

For a behavior to be deemed "bullying," it needs to include ALL of the following elements (defined by Massachusetts State Law):

- Must be ***repeated*** action(s) by one or more students
- Must be a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof
- Must be directed at a victim so that it causes one or more of the following:
  - physical or emotional harm to the victim;
  - damage to the victim's property;
  - places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property;
  - creates a hostile environment at school for the victim;
  - infringes on the rights of the victim at school; OR
  - materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

✓ One-time incidents may be deliberately mean or cruel, but they are not bullying. Still, one-time incidents may be subject to school discipline as per the school's policy.

✓ Incidents that happen off-campus (e.g., cyberbullying) may mean that the child who bullies cannot – by law – be subject to school discipline. However, other measures may be taken to help victims and to try to educate children involved in risky behaviors.



When Should You Contact The School?

You should contact the school to inform them of a situation when:

The situation	Your Role	What the School Can Do	What the School Cannot Do
Your child is afraid to see another child at school, or generally afraid to go to school because of any incident	Get as many specific details as possible about why this is occurring.	They can create a Safety Plan for your child.	They cannot discuss with you any discussions or actions taken with other children, including the child your child is afraid of.
Your child reports to you an incident that occurred at school.	Be sure to get very specific detailed information from your child about the incident	They can take steps to ensure the safety of the children involved.	They cannot discuss with you the steps they take that involve any other child.
Your child reports to you that they've heard a rumor about a future incident that may occur at school	Get as many specific details as possible.	Investigate the plausibility of the future incident and take appropriate actions.	They cannot discuss with you their discussions with other children.
Your child reports to you that another child is being bullied at school	Get as many specific details as possible.	Investigate the situation.	Report back to you any outcome of the investigation.
You hear about a school bullying incident from any other credible source (e.g., from other children, or reading about it on your child's Facebook page, etc.)	Get as many specific details as possible.	Investigate the situation.	Report back to you any outcome of the investigation, except for your child's part if any.
If you have a serious disagreement about a disciplinary action taken by the school	If this is the case, begin by pursuing a private conversation with the school administration. Challenging the school's authority publicly to make such decisions will only, in the long run, lead to more disciplinary problems among children who will perceive that the adult community does not respect the school administration.		Educators are bound by policy. They may not be able to change an action if doing so violates the policy set by the School Board.