

# Cyberbullying

Reviewed July 2014

## What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of communication technology to intentionally hurt or intimidate another person. For example, through email, text message, social networking sites, or websites.

Cyberbullying can be seen in many different forms:

- Posting mean or embarrassing pictures or videos of someone online without their approval
- Posing as someone else by using their name
- Sending threatening, mean, or harassing text messages or emails
- Making fun of others online
- Spreading rumours, gossip or secrets that will hurt someone
- Tricking someone into revealing personal information
- Making online polls (for example, "Who's hot? Who's not?")
- Sending viruses to either spy on the victim, or destroy their computers



## How is cyberbullying different from face-to-face bullying?

Cyberbullying can follow victims around and there is no safe place for them. Children can be bullied while sitting next to their parents in the living room, or while in their own bedroom.

Those who bully others are able to spread hurtful words wherever they are, whenever they want. No one will know unless the victim tells someone about it. The bullies are able to remain anonymous because they are hiding behind technology. Children who cyberbully others are less likely to be empathetic because they are not able to see how their words are hurting others. This can make it easier for them to be more cruel and hostile.

## What should you do if you are being cyberbullied?

- Walk away and try not to respond to the message. Those who bully others are looking to get a reaction out of their target. If you do not respond or give them a reaction, the individual who is bullying may stop.
- If you feel the need to respond, take some time to cool down. Often times we regret saying something in the heat of the moment. Try going for a walk, baking some cookies, or play some video games to get your mind off the situation.
- Keep track of the bullying. If possible, take screen shots of online messages or text messages.

- Report unwanted text messages to your service provider (the company that your cell phone is with). Report the bully's messages to the social media site administrators. Block the person who is responsible for sending the messages.
- You may not want to tell your parents that you are being bullied online because you are scared to lose your cell phone, computer, or internet access. Talk to them anyway, they will be able to help. They want your time online to be as safe as possible. If you don't think you can tell your parents, talk to another adult you trust.
- Remember that you didn't do anything to deserve being bullied

## Nova Scotia CyberSCAN Unit

Nova Scotia's Cyber-safety Act is the first of its kind in Canada. The Act is set up to protect victims of cyberbullying and make those responsible for the cyberbullying accountable under the law. With this Act, Nova Scotians are able to seek protection/prevention orders and sue cyberbullies for damages.

The CyberSCAN unit is the first cyberbullying investigative unit in Canada. Victims are able to seek a protection order from the Justice of the Peace Centre or file a complaint with the CyberSCAN unit. (Anyone is able to contact CyberSCAN to file a complaint - victims or their teachers, parents, and friends).

A protection order can be issued to stop bullying. These orders can:

- Prohibit the bully from contact with the person being bullied
- Prohibit or restrict the bully's electronic communications
- Prohibit or restrict the bully's internet access
- Result in the bully's electronic devices being confiscated

The unit works with the victim (and their family, school, and others) to investigate the complaint, gather evidence and help stop the cyberbullying. The team first tries to stop the cyberbullying by talking to everyone involved in it. Often times the individual doing the cyberbullying does not realize the seriousness of the incident. By having an investigator show up at the door, this can sometimes be enough to stop them.

If the bullying does not stop after that, the court may order the one that is bullying to limit their use of technology. If these orders are disobeyed, they could be fined up to \$5000, go to jail for up to six months, or both. Cyberbullies can also be sued in civil court. If the one bullying is a minor, the parent could be ordered to pay damages.

*\* Anyone who spreads damaging material can be sued, even if they did not start the cyberbullying.*

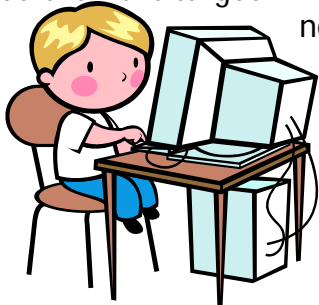
If the CyberSCAN team determine that a crime has been committed, they call the police. The crimes that are linked with cyberbullying include:

- Harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Distributing child pornography
- Defamatory libel (false claims in writing that could be damaging to a person's reputation)



## What is a bystander?

A bystander is anyone who is witnessing the bullying. Many bystanders don't do anything to stop the bullying from happening. They may be afraid that they won't be able to help, or worry that they will be the next target. They may think that their classmates will disapprove if they speak up. But doing nothing can actually make the situation worse.



Being a bystander when there is cyberbullying is different than during face-to-face bullying. A bystander seeing face-to-face bullying could be someone watching a child getting beat up on the playground for their lunch money. With cyberbullying, being a bystander can be much more subtle. You could be acting as a bystander by reading a mean post about someone on a social media site and not doing anything about it. And if you forward an embarrassing picture of someone to all of your friends, or like an untrue, hurtful post, or retweet a nasty tweet on social media - you are actively encouraging the bully. This can be quite damaging.

Most young people do not approve of bullying, but many wait for someone else to take the first step to stop it. If you step in, it is likely that some of your classmates will follow suit. Young people are more likely than adults to stop other youth from bullying. You may have a bigger impact on the situation than your teachers or parents.

Try being the one to take the first step.

- If it's safe, tell the one bullying to stop what they're doing
- Go find someone that can help stop the bullying
- Befriend the victim and lead them away from the situation
- Make up a scenario to get the victim out of the situation (for example, tell them that Mrs. So-and-so is looking for them. This will give them an out.)
- Report the situation to a teacher or the principal
- Write an anonymous letter and drop it off to someone you trust

Bullying makes everyone feel less safe.

By stepping up and speaking out we can stop the bullying from happening.

## Help in Nova Scotia

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team, 902.429.8167 or toll-free, 1.888.429.8167

Bullying Hotline (8am-8pm), call 902.490.SAVE(7283), text 902.233.SAVE(7283), or email [bullyhotline@halifax.ca](mailto:bullyhotline@halifax.ca)

Kids Help Phone, 1.888.668.6868, [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

CyberSCAN Investigation Unit, 902.424.6990 (within HRM) or toll-free, 1.855.702.8234, [www.cyberscan.novascotia.ca](http://www.cyberscan.novascotia.ca)



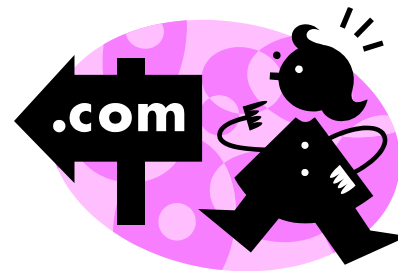
## Useful Websites

Get Cyber Safe, [www.getcybersafe.gc.ca](http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca)

Anti-bullying Nova Scotia, [www.antibullying.novascotia.ca](http://www.antibullying.novascotia.ca)

Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence (PREVNet), [www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca)

Pacer's National Bully Prevention Centre, [www.pacer.org/bullying](http://www.pacer.org/bullying)



## References

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