



Speak Up

Actions To Address
Bullying and
Cyberbullying Behaviour

Introduction

Bullying is a heartbreaking and complex problem. There are no easy answers. Bullying and cyberbullying reduce engagement, reduce productivity, and reduce quality of life. Victims are left feeling vulnerable and alone.

The frequency of bullying and cyberbullying is striking. And so too are its consequences. It affects the victim's emotional well-being. It affects the victim's performance at school. In a recent survey of Nova Scotia students, 60 per cent of respondents indicated that they have been bullied. Canadian teachers have ranked cyberbullying as their highest issue of concern. Most teachers — 89 per cent — agree that bullying and violence are serious problems in public schools.

Parents care deeply about their children and want the best for them. Parents want to know how they can be both proactive and supportive if their child is being harmed by or engaging in bullying behaviour. The effects of bullying go beyond the school yard. Parents are a key partner to help address bullying behaviour in our community.

When those experiencing, witnessing, or engaging in bullying behaviour speak up, change can happen.

What Parents Can Do

- Be alert to signs of bullying. Many instances of bullying behaviour go unreported. Report it!
- Connect with services and supports in your community to help youth build healthy relationships through the Speak Up action plan.
- Stay informed. Bullying is a societal issue and everyone can help to prevent it.

Parents want answers. Parents are looking for ways to help their children. Nova Scotia has an action plan. It is called *Speak Up, An Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviour*. This action plan was developed by the provincial departments of Education, Justice, Community Services, Health and Wellness, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, as well as the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. The Speak Up action plan supports a community-wide response to bullying and cyberbullying. Through this plan, Nova Scotians will see comprehensive action being taken in four key focus areas:

- interpersonal relationships
- public awareness and education
- partnerships
- system response: accountability and responsibility

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are how we get along with others. The ability to develop strong interpersonal relationships is a key skill for getting along in our society. It is key to developing social thinking skills. Social thinking skills enable our children and youth to successfully navigate life.

Actions in this area help build stronger relationships. Stronger relationships between youth and parents. Stronger relationships between youth and educators. Stronger relationships between youth and their peers. Stronger relationships between youth and the community. When we have strong and healthy interpersonal relationships, bullying behaviour is easier to spot. Bullying behaviour is easier to deal with. Bullying behaviour is neither accepted nor tolerated.

Checklist Legend:	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
New Action: ●			
Expanding Action: ○			
Interpersonal Relationships			
Support the Restorative Approaches in Schools initiative to build the tools and resources educators need to transform their schools into restorative schools	●	○	○
Support the expansion of SchoolsPlus from 12 hub sites to 28 hub sites across the province	○	○	○
Provide training for school staff in the implementation of the “go-to” educator training that helps to identify mental health problems and mental disorders in the secondary school setting	●		
Create Supportive Environments as set out in the Thrive! strategy for a healthier Nova Scotia:			
• Provide after-school programming for youth	●	○	○
• Provide free access to sport and recreation facilities	●	○	○
• Expand the Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program	○	○	○
Expand the Strongest Families program to ensure families across the province have access to telephone coaching services that help children with behavioural or anxiety issues and their families to manage these issues	○		

* Solid green circles indicate when new actions will start. Open blue circles indicate the expansion of existing actions. This is a multi-year action plan and actions are on-going throughout.

Public Awareness and Education

Before we can change behaviour, we need to raise awareness. We need to change attitudes. We are working with youth and communities to raise awareness and change attitudes towards bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. Actions in this area heighten awareness of bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. Actions look for its root causes. Actions figure out how it can be addressed. We need a meaningful community response to make a difference.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Public Awareness and Education			
Launch the Unlike Cyberbullying campaign— unlikecyberbullying.ca	●		
Deliver an annual conference on bullying and cyberbullying		●	○
Develop and maintain an anti-bullying website and social media platforms	●	○	○
Establish a Nova Scotia standard for evidence-based curriculum resources	●		
Provide program grants to allow schools to access and implement approved curriculum resources	●		
Promote cultural competency by providing professional development opportunities for teachers on meeting the educational needs of African Nova Scotian, First Nations, and immigrant learners	○	○	○
Develop a mental health unit for Healthy Living–9 curriculum and support teacher training		●	
Revise curriculum for Health Education Primary–6 and Healthy Living 7–9		●	
Create and identify resources to support the implementation of curriculum changes		●	
Provide learning opportunities for educators, community leaders, and youth, including highlighting the topic of bullying as part of the province’s annual Crime Prevention Symposium	●		
Update the <i>Guide for Girls</i> publication to include online safety for girls		●	

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Partnerships

We must all work together to address bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. This includes educators, community groups, families, and policing agencies. Actions in this area establish new partnerships and expand existing partnerships. It will take strong partnerships to support system-wide change in bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. If we can collaborate in this way, we can create safer communities.

<i>Checklist Legend:</i>	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
New Action: ●			
Expanding Action: ○			
Partnerships			
Establish an interdepartmental working committee to track, monitor, and report annually on the action plan's progress	●		
Expand the SchoolsPlus service to co-locate mental health clinicians in schools	○		
Re-establish the Nova Scotia Youth Advisory Council	●	○	○
Expand existing partnerships and explore new ones with universities, community colleges, and private career colleges, and with professional associations, and community and service organizations	○	○	○
Strengthen partnerships with African Nova Scotian, First Nations, and immigrant community-based organizations to support diversity of learning	●		
Strengthen partnership with the Atlantic Ministers Forum Responsible for the Status of Women	○	○	○
Collaborate to build provincial capacity to respond to human trafficking to raise awareness about victim-centred approaches regarding the sexual exploitation of youth and children	●	○	○
Facilitate the exchange of knowledge about online child sexual exploitation within the Atlantic Ministers Forum Responsible for the Status of Women	○	○	○
Support a youth-community-government partnership in an arts-based workshop about girls and bullying with an emphasis on diversity (<i>Mean Girl Monologues</i>)	●		

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System Response: Accountability and Responsibility

Our laws and regulations govern how our systems can respond to unwanted behaviour. We want our responses to reflect our core values. Our laws and regulations need to provide a way to effectively change attitudes toward bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. Actions in this area give government, educators, policing agencies, and community groups the authority and tools needed to address bullying and cyberbullying behaviour in our province.

<i>Checklist Legend:</i>	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
New Action: ●			
Expanding Action: ○			
System Response: Accountability & Responsibility			
Hire an anti-bullying coordinator	●		
Amend the <i>Education Act</i> to ensure all school staff have a duty to report known incidents of severely disruptive behaviour	●		
These amendments also require principals to investigate and respond to all known incidents of severely disruptive behaviour, including bullying and cyberbullying	●		
Amend the <i>Education Act</i> and Regulations to include bullying and cyberbullying definitions	●		
Revise the Nova Scotia School Code of Conduct to align with changes to the act and regulations	●		
Adapt all Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission programs and initiatives to recognize the amendments to the Nova Scotia <i>Human Rights Act</i> on transgender issues	●		
Legislate point-of-sale intervention to require cell phone companies to distribute educational materials on responsible cell phone use to customers entering a new contract	●		
Expand iNSchool to identify scope and prevalence of bullying and cyberbullying through behaviour incident tracking	○		
Require all school boards to report annually on incidents of severely disruptive behaviour, including bullying and cyberbullying	●	○	○
Promote data collection through Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to help identify the scope of bullying and cyberbullying			●
Improve suicide risk identification	○		

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Checklist Legend:	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
New Action: ●			
Expanding Action: ○			
Support the development of Gay Straight Alliance Forums in schools	○		
Host a symposium for police leaders	●		
Implement Adoption Project to improve overall outcomes for children and youth in care by increasing rates of adoption	●		
Conduct a gap analysis of the guidance counsellor ratio from P-12	●		

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Conclusion

Bullying and cyberbullying are a societal issue. To create real change in our community, we need to address the root causes. We know that bullying and cyberbullying behaviour happen for complex reasons. That means we need extensive and ongoing support to address this issue.

Through the Speak Up action plan, we take a coordinated and collaborative approach to address the root causes of bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. Our plan promotes awareness of bullying and cyberbullying. Our plan enhances our ability to relate to one another in healthy ways. Our plan creates change. No one action alone will bring success. But each individual who takes action to address bullying and cyberbullying can make a real difference.

Our approach is to empower young people to make good choices in any situation. To help young people understand the impact of their behaviour on others. To help young people navigate this ever-changing world.

Broad societal change is necessary. It's time to speak up and make a change. It is our hope that our children and youth will lead this change. Our children and youth can bring about a cultural shift. They can decide that bullying is not acceptable today or tomorrow.

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