

What happens if a student is bullied because of disabilities?

The law strongly protects students who are bullied because of disabilities.

Every student is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). If bullying a student with a disability causes the student not to get a “meaningful education,” the school must hold a meeting (IEP - Individual Educational Plan) to discuss the effect the bullying had on the student, whether the student’s needs have changed as a result of the bullying, and what additional supports must be provided to assure that the student gets a meaningful education.

Does the school have to prevent bullying?

All Connecticut schools must have a plan to keep the school safe, including prevention of bullying.

The school has to have a person who investigates bullying reports, keeps records of bullying investigations, and is responsible for preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying.

Can Michael go to a different school if he feels threatened?

If a student does not feel safe at school, the school may be able to help the student transfer. Ask a teacher, guidance counselor, school administrator, or lawyer what to do about this.

If a student is violently injured by another student on school grounds and this was reported to police, the injured student usually has the right to transfer to another school. All schools are required to notify victims of violent crimes of their right to transfer and to have policies about these safety transfers.

Is bullying a crime?

Not always. But some things that count as bullying, like physical attacks and threats, are crimes.

Can a student accused of bullying be suspended or expelled?

Yes, but this will not happen every time. Schools can use different options, including suspension or expulsion, to make sure bullying does not happen.

Need Help?

If you are at school, on a school bus, or at a school event, and another student or group of students repeatedly makes fun of you, threatens you, or embarrasses you on purpose, that is bullying. Go to a teacher or other school staff to report this.

Your Legal Rights

Call us if you need help:
860-570-5327 and 203-335-0719

This brochure is intended as reference only and should not be interpreted as legal advice. If you need specific information about the law, please call 860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719.

Center for Children’s Advocacy
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beef
drama
static
bullying

What is the law?

What counts as bullying?

Connecticut law says bullying is repeated verbal, written or electronic communication (cyberbullying), or physical acts or gestures, directed at or referring to a student in the **same** school district, that:

- cause physical or emotional harm to the student or damage the student's property
- place the student in reasonable fear of harm or damage to his or her property
- create a hostile environment at school for the student
- infringe on the rights of the student at school
- substantially disrupt the education process or orderly operation of a school



Michael can't take it anymore.

Kids at school call him a loser. He hears them laughing at online posts about him. Last week, a kid at school threatened to hurt him.

Michael does not want to snitch, but he hates going to school and he is afraid.

What can Michael do about the bullying?

1. Report it to any school employee.

He can report the bullying anonymously. This means the school cannot tell anyone that he made the report if he asks them not to. The school has to investigate all bullying reports, even if they are anonymous.

2. Tell someone at school that he does not feel safe.

3. Ask for a copy of the school bullying policy.

Or ask the school to give the school policy to his parent/guardian. This will help them know what the school should be doing to protect him.

4. Ask his parent/guardian to file a written report with the school.

Does Michael have to report it?

No. The law does not require him to report it.

Can Michael report the bullying anonymously?

The school must keep the report anonymous if asked to.

Can friends or other students report bullying?

Yes. The school has to investigate reports from other students. Students can make anonymous reports.

Does school staff have to report bullying?

Yes. School employees have to make a verbal and written report whenever they learn about bullying. Students involved may never know who reported it.

What does the school have to do about a bullying report?

If bullying happens at school, on a school bus, at a school event, or if it affects a student at school, the school must:

- investigate the report
- ask parents or guardians of all students involved to attend at least one meeting at school
- develop a plan to stop the bullying and prevent it from happening again

Is this Bullying?

If a student or group of students repeatedly makes fun of, threatens, or embarrasses another student, the law calls this bullying. If it happens through texting, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, or any social media, that is cyberbullying.

Here are some things that can count as bullying if another student does them more than once:

- insulting you or someone you care about
- harassing you sexually, or because of race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, or disability
- embarrassing you through pranks or jokes
- threatening to hurt you
- asking you to fight

If a student gets in a fight, is that bullying?

Bullying could cause a fight, but a single fight is not always bullying. It has to happen more than once.

