

State of Georgia Statute

Bullying is any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so or any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm.

Statute O.C.G.A. 20-2-751.4, 1999, Georgia General Assembly

Relational Aggression

Relational aggression is a term for behaviors that hurts others by damaging one's relationships with peers, or by injuring one's feelings of social acceptance. Both males and females use relational aggression as a form of bullying, though it is often thought of as the primary way in which females bully. Examples of relational aggression are:

- Purposefully ignoring someone when angry such as giving the *silent treatment*
- Spreading rumors about a disliked classmate
- Telling others not to play with or associate with a certain classmate as a means of retaliation.

In each of these examples, *social relationships* are used as the vehicle for harming a peer. The common stereotype of bullying behavior is a large child beating up on a smaller child. While this sometimes occurs, the most common form of bullying behavior among children is relational aggression. Because of the widespread belief that most bullying is physical in nature, children may not understand that rumors, exclusion, and calling another student names is also a form of bullying.

Tips for Parents:

- Make sure your child understands that relational aggression is a form of bullying that can be just as harmful as or more harmful than physical bullying.
- While most children who observe relational aggression dislike the behavior, they may be uncertain about what to do when they see it. Suggest the following to your child:

When I see someone being teased or excluded I can:

- invite him or her to sit with me
- refuse to leave someone out
- be a rumor blocker ("How do you know that? Sounds like gossip to me.")
- confront the bully openly (only if you feel safe doing this)
- distract the bully by suggesting another activity
- give support to the student being targeted privately
- tell an adult

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