**Online Bullying**

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Teens are using the internet and social media more than ever. Cyberbullying is at an all-time high. It's important that we are able to recognize when bullying is happening to our children. We have to take steps to ensure that all children feel safe.

According to the State of Michigan, bullying is defined as any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication that is likely to harm someone directly or indirectly. Michigan does have laws to provide protection against cyberbullying for students while they are on or off school grounds. Research continues to show that having an adult be a consistent and reliable resource is what really helps decrease the chances of a child being bullied.

Parents must stay alert and aware of their child's behaviors, as most youth are very unlikely to come to a parent or trusted adult for help. The following tips can assist in determining if your child is a victim of bullying or doing any bullying themselves:

- *Pay close attention to changes in behaviors*. Changes in behavior can be considered a normal part of childhood. However, sudden changes in behavior or spikes in emotions can be a sign that something is wrong and should be addressed right away.
- *Use any opportunity to talk to your child about bullying.* Whether it is a tv show, movie, or video that you've watched, use the actions of others as examples to share with your child and start a conversation.
- *Ask questions about their experiences.* While listening to their responses, be sure to watch body language, listen to tone of voice and hold space for them to share.  Try not to rush their responses or fill in the blanks.
- *Stress the importance of how we make others feel.* Remind your child we should never make others feel bad, as we know some youth are not only being bullied but are bullies themselves.

If you would like more information or resources to help stop bullying, please visit stopbullying.gov.