Bullying

People with disabilities are bullied more than others. This really hurts us.

What to Do if You Are Bullied?

You Can Report It. Tell your boss, your self-advocacy group, a trusted friend or family member, support staff, or counselors if it happens.

SARTAC - Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center
www.selfadvocacyinfo.org
Bullying is a big problem. People with disabilities are more at risk for a few reasons:

- They may not know what bullying is because they did not learn about it.
- Some people may have a hard time speaking, so they cannot report it.
- Talking about bullying can be hard, nobody teaches them how to do it.
- Some think they deserve to be treated badly, even though nobody does.
- They might worry that people will not believe them if they talk about the abuse.

SARTAC - Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center
www.selfadvocacyinfo.org
The **difference** between bullying and harassment is that when the bullying behavior is directed at a person who belongs to a protected class, it's defined as harassment.

Protected classes include:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sex
- Age
- Disability
- National origin

SARTAC - Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center
www.selfadvocacyinfo.org
Bullying at Home or Between People

How can I tell if I am being bullying?

Pay attention to your feelings when around someone.

Your feelings matter the most!
Types of Bullying

**Verbal bullying** means using words in a mean way. This can be:
- Making fun of someone
- Calling someone mean names
- Saying unkind things about someone's body
- Saying they will hurt someone

**Social bullying** is when someone tries to make another person look bad to others or messes with their friendships. This includes:
- Not letting someone join in
- Telling others not to be friends with someone
- Spreading false stories or making someone feel embarrassed in front of others
Types of Bullying

Physical bullying is when someone hurts another person's body or their stuff. This involves:

- Hitting, kicking, pinching, tripping, or pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things
- Showing mean or unkind hand signs
Even though there's no national law just about bullying, sometimes bullying is discriminatory harassment. It may be harassment because of someone's race, where they're from, their skin color, sexual orientation, gender identity, how old they are, if they have a disability, or what religion they follow.

You can File an ADA Complaint if the bullying is because of your disability. It can be considered discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA. You can file a complaint with the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights or the Department of Justice.
Bullying can be Verbal Abuse by Staff

People with disabilities face higher rates of abuse by staff in day programs, group homes and any place where you get services.

What to Do if Abused by Staff

Report it to other staff members, counselors, or doctors. Many are mandated reporters. That means they must report abuse to the authorities.

SARTAC - Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center
www.selfadvocacyinfo.org
There isn't one "best" or "right" way to handle a bully. Every situation and person is different. You might:

- Ignore them.
- Say something back.
- Tell someone about it.

You often have to decide quickly what to do.

Always think first - Am I safe?

Then, choose what to do next.

If you feel scared, it's okay to just ignore the bully.
Here are ideas to consider. Practice, role-playing, and brainstorming responses ahead of time can help, too

• **Say something:** If you think it's safe. Stay calm. Don't yell or call names. You might say, "Please be respectful" or "Don't make fun of people with disabilities."

• **Give them a flyer:** If talking feels too hard, you can hand them a card or flyer that talks about treating people with disabilities with respect. You can get these from websites like [Spread the Word to End the Word](http://www.spreadthewordtow.com) or [Words Hit Like A Fist](http://www.fistwords.org).

SARTAC - Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center www.selfadvocacyinfo.org
Choose your battles wisely.
How you respond should depend on how often the bullying happens and how serious it is. If the bullying isn't very bad or hurtful, and you don't see the bully very often (like at work or a bothersome family member at gatherings), you might decide to stay away from them and ignore what they do.
• Try looking the bully in the eyes. Sometimes, if a bully really sees you looking at them, they might start to feel sorry and stop bothering you.

• If you can, try to get away from the bully. If this happens at work, you could ask if you can work in a different place.

• Keep track of what the bully does. Write down when it happened and what exactly happened. If writing is hard for you, ask someone to help you write it down. You might need these notes if you decide to tell someone at work or the police about the bullying.
• **Tell the Company:** If the person bullying you works for a company, you can call or write to the company to tell them their worker is being mean to people while working. Explain why this isn't okay.

• **If the bullying happens at a bus stop, subway, or train station,** you can tell someone about it. File a complaint online or by calling them.

• **Tell the Police:** If you need to talk to the police, it's good to let them know if you have a disability.

SARTAC - Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center
www.selfadvocacyinfo.org
● **Use your Phone**: If you have a smartphone you can take a video of someone being bullied.

● **Be Creative and Help Stop Bullying**: You can make flyers about stopping bullying and hang them up. You can also write a letter to your local newspaper telling them about bullying.
What to Do If You See Bullying Happening

If you see someone being bullied, there are many ways you can help:

● If you think it's safe, say something. Ask the bully why they're acting that way. This can make them stop and think.
● Use jokes to change the subject and make things lighter.
● Remember, when more people come together, they're stronger. If you and others act together, you can show you don't like bullying.
● Walk with the person who was bullied to make them feel safer.
● Later, talk to the person who was bullied when you're alone. Tell them you don't agree with bullying and that you care about them.