

# How to Help Children who are Bullied



Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence  
La promotion des relations et l'élimination de la violence

by Katherine McKenney, M.A.

**C**hildren are often hesitant to talk about being bullied because they are fearful of retaliation or feel ashamed of being victimized. Some children believe that adult intervention will make the bullying worse. It is important that leaders convey the message that it is the leaders' responsibility to deal with bullying, not the Scouts'. Leaders want to know about all incidents of bullying, even the minor ones, such as name-calling.

For those children who think that telling adults about bullying means tattling on others, leaders should clarify the difference between "tattling" and "telling". "Tattling" is what you do to get someone *into trouble* and "telling" is what you do to get someone *out of trouble*. So when someone is not safe (either yourself or another person), it is important to tell a trusted adult. Leaders need to realize that when children finally come forward and report being bullied, they have likely been bullied dozens of times prior to this. It is im-

portant, therefore, that leaders be ready to listen to children's experiences right away rather than put it off until later. Thank the child for having the courage to come forward and explain that it is his/her right to feel safe and have a positive experience in their Scouting group.

**Once leaders learn of a child being victimized, it is their obligation to take steps to address the bullying.**

For some children, however, it can be difficult to talk about their experiences. Leaders can reduce the discomfort children feel about reporting bullying by providing alternative means of informing adults. For example, create an anonymous "bullying box" where children can submit written accounts of their experiences. Provide form letters that children can

use to describe the bullying. These letters can then be given to parents, teachers, or other leaders to inform adults of their experiences. A few examples of such form letters can be found on the PREVNet web site ([www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca)).

Once leaders learn of a child being victimized, it is their obligation to take steps to address the bullying. Leaders should first ask for details about the incident including: what happened, when did it occur, who was involved, how did it end, who, if anyone was informed, and what action, if any, was taken. Then leaders can make a plan for protection. Talk with the victimized children and discuss what they themselves can do to solve the problem, as well as identify who and where they can go to if they start to be bullied again. Help by teaching children how to remain calm when being bullied, because showing distress or fighting back can both make the bullying worse. Strategies such as deep breathing and counting to ten can help children remain calm in the situation. Children should not be encouraged to fight back. Research shows that when children who are victimized fight back, the severity and the length of bullying episodes increase. Rather, children should be encouraged to stay calm, walk away, and tell a leader.



## Scouting's Mission

The mission of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

## Énoncé de Mission du scoutisme

Le scoutisme a pour mission – en partant de valeurs énoncées dans la promesse et la Loi scoutes – de contribuer à l'éducation des jeunes afin de participer à la construction d'un monde meilleur peuplé de personnes épanouies, prêtes à jouer un rôle constructif dans la société.



