



KITSAP SAFE SCHOOLS NETWORK
www.kitsapsafeschools.org

A Family's Guide To Handling Anti-Gay Bullying

First, take pride in your child's trust.

Only half the young people who experience anti-gay bullying feel safe going to their families for help.

Then, support your child:

- Listen. If you ask questions, try to make them supportive, not blaming, questions.
- Make sure your child knows that you ...
 - o love and believe in your child
 - o are upset that it happened – but angry not at your child, just at the offenders
 - o will do what you can to make sure school is a safe place for him or her.

You may want to gather information and support for yourself:

- Call a trusted school counselor, nurse, teacher, administrator or social worker.
- Contact another parent. Try Kitsap/Bremerton PFLAG (Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), 360-731-7099
- Contact an advocate at Kitsap Safe Schools Network, info@kitsapsafeschools.org.

Next, you may want to talk with your child's teacher, if the problem is confined to a specific classroom:

- **Explain what happened** and what makes you think the bullying or violence was bias-based.
- **Explain that you want the teacher's help** to ensure your child's emotional and physical safety at school and in transit.
- **Discuss** with the teacher ...
 - o what the teacher will do to stop the bullying from continuing
 - o what the teacher will do to reduce the chances of retribution against your child for speaking up and what to do if there is retribution despite his/her best efforts.
- **Send the teacher a letter** thanking him/her for meeting with you and spelling out your understanding of what was agreed upon. Keep a copy of the letter.

If meeting with the teacher doesn't stop the abuse, or if it is happening in the halls and on the playground rather than in a single classroom, you may want to go through exactly the same steps ...

- with your **principal**,
- and if that doesn't solve the problem, with the assistant superintendent or the **superintendent**,
- and if that doesn't solve the problem, with the **school board president**.

If you do find yourself climbing this ladder of responsibility,

- **Keep in mind that each new individual with whom you speak must care about children or s/he probably would not have become an educator.** You have this in common, although of course you know and love your own child better than anyone does.
- Keep records of your meetings.