

# **Bullying Awareness Month - signs to look for and how you can help**

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Being a kid can be tough. Add a bully to the mix, and being a kid can become unbearable.

A child can be set up for ridicule, rejection, and even abuse by anything that stands out as different from the rest of his or her peer group. Bullying can happen at school, out in the community, or online through social media. It's estimated that 30 percent of Arizona's children are experiencing bullying.

As the Regional Behavioral Health Authority for Maricopa County, Magellan Health Services is concerned about the long-term behavioral health impacts of bullying on Arizona's children. Children who are bullied are more likely to have symptoms of depression, anxiety and other behavioral health issues that persist well into adulthood. And it's not just the victim that is impacted. Bullying may lead to behavioral health issues for the bully, the victim, and even bystanders who witness the bullying.

October is Bullying Awareness Prevention Month, a national-recognition month to raise awareness and inspire action to prevent and stop bullying. Magellan Health Services of Arizona is working with StopBullyingAZ, First Lady of Phoenix Nicole Stanton's anti-bullying program, to raise awareness about bullying.

Awareness is especially important for parents. Often, parents don't even know their child is being bullied. Even if there is generally good communication between the parent and child, children may not tell their parents they are being bullied because of fear, embarrassment, or not wanting to worry the parent. However, there are behavior changes a parent can look for that may be signs a child is dealing with bullying, such as:

Refusing to go to school or making excuses for missing school, such as feeling sick when there are no other symptoms of illness.

Carrying weapons or objects that could be used as a weapon; if confronted, the child may say he or she needs a weapon for self-defense.

"Losing" money, valuable possessions, or articles of clothing; possessions may have been taken or coerced from the child by the bully.

Unexplained bruises or other injuries that the child tries to hide or make unlikely excuses.

Emotional distress after using a computer or checking a smart phone.

If you suspect your child is being bullied talk with them. Some tips for talking with a child about bullying include:

Talk on “neutral ground” or the child’s territory, such as his or her room.

Talk in private. Don’t try to have an in-depth conversation while driving or in front of a room full of people.

Take the time to talk. Don’t start the discussion when you are in a hurry.

Talk with the child, not at him or her. Encourage the child to express feelings and opinions and to contribute ideas for solutions.

If other people, such as a teacher, need to be involved, work with the child to understand why they need to be involved and how to bring them into the conversation.

Be calm. Getting angry and threatening revenge against the bully doesn’t help and might keep the child from disclosing more to you.

Be supportive and encouraging. Whatever “difference” your child may have from some of his or her peers is part of what make your child special to you.

For more information about bullying visit: [www.StopBullyingAZ.org](http://www.StopBullyingAZ.org); or, Magellan’s anti-bullying information website at [www.takementalhealthtoheart.com](http://www.takementalhealthtoheart.com) or [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov).