

## Supporting families to navigate school responses to bullying

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### Key messages

- Schools are obliged to take measures to protect children from bullying and actively support children's right to safety.
- The school system can be powerful and effective in preventing and responding to bullying, but these efforts are not always successful.
- Navigating school responses to bullying can be complex, confronting and require significant effort – both children and parents may need information and support to do so.
- Practitioners outside the school system can support the wellbeing of children and families while those children and families advocate for their own needs and navigate the school system.

### Focus of this resource

This resource presents principles and practices that can be applied by a wide range of practitioners who form relationships with children and families. Your aim as a practitioner is to take advantage of opportunities to check in about bullying, school responses so far, and – most importantly – how the family feels about the process.

This resource has been designed with primary school-aged children in mind, but the principles described may also be helpful also when working with older children.

This resource was written for health professionals. If you are a parent who needs information about childhood bullying, please check out [our Emerging Minds Families resources](#).



### A note on terminology

In this resource we use the term 'parent' to refer to anyone playing a significant caring role in a child's life, and acknowledge that this could include biological parents, grandparents, other relatives, adoptive parents, adults in blended families, kinship carers and many other roles.

### Introduction

Bullying is a significant problem for the healthy development of children in Australia. A detailed discussion of the impact of bullying and the need for response from health care workers can be found in our resource *Identifying and responding to bullying in the preteen years: The role of primary health care practitioners* at: [www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/identifying-and-responding-to-bullying-in-the-pre-teen-years-the-role-of-primary-health-care-practitioners](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/identifying-and-responding-to-bullying-in-the-pre-teen-years-the-role-of-primary-health-care-practitioners).

Efforts to address bullying have largely focused on the school environment, since this is where the majority of bullying involvement occurs (Cross, 2009), and where a significant skilled workforce is engaged in caring for children. To date, a number of school-based bullying reduction programs have had success in reducing childhood bullying involvement (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009).

While school-based responses are vital and can be effective, bullying is nevertheless highly prevalent (Jadambaa et al., 2019). Because these programs are resource intensive and demanding to implement they are not used in all schools, and even where they are, some children will still experience bullying.

This is where practitioners outside the school system have an important role to play in supporting children and their families. Children and their parents may find it challenging to raise bullying concerns with their school: 72% of children report that they wouldn't raise a bullying concern with their teacher, and for those who have done so, only 27.8% report that this helped the situation (Cross et al., 2009).

This resource discusses how practitioners who work with children outside the school system can help children and families to engage with and activate school-based responses to bullying involvement. It also suggests practices to help children and families cope with this process, which can take time, create significant stress and may take multiple engagements to achieve results.

## Recognising and understanding bullying

Bullying is repeated behaviour that causes harm to another person, in the context of a real or perceived power imbalance (Nansel et al., 2001). This power imbalance could be based on physical intimidation or social status. Some bullying behaviours are overt and more readily observable, such as physical violence, while others are more subtle, such as excluding another child from activities. Bullying can occur in person or remotely via technology, which is referred to as cyberbullying.

Definitions of bullying vary and in practice there will likely be situations where it's unclear whether a series of interactions between children in the school setting meets the definition or not, or where the various parties involved disagree about whether it constitutes bullying (Mishna, 2004; O'Brien, 2019). Additionally, it is common for a child who is experiencing bullying behaviour to also engage in bullying behaviour themselves.

Disagreements about identifying bullying can be stressful for children and their families. It is important you validate the child's feelings about their experience – if they are upset or concerned about a relationship interaction then it's important that they feel supported, even if their experience doesn't strictly meet the definition of bullying.



## Types of bullying behaviour

### Discrimination-based bullying

Unfortunately, some children are more likely than others to experience bullying behaviour (Menesini & Salmivelli, 2017), including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children with disabilities
- children from cultural backgrounds different to local majority groups
- children with higher body weight
- children who are exploring their gender identity, or who are trans or gender diverse.

It is important that these children see the positives in their identities. Encourage families to do activities and engage with people who accept or celebrate these aspects of their child's identity. If you are concerned about a significant amount of identity-based bullying, it may help for you or the family to raise this with the school. Teachers and other staff can include topics in the curriculum that create opportunities to learn about and embrace diversity, such as multicultural awareness activities.



- In some circumstances a child's digital account may be accessed by others, for example if a shared computer is used. This can enable access to sensitive private information or impersonation.
- 'Likes' and numbers of friends on social media platforms can be perceived to equal popularity.
- Exposure to strangers is often facilitated by social media platforms – for example, a post commented on by a friend may be visible to a friend of that friend.
- Online interactions can allow for a level of anonymity if people choose not to share their full or true identities. This may help children to feel less vulnerable, but can also reduce accountability for online behaviour.

Schools may vary in the extent to which they are proactive about intervening in the online activities of their students. They may also struggle to achieve oversight of these activities and seek additional input from parents in cases of cyberbullying.

### Covert bullying

While some types of bullying like hitting, physical intimidation, name-calling or racist remarks, are easy to observe and clearly unacceptable behaviour, covert bullying is more subtle. Actions such as mocking tones of voice, excluding a person from activities or spreading false information about a person may not be obvious to school staff or even other children. This type of bullying is common, and contrary to commonly held beliefs, just as damaging as more overt forms of bullying, such as physical intimidation (Cross et al., 2009).

Help families to recognise covert bullying and encourage them to take it seriously. Be prepared for school responses to covert bullying to take more time as staff may need to build a more in-depth understanding of the children involved and their relationships, compared to overt forms of bullying.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs via digital channels, such as text messaging and social media. It can be seen as a form of covert bullying but has some distinctive features to be aware of (Vaillancourt et al., 2017).

- Digital platforms facilitate the sharing of comments, images and video, so one harmful comment or embarrassing moment can be shared many times. Determining responsibility can be difficult when comparing, for example, one child making a hurtful comment about another child, which is then shared and forwarded multiple times by a second child.

### Practice approach

This resource describes a psycho-social, strengths-based approach to supporting families as they navigate school responses to bullying involvement. This process involves acting as the family's 'coach' – you help them identify what needs attention and what resources they can use to best address the child's experience of bullying. It is your role to help the family arrive at their own solutions, rather than solving problems for them.

#### Online courses

For more information and to further develop your skills in working with children and their families refer to the following Emerging Minds online courses:

*Practice strategies for assessment and engagement* ([www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/practice-strategies-for-assessment-and-engagement-child-mental-health-training](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/practice-strategies-for-assessment-and-engagement-child-mental-health-training))

*Engaging children: Good beginnings* ([www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/engaging-children-good-beginnings-e-learning-course](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/engaging-children-good-beginnings-e-learning-course))

## Key practices

There are eight key practices to consider for assisting families to navigate bullying:

- Validate concerns
- Gather information
- Inform about rights
- Brief the family on how to handle bullying
- Check for impacts
- Activate school responses
- Enable protective supports
- 'Hold' the family through the process.

Note that these do not need to be undertaken in order. Effective practice may involve spending significantly more time on one or more of these practices than others depending on the needs of the family.

### Validate concerns

**It is essential to take the time to validate concerns.** Communicate that bullying is a serious issue and that the family has made the right decision by bringing it to your attention. Children and families may have doubts themselves about how serious the issue is, whether it warrants intervention and whether it's appropriate to bring it up with you in your professional context. You should reassure them that you are interested and that it deserves your collective attention.

It is important to present a 'no wrong door' approach and avoid giving the impression that bullying should be handled elsewhere. The language you use and attitude you present can be important in this early stage. Aim to help the child and family feel supported and open about how to move forward, including school-based responses.

### Gather information

**Ask sensitively for more information about the nature and extent of the bullying.** If you sense that the child is hesitant to discuss the matter, it may help to offer a different way for the child to provide this information. Some children may prefer to talk to you with their parent present, others may prefer their parent not be in the room. Some children may prefer their parent to relay information they've previously disclosed to their parent. Others may prefer to write down the main details such as in a questionnaire. Consider the child's communication needs and how that may impact the way they talk about bullying experiences, including whether the

child comes from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background or has a disability related to communication.

Check if the child or family has raised the issue elsewhere, and if they have, what the response has been. Ask if they've been satisfied with any response so far – and if not, what response they were hoping for.

**To really understand the bullying issue, it is best to take a holistic approach to the types of information you gather.** Rather than focusing just on the bullying itself, seek to understand the whole child, including their social world. Ask about who they get on well with, and who they are experiencing difficulties with. Seek to understand the quality of their friendships and ask how others around them respond when any bullying occurs. Ask about whether other children are also experiencing bullying, how it compares to their experience and if the same people are involved. Be curious about their social experiences both in and outside of the school context, as well as online.

### Further resources

For more on information gathering see our companion resource, *Exploring bullying in context: Children's relationships, friendships and social functioning*: [www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/exploring-bullying-in-context-childrens-relationships-friendships-and-social-functioning](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/exploring-bullying-in-context-childrens-relationships-friendships-and-social-functioning)

### Inform about rights

**All children have a right to safety.** This means that schools, and the staff who work in them, are legally required to take measures to protect children from harm, including bullying. All states and territories have legislation covering the rights of children to safety at school – for more information, go to [bullyingnoway.gov.au/responding-to-bullying/legislation-and-policy](http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/responding-to-bullying/legislation-and-policy).

However, not all families will be aware of the school's requirement to support children in feeling safe at school, or what they can do if they believe the school is not fulfilling this responsibility.

**Managing a family's expectations and attitudes towards help-seeking is an important part of supporting them to get the best results for their child.** Be mindful of how a family's understanding may influence the way they approach school-based responses to bullying and what type of support might be most impactful for them.

Consider the following examples:

- A family that is concerned about their child's experience of bullying at school but is unsure how impactful the bullying is and is reluctant to 'make a fuss'. They might be willing to ask the school to investigate the situation but then be reluctant to pursue the issue or unsure whether any action can be taken.
- A family that is upset and angry about their child's experience of bullying and has engaged in arguments with school staff. The family may have a poor existing relationship with the school and perhaps the child has been engaging in bullying behaviour themselves and thus has a reputation for conflict. The family is desperate to see a change in the situation but is unaware of how to effectively advocate for their child's rights.
- A family that is concerned about their child's experience of bullying and is confident in advocating for their child, but their expectations of what actions should be taken are unrealistic. The child is engaged in some mutual conflict with others at school, the school has investigated and is taking steps to improve these relationships but needs time to enact measures.
- A recently immigrated family from a background of disadvantage, with low English language skills, that is still learning about Australian culture and its related expectations of children and school staff. They want the best for their child but are not well informed about the impacts of bullying and the role they might play in supporting their child.

You can help a wide variety of families to establish realistic and helpful expectations of the school through the sensitive sharing of information – refer to Emerging Minds resource *Sharing information with parents about children's social and emotional wellbeing: A step-by-step approach* available at: [emergingminds.com.au/resources/sharing-information-with-parents-about-childrens-social-and-emotional-wellbeing-a-step-by-step-approach](http://emergingminds.com.au/resources/sharing-information-with-parents-about-childrens-social-and-emotional-wellbeing-a-step-by-step-approach)

In most cases schools and their staff want to effectively support children, so you can be confident in encouraging the family's expectation of cooperation and understanding from the school.

## **Brief the family on how to handle bullying**

**It is important to check how parents and children understand some core principles for responding to bullying involvement.** You must take care in how these principles are presented as it is essential that the child doesn't feel it is their responsibility to stop the bullying behaviour or that they will just have to cope with it. Help the family to develop an

expectation that they will be supported and there will be intervention to improve the situation. This doesn't mean promising that the child won't have any future negative experiences with their peers or that changes will occur immediately, but rather ensuring the family that there is likely to be some relief from bullying involvement soon.

Some basic ways for both children and parents to respond are presented as follows.

### **For children**

- Avoid 'fighting back,' either physically, with mean or clever words, or by encouraging others to dislike the child who is engaging in the bullying behaviour. This is likely to escalate the situation and lead to an increase in bullying.
- Practice staying calm in bullying situations. It may help to take some deep breaths or count to 10 in your head. Walk away where possible.
- Tell someone about it. Children need to be willing to report bullying incidents to responsible adults.
- Spend time around people who make you feel good about yourself, such as friends –especially those who are separate from the situation where the bullying occurs.
- Discuss availability of mental health supports, such as school counsellors, psychologists or services such as Kids Helpline ([kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)).

### **For parents**

- Avoid getting involved directly with any children involved in bullying or their families. This is unlikely to improve any bullying situation and may escalate it, making your child's experience worse (Freeman et al., 2012).
- Thank your child for talking about the issue, encourage them to talk to staff at school and reassure them that it is not their fault that they are experiencing bullying.
- Model optimism to help your child feel that the situation can improve.
- Support your child's access to positive social experiences, including opportunities to spend time with friends. Consider whether they would benefit from opportunities to make new friends, for example by joining an extracurricular activity. Read more about this in our resource *Working with families to prevent bullying*: [www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/working-with-families-to-prevent-bullying](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/working-with-families-to-prevent-bullying)
- Raise the bullying issue with the school.



Cyberbullying can be considered a special case and may require helping the family to understand what additional measures to take. These include:

- blocking people on social media and SMS text message systems
- changing passwords
- not deleting any abusive messages that have already been received – and showing them to a responsible adult; and
- monitoring your child's online presence, such as any social media accounts and online games, and when these are being used, such as late at night. Reassure children that their access to safe platforms won't be impacted by being open with you (although steps may need to be taken to change how they are using those platforms).

### Further information

Further information is available from the eSafety Commissioner, for both parents and children: Cyberbullying: A guide to online bullying for parents and carers: [www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/cyberbullying](http://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/cyberbullying)

Cyberbullying (a guide for young people): [www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/cyberbullying](http://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/cyberbullying)

## Check for impacts

**Bullying can have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of children.** You should be curious about and offer support if there are any indications of the following in children who report exposure to bullying (Bonanno et al., 2010; Carr-Gregg et al., 2011):

- depression
- anxiety
- self-harm
- suicidal ideation
- difficulty sleeping
- a drop in academic performance
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder; and
- higher weight.

Any of these impacts may need referral to a specialist practitioner for intervention.

## Activate school responses

**Discuss the importance of approaching the school to activate a direct response with the family.**

Reinforce that the school has a duty of care.

Note that children may have mixed feelings about this prospect, and some may state a strong preference for school staff not to be involved, possibly due to fear of embarrassment, that the school response won't help or that more bullying may be provoked. These fears may have some basis given that school responses are not always effective (Menesini et al., 2017) and many children report that their disclosing incidents to the school did not help (Cross et al., 2009). However, the school has the power to intervene directly and improve the situation.

Be prepared to engage in supportive discussions with families and listen to their reservations about approaching the school. Communicate realistic expectations and reassure them that it may take time and more than one attempt to achieve a satisfactory result, but that together you will persist. Inform parents that they may need to go ahead and approach the school without the child's agreement, and be willing to discuss with the child why this is necessary.

When approaching the school, advise parents they should generally speak to their child's main classroom teacher in the first instance. If the situation does not seem to be improving, they should approach the school wellbeing coordinator (who may be a deputy principal, leading teacher or a dedicated position), followed by the school principal.

Parents should also be encouraged to ask the school for a copy of their bullying policy. This can help the family to understand what to expect from the process and ask questions about how each of the steps in the policy are being addressed.



**Consider options for your direct involvement with the school.** Note that schools will generally expect parents to be the key contact for responses to bullying. However, contact from a professional can help establish the nature of the concerns and add an extra layer of accountability. Discuss with the family if they would like you to send a letter outlining your observations and concerns for the child's wellbeing and asking to be kept informed about progress. Schools may invite practitioners involved in a child's care to participate in student support meetings, which could provide you with another avenue to support the child and help guide the school's response to the bullying. It is worth asking about this possibility if it is not initially offered by the school.

Note that parents may experience a range of emotional responses to their child's difficulties at school. It can be helpful to encourage parents to use a calm and respectful tone when engaging with the school. Explain that schools generally do have children's best interests at heart and want to help. As you work to support families through the process of school responses to bullying involvement be mindful of their emotional state and what it might mean for their ability to effectively advocate for their child. You

can support the family to reflect on their responses and, where appropriate, to find ways of expressing their frustrations in a productive way.

## Enable protective supports

Resilience is important for a child's wellbeing – especially in the context of bullying. While some people view resilience as an innate personality characteristic, it is a skill that children develop. By implementing protective supports that can reduce the impact of any bullying a child is experiencing you can support and increase their resilience.

One of the strongest protective factors against bullying impacts is being 'socially hopeful'. This refers to the extent to which a child believes that they can succeed in social situations (Bonanno et al., 2010). It can be threatened by bullying – a child who is experiences bullying behaviour may form beliefs that they are unlikeable and unlikely to have positive experiences with peers in the future.

**You and the family can support a child to be socially hopeful by providing opportunities for positive interactions.** Discuss the child's close peer relationships, how these might be strengthened and how new ones can be built. Don't assume that families will know how to support their child in building relationships with other children – for example, the concept of a 'play date' may not be familiar to them. Discuss opportunities for involvement in activities outside of school, such as sport, drama or art, which might be available through local community organisations. Be aware that cultural expectations can play a role here – some families may emphasise bonds within the family above those with peers, and not realise the importance of building other connections.

However, family connections are also an important form of protective support to focus on strengthening. Talk to families about positive experiences they can share, and how to build warm, trusting relationships, with regular and open communication.

Seek to establish ways in which the child's self-esteem can be supported. Help the family identify areas in which the child can build skills and a sense of achievement. This may include encouraging their hobbies and interests, and taking on new challenges.



## ‘Hold’ the family through the process

Perhaps the most valuable action a practitioner outside the school system can take to support children who are exposed to bullying is to **partner with the family along the journey**. This is referred to as ‘holding’ the family and stands in contrast to approaches where practitioners address any immediate questions, and the family is then left to follow up on their own.

Firstly, this means communicating with the family about your role in a specific way. Explain that effectively responding to bullying is a process that can take time, but you will be alongside them throughout. Indicate during the first session in which bullying is identified that you intend to revisit this topic with the family regularly. Depending on your service context, this may involve asking the family to book in regular appointments, for example on a fortnightly or monthly basis, even if they don’t have concerns other than the bullying involvement.

Note that families may not expect you to work in this way or to take such an interest in bullying. Some may even be reluctant to engage in a process where they keep revisiting the issue. Without being coercive, try to encourage the family to see the value in checking in regularly and emphasise that bullying is an important topic that deserves consistent attention over time.

While you are holding families during this process, it may help to use a coaching approach. This involves asking the family about how well they feel the bullying response is being managed and how effective their own strategies to advocate for their child are. For example, if teachers have been slow or reluctant to

intervene, what next steps could the family take? For example, when might they escalate the bullying issue to the school principal? If the parents have tried a strategy to help their child make new friends, such as getting them involved in a sporting team, but it doesn’t seem to have worked to increase the child’s social hopefulness, what might they try next? If the family is using specialist mental health support to help their child, how is this progressing?

‘Holding’ also involves monitoring for impacts of bullying and any deterioration in the child’s wellbeing. Impacts may get worse over time and require additional intervention, particularly when school responses to bullying are slow or ineffective.

## Additional information to inform your practice

### Common types of school responses

It may be helpful to know some of the common methods Australian schools use to address bullying involvement (Bradshaw, 2015; Rigby et al., 2016). Note that many of the methods listed following may be combined into an overarching program with specific branding, such as ‘Managing the Bull’ or ‘Stop Think Do’.

### Reactive approaches

- **Direct sanctions** – negative consequences delivered to children who engage in bullying behaviour.
- **Strengthening the victim** – helping children who are experiencing bullying behaviour to develop social and assertiveness skills.
- **Mediation** – two students meet in the presence of a third party (usually a staff member, but possibly a peer mediator) to discuss the situation and attempt to resolve disputes.
- **Restorative practices** – a child who engages in bullying behaviour and the child experiencing this behaviour are brought together to meet, and the child who has engaged in the bullying behaviour is expected to reflect on their behaviour, express remorse and commit to changing their behaviour.
- **The Support Group Method** – a relevant staff member first meets with the child who is experiencing bullying behaviour. Then the staff member meets separately with a mixed group of children that includes the child, or children, who have engaged in the bullying behaviour; plus other children who are likely sympathetic and supportive towards the child who has been experiencing the behaviour. The staff member



explains to the group how the child who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is being impacted and each member of the group is asked to state how they will support this child. The staff member then monitors the situation and follows up.

- **The Method of Shared Concern** – involves a series of meetings. First, one-on-one meetings are held with each student suspected of being involved in the identified bullying behaviour, where they are asked how they can improve the situation. The situation is monitored, followed by another meeting, involving all children who have engaged in the bullying behaviour. There is then a final meeting involving any children who have engaged in the bullying behaviour and the child who has experienced the behaviour, where all children are asked to agree on a sustainable resolution.



### Proactive approaches

- **Playground supervision** – providing staff to monitor children’s behaviour in the school yard and other spaces during recess, lunchtime and before and after school. These staff may aim to be highly visible to both deter problematic behaviour and to be available for children to report issues such as bullying.
- **Classroom management strategies** – various methods by which teachers manage difficult behaviour and conflict within the classroom.
- **Parent training activities** – training offered to parents on how to identify and respond to bullying.
- **Bystander interventions** – teaching all children how to act to support others who they understand to be the targets of bullying behaviour.
- **Education/awareness campaigns** – presentations at school assemblies, information nights for parents and participation in special events such as the [National Day of Action on Bullying](#).
- **Classroom work** – using class time to discuss topics such as empathy, respect for others and bullying. This is often referred to as ‘social-emotional learning’ (SEL).
- **Encouraging reporting** – communicating to the whole student population that they should report bullying to teachers when it occurs. Often it also includes encouraging children who are experiencing bullying behaviour to report each occasion of bullying behaviour as it occurs.
- **Peer support** – setting up buddy programs and peer mediation programs (in which children are taught how to help others resolve conflicts).

### Issues to be prepared for

#### Inadequate school responses

Unfortunately, school responses to bullying are not always successful. While both prevention approaches and responding when bullying occurs can reduce the incidence of such behaviour, these methods are not successful in all cases (Bradshaw, 2015). Furthermore, the ‘gold standard’ of school anti-bullying programs, which includes multiple measures implemented on an indefinite, rolling schedule (such as weekly in-class work for all students), can be difficult to implement and may lack investment by the school (Menesini et al., 2017). There may also be variations between schools, not only in the skills of staff, but also their attitudes and expectations around bullying, which could influence the outcome.

It is important to convey optimism that the bullying situation will improve over time, without setting up unrealistic expectations and encouraging the family to keep trying if results are unsatisfactory in the short- to medium-term. If families become frustrated at perceived or actual inadequacies in the response from their school, acknowledge these frustrations while encouraging a forward-looking, solution-focused approach. Keep families informed about their options to escalate bullying issues further, including approaching state education departments for further action.

#### Future recurrences

Be mindful when supporting children that bullying can reoccur in the future. This may be particularly detrimental to a child’s sense of being socially hopeful, as mentioned previously.

## **Self-harm and suicidality**

It is important to be aware of the increased risk for self-harm and suicidal ideation in young people who experience or engage in bullying behaviour. Data from the Longitudinal Study of Australia's Children indicate that in the 14- to 15-year-old age group, children who had experienced bullying behaviour were more than three times as likely to have self-harmed and more than two times as likely to have attempted suicide. Adolescents who had engaged in bullying behaviour were more than two times as likely to have self-harmed and more than two times as likely to have attempted suicide. Children who had both experienced and engaged in bullying behaviour fared worst of all, being more than four times as likely to have self-harmed and more than 2.5 times as likely to have attempted suicide (Ford et al., 2017).

While this study focused on a slightly older age group than this resource is intended for, the data indicate that self-harm and suicide are important issues to be aware of and monitor.

## **Bullying in non-school contexts**

Many of the practices and principles described in this resource may also be relevant to bullying that happens outside of school. Practitioners should be active in supporting families where bullying occurs in external contexts, for example, during extracurricular activities like school sporting teams or out of school hours care.

However, it's important to note that school-based staff are likely to have completed more professional development on bullying, and to see addressing it as more central to their roles. This doesn't mean that responsible adults in other settings aren't required to protect children, or that they won't want to help respond to bullying, but it's important to recognise that it could potentially be a slower process with additional challenges.

## **Conclusion**

Bullying is an ongoing, significant threat to the wellbeing of all children. Responding effectively is likely to require a concerted effort from all practitioners concerned with supporting children and their families. To date, efforts at reducing and responding to bullying have understandably focused on the school context. However, navigating these processes can be confusing, daunting and emotionally challenging for children and their families. This presents practitioners outside the school system with a real opportunity to play an important role in tackling bullying by helping families engage and succeed in these systems, while also building children's capacity and resilience.

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