Fact Sheet 18

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH BULLYING: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Bullying can happen at any age, in person or online. For children and teenagers with craniofacial conditions, experiences may vary depending on how visible their difference is, what peers know about their surgery or condition, and the social environment at school.

This fact sheet is written for parents. It offers practical advice you can share with your child and adapt to their age, personality, and situation. Not every suggestion will be relevant to every child — use the strategies that feel most appropriate, and add your own.

Core Messages to Share

- **It's Not Their Fault**

Reassure your child that bullying is never their fault.

- **They Are More Than Their Difference**

Having a craniofacial condition is only one part of who they are. They are also kind, funny, clever, creative, thoughtful — and so much more.

Practical Strategies

- **Tell Someone You Trust** – Encourage your child to talk to you, a teacher, counsellor, or family friend.
- **Stay Close to Supportive Friends** – Good friends stick up for each other.
- **Walk Away and Stay Safe** – It's okay to remove themselves from unsafe situations.
- **Use Words (if safe)** – Phrases like "That's not okay" or "Please stop" can sometimes stop bullying.
- **Ignore or Block** – Not engaging, or blocking/reporting online bullies, prevents escalation.
- **Stay Calm** – Bullies often seek a strong reaction. Remaining calm or using humour can help.

(continued overleaf)

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- **Prepare Responses (teens)** – A witty or calm comeback can reduce the impact of repeated insults.
- **Document Incidents (teens)** – Keeping notes of what happened can help when reporting.
- **Build Confidence** – Joining clubs, sports, or hobbies strengthens resilience and friendships.
- **Express Feelings** – Younger children might draw or write; older ones may prefer talking, exercising, or journaling.

Supporting Children with Craniofacial Differences

- **Curiosity vs. Bullying** – Help your child recognise the difference between genuine curiosity and unkindness. Role-play possible questions.
- **Dealing with Misinformation** – Support them to correct false stories calmly or choose not to engage.
- **Choosing What to Share** – Children can decide how much to disclose about their condition or surgery. Both privacy and openness are valid.
- **Using Experience as an Educational Tool** – Some children may feel empowered by sharing their story; others may prefer not to.

Working With Schools

- Stay in touch with teachers and counsellors.
- Ensure your child knows which adults at school they can approach.
- Advocate for psychosocial safety strategies, such as safe spaces or teacher allies.

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Where to Get More Help

These Australian organisations provide excellent resources for children, teens, parents, and schools:

Bullying No Way! (https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/) – Government-backed site with evidence-based resources, fact sheets, and activities.

Kids Helpline (https://kidshelpline.com.au/) – Free, confidential 24/7 phone and online support, with age-specific advice on bullying.

Student Wellbeing Hub – Bullystoppers (https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/resources/bullystoppers-parents/) – Resources for parents, teachers, and students on bullying prevention and response.

Alannah & Madeline Foundation (https://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au/what-we-do/prevention-programs/national-centre-against-bullying) – Focus on protecting children from violence and bullying, with resources for families and educators.

Bully Zero (https://www.bullyzero.org.au/our-programs) – Programs and support for schools, workplaces, and communities.

Project ROCKIT (https://www.projectrockit.com.au/) – Peer-led movement empowering young people to challenge bullying and prejudice.

Australian Human Rights Commission (https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/commission-general/get-help-bullying-violence-and-harassment) – Fact sheets on bullying, harassment, and how to get help.

This information is based on the expertise of clinicians who work with families affected by craniofacial conditions and the lived experience of parents with children who have been diagnosed with craniosynostosis. We thank everyone who contributed to this fact sheet.

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How we can support you:

- Care packs
- Financial assistance
- Family support coordinator
- Connection to other families

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