



Partners for Success  
**Family Support and Resource  
 Center**

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### **Demonstration Classroom Opens: Helping Professionals Work with Deaf-Blind Children**

The Demonstration Classroom is a collaborative project among Connections Beyond Sight and Sound, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Maryland School for the Blind. Located at the Maryland School for the Blind, the project has been established to provide statewide support, training, modeling and mentoring to teachers and related service providers working with students who have dual-sensory impairment and/or cortical visual impairment. Deaf-blindness is a low-incidence disability, but the educational impact of the unique needs of these students can be significant.

Once a visit to the Demonstration Classroom has been scheduled, visitors will receive a packet of resources and materials geared toward the specific needs they expressed on the intake form. During the visit, professionals will have opportunities to:

- Observe classroom activities with individual students and small groups, as well as individual therapy sessions as appropriate;
- Explore environmental modifications, accommodations, and assistive technology tools;
- Speak with educators and related service providers working directly with students.
- View videos of additional instructional strategies.

If you would like to schedule a visit to the Demonstration Classroom, call 301-405-7915 or visit [www.dbss.umd.edu](http://www.dbss.umd.edu) to obtain an Intake Form.



### **The Maryland State Steering Committee For Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students**

The Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students is a non-profit organization sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education and provides a forum for communication and support among public schools and state-operated programs that serves this population throughout the state and meets on a quarterly basis. The professionals who represent the committee are comprised of representatives from each county and the Maryland School for the Deaf.

The purpose of the committee is to serve as an advocacy group on behalf of Deaf and hard of hearing students by encouraging and promoting exchange of information through inter-agency collaboration, providing recommendations and/or assistance, when appropriate, to agencies formulating policy which affects education, and sponsoring an annual conference to provide continuing education opportunities for professionals working in the educational setting.

The array of professionals that participate on the committee consists of administrators, coordinators, team leaders, teachers of the Deaf and hard of hearing, audiologists and speech language pathologists. The diversity of the committee makes it possible for the group to maintain awareness of current trends in education, technology, and service delivery models to best represent the full continuum of educational opportunities available for students.

For more information about the Maryland State Steering Committee For Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students contact, Kathy Slagle at [SlagleK@calvertnet.k12.md.us](mailto:SlagleK@calvertnet.k12.md.us).

### **New Early Childhood Resources Available in Several Languages**

PACER Center has published several new resources for parents of young children with disabilities from diverse cultures.

- **The Early Childhood Transition Guidebook** is now available in Spanish and Somali. The guidebook helps parents understand the process that guides their child's transition from infant and toddler intervention services to other early childhood services at age three and includes strategies to use for a successful transition.
- **Making the Move from Preschool to Kindergarten** is a handout available in English, Somali, Spanish, and Hmong. It offers a check-list for parents whose children are transitioning from special education preschool services into kindergarten.

Visit [PACER.org](http://PACER.org) to view any of the above resources or call 952-838-9000 to order copies.

# What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone repeatedly hurts or threatens another person on purpose. Bullying comes in many forms. It can happen in person, in writing, online, on cell phones, in school, on the bus, at home, anywhere. Wherever it happens, it's NOT acceptable.

## What Should You Do if Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child is Bullied?

### 10 GUIDEPOSTS TO HELP STOP BULLYING PREVENTION

**Recognize that bullying happens to kids who are deaf or hard of hearing.** Many people cannot conceive of the idea that a child with special needs would be the victim of bullying. Unfortunately, children perceived as being different in some way are usually the first individuals to be targeted by bullies. This aggression can take the form of:

- Teasing imitation of the use of sign language.
- Mimicking the deaf child's distinctive vocal quality.
- Encouraging classmates not to associate with the "different" kid.

**Be alert that bullying might be happening to your kid.** Since children who are deaf or hard of hearing can occupy a lower social standing among their peers, they might lack a support system - which the bully recognizes. Bullying can go unreported because children with special needs sometimes struggle with self esteem issues. They may fail to report the abuse due to their feelings of intimidation, humiliation, or embarrassment. It's important to speak with your child about bullying. Tell your child in no uncertain terms that bullying should never be tolerated and there is no shame attached to reporting it.

**Help create a communication friendly environment in your child's school.** Since bullies tend to victimize loners without a support network, encourage your child to engage with other kids and adult staff. Establish a rapport with your child's teacher and principal. Educate them to the nature of your child's hearing loss and to your child's strengths and vulnerabilities. For example, one deaf student had gotten the reputation of being rude because she didn't return the greetings of classmates who passed her in the hall. When the group was reminded that they needed to be in the child's line of sight in order for their greetings to be recognized, the misunderstanding ceased.

**Teach your child to be a self advocate.** Teach your child that she has a lot to offer both classmates and school. Encourage your child to speak out when something seems wrong. If she is perceived as having a strong character, that is often enough to discourage a bully from targeting her. If necessary, consider social skills training or getting to know a deaf or hard of hearing adult mentor for assistance.

**Beware of cyberbullying.** The cyberbully uses the Internet and social media tools to harass his victims. Matthew Kaplowitz, co-author of *How to Talk to Your Kids About Bullying and School Violence* and producer of digital media for students with disabilities, recommends that you oversee your child's computer activities. "Consider installing Internet security filters. They will help you regulate your child's online experience. Teach your child the nuances of communicating online, and that messages, sent privately, can easily be shared with others. Check text messages to make sure that offensive messages aren't being sent to your child. Teach your child never to reveal personal information online."

### INTERVENTION

**Be supportive.** If you discover that your child is being bullied; don't wait. Speak to her about it immediately. Listen to your child's feelings. Be understanding and supportive. Explain that they are not responsible for being bullied nor is there any shame in being bullied—bullying must never be tolerated. Share a story about how you or someone you know was bullied. You are also likely to have strong feelings in the matter, but try to generate an impression of calmness. This is your child's experience—and it's a very personal experience.

**Gather information.** Find out everything you can about the incident(s). Who was involved? What led up to the altercation? How long has the bullying been going on? Learn about the school's anti-bullying policy. Get all your facts organized so you can approach the situation efficiently and effectively.

**Communicate your concerns calmly with the school.** Positive communication is usually the key to getting results. Approach your child's teacher and the parents of the bully in a calm, objective manner. Let your demeanor show that you are just there to find a practical solution to an unfortunate problem. The other parties involved might respond defensively if they feel you are angry or judging them. You are all going to have to work together on a solution, so eliminate resistance before it begins by communicating calmly.

**Be persistent.** Bullying is not to be tolerated after it has been discovered and reported. If the bullying continues and your child's teacher doesn't rectify the problem in a prompt fashion, do not hesitate to take the matter to a higher authority. Alert the school's guidance counselor or principal. If this fails to bring satisfaction, notify the district supervisor. Keep a written record of all the communications and conversations you've had with teachers and school staff or school administration.

## INTERVENTION (Continued)

**Utilize your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).** If the bullying of your child is based on his hearing loss and the harassment is interfering with your child's learning, the school is legally obligated to stop the persecution and provide support. If your child has an IEP, set a meeting with the IEP team to collaboratively figure out an anti-bullying action plan.

Reprinted from **Hands & Voices Communicator**, Fall 2011. This article was prepared in collaboration with **Hands & Voices**, [www.handsandvoices.org](http://www.handsandvoices.org), the **National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI)**, [www.spedex.com/napvi](http://www.spedex.com/napvi), and **Bridge Multimedia**, [www.bridgemultimedia.com](http://www.bridgemultimedia.com).

### Bullying Related Links:

#### Stop Bullying: Speak Up:

A website, produced by the Cartoon Network, that educates kids about the problem of bullying and encourages them to spread the word about bullying awareness and prevention. [www.cartoonnetwork.com/promos/stopbullying/index.html](http://www.cartoonnetwork.com/promos/stopbullying/index.html)

#### National Bullying Prevention Center:

A website created by PACER, a parent training and information center for families of children with disabilities, to address bullying through educational, creative, and interactive resources. [www.pacer.org/bullying](http://www.pacer.org/bullying)

#### StopBullying.gov:

A website that provides information from various government agencies about how students, parents, educators, and community members can prevent or stop bullying. [www.StopBullying.gov](http://www.StopBullying.gov)

#### Bullying and the Child with Special Needs:

A website that offers a comprehensive report and online resources regarding bullying and children with disabilities. <http://www.abilitypath.org/areas-ofdevelopment/learning-schools/bullying/>

### Soothing School Stress

Anxiety about homework, tests, even socializing, can get to any students.

**Find the source.** Determining the cause of your child's anxiety can be difficult, especially with younger children. You might explore her feelings using a favorite puppet. Have the puppet say, "I am really worried about my science test," and then encourage your child to tell the puppet her own feelings about school. This technique can lighten the mood and help your child express herself.

**Let him know what to expect.** If your child feels anxious about an upcoming event or change in schedule, help him understand what's coming. You might compare a class field trip, for example, to a recent family outing. Give him specifics: Let him know exactly where he's going, which parents will be on hand, and when he will be picked up. Reducing the uncertainty can help calm nerves.

**Stick to a low-key evening routine.** Your child's days are packed. Create time each night to allow him to wind down with quiet activities like drawing

or stretching. Setting aside time for rest, not just sleep, helps ease the anxiety children feel.

**Use relaxation techniques.** Certain exercises can help children work through stressful moments. Have your son tense and then release the muscle groups one at a time from head to toe. Focusing on the muscles, rather than a problem, like a poor grade, can be meditative.

**Send some love.** Put a "Thinking of you" note in her backpack. This simple gesture reminds your child that she's loved and that she's always on your mind when you're apart.

**Be a model.** Discuss a few situations that cause you stress and the methods you use for dealing with them. This lets your child know that she's not alone and can provide her with new ideas for coping.

Reprinted from **Scholastic Parents**, October, 2011.  
[www.scholastic.com/parents](http://www.scholastic.com/parents)

## Family Support and Resource Center

8169 Old Montgomery Road  
PO Box 894  
Columbia, MD 21044  
Phone: 410-480-4597 (v/tty)  
Fax: 410-480-4598  
E-mail: [partners@msd.edu](mailto:partners@msd.edu)

A statewide support service for families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and the professionals who support them.



## Teaching Your Children to be Thankful

Thanksgiving is the perfect time to teach children about being thankful, here are some ideas.

**Thankful Paper Chain.** Cut strips of paper and connect them together as loops. Write things you are thankful for on the strips of paper before you connect them.

**Thanksgiving Tree.** Trace your child's hand on yellow, red or brown construction paper. Cut out the hand shapes and have your child write what they are thankful for on the handshape. Cut a tree trunk shape out of brown construction paper, put it onto a large piece of poster board. Let the kids add their hand shapes as leaves above the tree trunk, turning it into a beautiful fall colored tree.

**Thankful Book.** This is more of a keepsake. Purchase or make a photo album, add photos of loved ones, include stories about why they are special to you. Include pages of your favorite foods, stories, movies and other things that make you happy. Anytime your kids feel down, they can open their Thankful book to see all the reasons they have to be happy.

For more fun ideas, visit [www.apples4theteacher.com](http://www.apples4theteacher.com).

## Mark Your Calendar Today

### November 9, 2011

Just For Mom's  
7:00 - 8:30 PM

Maryland School for the Deaf - Columbia Campus  
8169 Old Montgomery Road, Ellicott City, MD 21043  
Denton (Main) Building, Multi Purpose Room  
Resources, Resources and More Resources  
Learn about free and fun resources available to help with raising and educating deaf and hard of hearing children.

### November 28, 2011

2:00 PM

American Sign Language Story Time  
Baltimore County Public Library—Woodlawn Branch  
1811 Woodlawn Drive, Woodlawn, MD 21207  
Join us inside Storyville for stories told in American Sign Language with voice interpretation.  
For children 2 - 5 years of age with an adult.  
For more information, contact the library at 410-887-1336.

### December 7, 2011

Just For Mom's  
7:00 - 8:30 PM

Maryland School for the Deaf - Columbia Campus  
8169 Old Montgomery Road, Ellicott City, MD 21043  
Denton (Main) Building, Multi Purpose Room  
Self Defense Strategies  
Learn self defense strategies from a trained instructor.  
Wear comfortable clothing for this fun and interactive workshop.

### February 20, 2012

2012 Deaf & Hard of Hearing Legislative Awareness Day  
Department of Legislative Services Building  
Joint Hearing Room, 1st Floor  
Annapolis, MD  
2:00 - 8:00 PM

Join the Maryland Governors Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) for this exciting Legislative Awareness Day. Activities include advocacy training, awards ceremony, meet with your legislators and view a House Session.

For more information visit the ODHH website at [www.odhh.maryland.gov](http://www.odhh.maryland.gov).

### April 14, 2012

8:30 - 3:00 PM

ADHD: Perspectives on Behavior & Parenting  
Washington County Technical High School  
Hagerstown, MD

Jason Barth will look into the various perspectives on childhood behavior, including clinical diagnostics for mental and behavioral disorders of childhood and behavior-specific interventions.  
\$15,00 per person. Space is limited.

For more information about any of the workshops listed above, please contact Cheri Dowling at 443-277-8899 (v/text) or [cheri.dowling@msd.edu](mailto:cheri.dowling@msd.edu).