

DISABILITY JUSTICE

Bullying and Leaving Out Students with Disabilities

Bullying and exclusion are serious issues for disabled students. Learn more about what rights parents can exercise to protect students.

Frequently Asked Questions

What counts as bullying?

Bullying happens when an individual makes fun of a student's disability so much that the student feels unsafe or can't learn. Examples of bullying include:

- Making fun of the way the student talks, walks, or learns.
- Blocking the student's wheelchair so they can't get into class.
- Refusing to play with the student at recess because of their disability.

What should the school do if bullying happens?

If the school learns a student is being bullied, it must:

- Try to find out what happened.
- If the child is being bullied, make a plan to stop it from happening again.
- Help the student feel safe and supported in school.

What if the student is left out of school activities?

If the school does not let a student go to assemblies, sports, clubs, recess, or other activities, you may be able to argue that the student is being unfairly left out of activities because of their disability.

What can I do if a student is bullied or left out of activities at school?

1. Tell the school or district.

Write or email the principal and the student's case manager or special education teacher. Make sure you include:

- a. The student's name and disability.
- b. The name of the individual who bullied or excluded the student.
- c. What happened, when, and where it happened.
- d. What the school has already done to stop it.
- e. What you want the school to do next to stop it.

If the problem continues, contact the district's special education director or Section 504 coordinator. A list is available on the [Colorado Department of Education website](#) or the school district's website.

2. Ask for a meeting.

- a. Email is best because it creates a record.
- b. Paper or written letters should be documented. For instance, you should get a signed and dated copy of hand-delivered letters.
- c. Certified mail is another way to show proof that the school received it.

3. Go to the meeting.

Before the meeting, think about:

- a. How the school can keep the bully away from the student during lunch, recess, and in the hall.
- b. Who in the school the student can go to if bullying happens.

- c. If the student has an IEP (Individualized Education Program), whether they need a new goal or social work services to help them deal with being bullied.
- d. Whether your child lost any services or progress while they were bullied and what the school can do to make up for it.

What if nothing changes?

If the bullying or exclusion continues after all of steps above:

- Call Disability Justice 303-722-0300
- Submit an online intake form to Disability Justice: [Intake Form](#)
- File a school complaint (see the [School Complaints section](#) of the Education Rights Toolkit)

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