



### What does it mean to be neurodivergent?



“**Neurodivergent**” describes someone whose brain learns or processes information differently. This includes students with formal supports and those without, who still experience other differences or disabilities. These differences **don’t** limit their strengths, potential, or right to a safe, supporting learning environment. Supporting students with neurodivergence means helping them succeed as they are, not trying to make everyone think, learn, or communicate the same way.

### What is bullying, and what are the signs?



**Bullying** is when someone repeatedly and purposely hurts another person to have power over them. In 2025, nearly 4 in 10 elementary students, 1 in 4 middle schoolers, and up to 1 in 6 high school students have been bullied. **Direct bullying** happens face-to-face, like *pushing or name-calling*. **Indirect bullying** happens behind the scenes, such as *spreading rumors, leaving others out, or sending hurtful messages online*.

#### Signs a student may be bullied:

- **Classroom cues:** declining academic performance or skipping school.
- **Social cues:** “masking” to fit in; withdrawing from friends, avoiding social events, “acting out” behaviors.
- **Physical clues:** unexplained injuries or lost/damaged belongings.

### How is neurodivergence connected to bullying?



Students who are neurodivergent often face bullying every day. This can affect their learning, friendships, and safety. Students with disabilities are **3 to 4 times more likely** to be bullied than other students. When people do not understand differences in learning, communication, or behavior, students with neurodivergence may be left out, teased, or bullied for seeming “different,” even if no harm was meant. Bullying a student based on characteristics, including a disability, is more serious under the law, and schools must act when bullying affects a student’s safety or ability to learn.

### What should I do to get help if my child is being bullied for being neurodivergent?



- **Talk with your child:**
  - “I’m really glad you told me. You deserve to feel safe.”
  - “Has anything happened that has made you feel sad or mad?”
  - “I want to make sure you know it’s not your fault.”
- **Listen and write it down:** document dates, times, locations & witnesses. Take a screenshot if it is online.
- **Tell your child’s school:** report bullying to the appropriate person at your child’s school. Follow up with school later to make sure it is being addressed.

# Support and Protect Your Child Who Is Neurodivergent

## How can I help support my child emotionally?



- **Connect with a positive role model.**

Trusted adults, siblings, or friends can show positive ways to handle problems with others. IEPs or 504 plans can also list school staff who can give support.

- **Change social norms.** Teach to respect differences and that bullying is not okay. Help students understand that people learn and communicate in different ways. Different does not mean wrong.
  - Phrases can help stop bullying:
    - “That’s not how we should speak about other people.”
    - “That’s not funny.”
  - Emphasize “You don’t have to confront anyone if it feels unsafe.”

## Why is bullying of students who are neurodivergent different?



School personnel **must** look into **every** bullying report and take steps to keep **all students** safe, whether they are neurodivergent or neurotypical.

For students with an **IEP or 504 Plan**, school personnel are federally required to take action. For example, if bullying makes it harder for students to learn, feel safe, or use resources, school personnel must act.

If you feel that your child is not getting enough support, escalate your request for help. Use the QR code below to access more resources.

## How can my child’s school support and protect them?



- **Schools** can watch for signs of bullying and step in right when it happens, give your child a safe adult to go to for help, and make a plan for what adults will do if bullying happens again.
- **Teachers and staff** can help your child feel included, encourage positive peer interactions and classroom norms, and allow breaks if needed.
- **If bullying continues**, families can seek help under a law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to protect your child’s right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

## Where can I learn more about neurodiversity and how to prevent bullying?



- **Your school or school website:** Under Senate Bill 939 (2023-2024), district or county offices of education must post resources on bullying and neurodiversity and provide support to students who are bullied for being, or being perceived as, neurodivergent.
- **Scan QR code for more resources:**

