

As a parent or guardian, understanding the risk factors of cyberbullying and knowing how to support your child is crucial in today's digital world. While online interactions significantly impact school environments, most cyberbullying occurs outside of school hours and on personal devices. This limits the actions schools can take in response. However, if cyberbullying crosses into criminal behavior and involves individuals aged 12 or older, it can be reported to law enforcement.

Ultimately, the most significant influence in preventing and addressing cyberbullying comes from parents and guardians. By staying informed, fostering open communication, and guiding responsible technology use, you play a key role in creating a safer online experience for your child.

Recent studies have highlighted the prevalence of online victimization among Canadian youth aged 12-17.

Key Findings:

- Approximately 1 in 4 teenagers experience cyberbullying.
- Indigenous youth, LGBTQ2+ individuals, those with disabilities and females are more susceptible to online victimization.
- Frequent social media use and constant smart phone engagement, especially before bed and upon waking are linked to higher instances of cyberbullying.

How Parents Can Help:

1. **Monitor Online Activity:** Regularly check in on your child's online interactions. Being aware of their digital presence can help identify and address potential issues early.
2. **Establish Tech-Free Zones:** Instilling good habits by limiting device usage during mealtimes and before bedtime to encourage healthy habits and reduce exposure to potential online harm.
3. **Foster Open Communication:** Create a safe space for your child to discuss their online experiences without fear of judgement. Open dialogue can empower them to share concerns about cyberbullying.
4. **Educate About Online Safety:** Teach your child about privacy settings, recognizing suspicious behaviour, and the importance of not sharing personal information online.
5. **Encourage Offline Activities:** Promote participation in physical activities and face-to-face social interactions to balance screen time and build real-world connections.

6. Be a Role Model: Demonstrate responsible internet use and set an example by balancing screen time with other activities and share in the Tech-Free Zones.

By staying informed and actively engaging in your child's online world, you can help mitigate the risks associated with cyberbullying and foster a safer digital environment for them.