

Bullying and stuttering: A resource for parents and teachers

About bullying and stuttering

- School-age children who stutter are at high risk of being teased and bullied because of the way they speak.
- Bullying during the school-age years can cause some children to develop mental health problems, including anxiety.
- One bullying event can be enough to have a significant impact on a child's psychological wellbeing.
- Adults who stutter commonly recall being bullied at school, many years after the bullying events.
- Bullying at school is not always obvious, and it can easily be missed if it is not closely monitored within and outside the classroom.
- When talking to adults, children sometimes downplay bullying or choose not to share what has happened for fear that this may make the bullying worse.

What can I do if my child is being teased or bullied about stuttering?

- Be the child's advocate.
- Reassure your child that, together with the school, you will deal with the issue.
- Raise your concern with your child's teacher without delay. It may be helpful to communicate this verbally and in writing.
- Establish a plan of action in collaboration with school staff.
- Maintain open channels of communication with your child and the school about bullying.

How can teachers support a student who is being teased or bullied about stuttering?

- Deal with the issue immediately. If one event has been observed or reported, it is possible that other incidents have occurred.
- Refer to the school policy for bullying management guidelines. If in doubt, discuss the matter with the school principal.
- It is essential that any intervention does not have negative repercussions for the child.
- Children benefit from reassurance that they will be protected throughout the process of dealing with bullying.
- Continue to monitor peer interactions within and outside the classroom.
- If you have any concerns about the child's psychological well-being, raise these with the child's parents and discuss support options. These can be discussed with the school counsellor or external psychological services.