

## Factsheet for Families

### Bullying and child care

Bullying can be a major cause of stress and anxiety in children, the effects of which can last throughout a person's life. Unfortunately, bullying can occur among young children, including those who attend child care and primary school. However, there are many things that child care professionals and families can do to stop bullying and to support children to develop the social skills and resilience to confront and stop bullying behaviour.

#### What is bullying?

A person is bullied when they are deliberately hurt, often repeatedly, by a more powerful person or group of people. Bullying can be physical or emotional, and can involve:

- name calling or teasing
- verbal threats and spreading rumours
- being hit or pushed around
- personal property being hidden or damaged
- deliberately excluding another from an activity
- intimidating or unkind communication by e-mail, text messaging or on social networking websites such as Facebook or MySpace.

#### What are the effects of bullying?

Bullying has both immediate and long term effects which can become serious if the bullying is ongoing. These include:

- feelings of hurt, anger or unhappiness which may lead to depression or significant mood swings
- feeling isolated and reluctant to go to school or child care
- crying, nightmares or bedwetting. Over time this may lead to problems such as sleep or eating disorders.
- inability to concentrate which may result in poor performance at school
- a loss of interest in hobbies or sport.

#### How can child care services prevent bullying?

Services may develop 'zero tolerance' policies toward bullying in consultation with families and children. Child care professionals can also help children to use strategies to stop bullying such as:

- saying "Stop, I don't like it when you do that"
- walking away from teasing
- learning to read other people's feelings, body language or expressions
- challenging behaviours that are unfair.

Child care professionals can also:

- read age appropriate books with children that reinforce anti-bullying concepts
- model taking turns, sharing and showing concern when someone is hurt or upset.

#### How do child care professionals work with children who bully and children who are being bullied?

Child care professionals play an important role in helping to make the environment a happy and safe place by responding promptly to bullying behaviour.

They should endeavour to:

- take swift, decisive action to deal with bullying
- discuss bullying with children, including how it feels to be bullied and what rules can be used to prevent bullying at the service
- investigate problems raised, treat all involved fairly and offer mediation when required
- provide activities where children can 'cool off', practice deep breathing and count to ten as a strategy to relax
- arrange regular meetings with families whose child is being bullied or whose child is bullying others. This helps families and child care professionals to work together to implement consistent strategies at home and child care to stop bullying behaviour or to support a child who is experiencing bullying.
- help children to identify adults to whom they can talk if they are feeling unsafe or are worried about a problem
- explain to older children how they can access the Kids Helpline (**1800 55 1800**) and display the telephone number prominently at the service.

To discuss any queries or concerns you may have regarding your child's relationships with others, please speak to:

or telephone:

