



# Children's Mental Health Matters!

a statewide public awareness campaign ■ [www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org](http://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2010

**Contact:** Lea Ann Browning-McNee  
410.730.8267 or 1-888-607-3637

Governor Martin O'Malley has declared May 24 – 28 Bullying Awareness Week to educate students and teachers about the dangers of bullying and how to keep it out of the classroom. Bullying awareness fits perfectly with the Children's Mental Health Matters! campaign's message that a child's mental health is just as important as his/her physical health.

Bullying may be physical or verbal. Teasing, harassing, spreading rumors, actively ignoring or intentionally hurting another child are all forms of bullying. Boys most often bully through physical intimidation while girls most often use social intimidation to exclude the victim from peer interactions.

"Bullying is a very serious issue," says Lea Ann Browning-McNee, a spokesperson for the Children's Mental Health Matters! campaign. "Victims of bullies are more likely to experience depression, less likely to be accepted by classmates and may have low self-confidence and poor coping skills. But the bullies also face challenges: bullies are less likely to do well in school and more likely to engage in criminal activity as adults. For both the bully and his victim, insecurity plays a big role in the child's development --- whether in elementary, middle or high school."

The Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign offers the following tips to help families better recognize and understand bullying.

- Know your child's routine and pay attention to changes in that routine. Does your child suddenly take alternate routes home, go early or stay late at school or activities or stop participating in extra-curricular events?
- Maintain close contact with teachers to monitor your child's experiences and to learn whether your child is avoiding certain school settings or situations.
- Empower your child by showing how much you value him or her. Spend time talking together about personal self-worth and the importance of sticking up for oneself.
- Help your child understand the difference between aggressive, assertive and passive communication by showing different examples of each.
- Discuss with your child the negative outcomes of being a bully.
- Become familiar with the bullying prevention curriculum at your school. All Maryland public schools include a bullying prevention component in their curricula.

To learn more about bullying and how to support your child, visit [ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org). If you believe your child is in crisis, contact the state's crisis hotline at 800-422-0009.

Children's Mental Health Matters is a statewide education campaign of the Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health and the Mental Health Association of Maryland.