



What to Do if Your Child is Facing Discrimination or Harassment at School

Under state and federal law, public schools are required to protect students from harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

If your child is being harassed, discriminated against, bullied, or intimidated at a public school because of his/her race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability, there are five steps you can take:

1. Immediately document, in writing, the harassment and discrimination. Gather as much information as you can from your child, including: when and where each incident of harassment occurred, who participated in the harassment and who witnessed it, and the details of what happened. Document how each incident affected your child in the short term (e.g., crying, illness, scared to go to school), and how the harassment has affected your child over the long term.
2. Check your school district's policies on harassment and discrimination, and follow all its procedures for reporting problems. Keep a copy of any forms you submit to the school, and follow-up with the school if you do not hear back in a reasonable amount of time.
3. In addition to following the procedures set forth in your district's policies on harassment and discrimination, notify your child's teacher or principal, in writing, immediately, every time an incident of harassment occurs. Include all of the information in Step 1 above. You can use our model letter, which can be found at www.aclumaine.org/webelonghere.
4. If your child's school does not take action to stop the harassment, consider sending the model letter to the school district's superintendent.
5. Consider filing a request for help with the Maine Human Rights Commission. More information about how to do that is here: www.aclumaine.org/webelonghere.