

# HOW TO REPORT CYBERBULLYING AND INAPPROPRIATE ONLINE CONTENT



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## Contacting your mobile phone service provider

If your child is experiencing cyberbullying via mobile phone, a complaint may be made to the mobile phone service provider in line with [Industry Code ACIF C525:2006 – Handling of Life Threatening and Unwelcome Calls](#). All service providers must have internal policies and procedures consistent with this code. However, do not be surprised if you encounter service providers unaware of the reporting procedures. Cyberbullying calls are often treated as a general customer service concern, and most service providers do not have a direct contact number for these types of enquiries.

To lodge a complaint under ACIF C525:2006, a pattern of calls must be documented consisting of one of the following:

- three or more unwelcome calls over a 48–120 hour period
- 10 or more unwelcome calls over a 24-hour period
- unwelcome calls made at consistent or unusual times (for instance, at 2 am every Wednesday)

Having determined the validity of a complaint about cyberbullying, the responsibilities of the mobile phone service provider include the below actions:

- After receiving a complaint, a warning letter must be sent to the customer making the calls advising that the mobile phone service is not provided to make unwelcome calls and requesting cessation. The service provider is given 14 days to investigate and send out a letter.
- If calls do not stop within 14 days, you need to contact your service provider to request that a second warning letter be sent, this time advising the harasser that it is an offence to use a telephone service to menace or harass and that their telecommunications services will be suspended if the unwelcome calls continue.
- If calls do not cease, the service must be discontinued.
- If you would like the call to be traced, a call trace form must be completed. Service providers recommend that you answer all phone calls to make tracking of calls easier, even if this means picking up for a second and immediately hanging up.

Although it focuses on real-time phone calls, ACIF C525:2006 also covers ‘unwelcome call complaints relating to non real-time communications’ such as texts, emails and instant messages. The code states that service providers ‘must assist end users in receipt of unwelcome messages where it is reasonably possible’, while acknowledging that in some situations – such as harassing texts sent from an unregistered number – the provider may be unable to do so. It also notes that blocking and screening are available options in dealing with non real-time communications.

## Contacting your internet service provider

Internet service providers deliver internet service to your telecommunications devices. Unlike mobile phone providers, they have no responsibility to moderate or investigate hostile content posted on websites. Reporting of cyberbullying or inappropriate online content should instead be directed either to website administrators or to the [Australian Communications and Media Authority \(ACMA\)](#).

## Contacting ACMA

According to the [Broadcasting Services Act 1992](#), inappropriate content may be reported to ACMA when it falls under one of the following categories:

- content classified as RC or X18+ (such as child pornography, violence or drug use)
- content classified R18+ or MA15+ and not subject to a restricted access system

Parents should be aware, however, that ACMA does not investigate complaints about content contained in email, instant messages, texts or social media messages, unless it is provided as part of an adult chat service or by a service that specialises in the provision of prohibited or potentially prohibited content. Additionally, defamatory content will not be investigated.

The easiest way to make a complaint to ACMA about internet content is to use their [complaints form](#). Alternatively, you can phone ACMA’s Customer Service Centre on 1300 850 115 or email [info@acma.gov.au](mailto:info@acma.gov.au).

## Contacting website administrators

Based on the terms and conditions of a website, some material may be classified as inappropriate. Most websites offer methods for reporting, and have policies stating that inappropriate content will be removed. However, there appears to be some discrepancy between practice and policy. In addition, young people have expressed little confidence in the effectiveness of website reporting mechanisms. In a recent survey, 44% of young people indicated they would never use this avenue for reporting.

It is important to note that some social media sites require a membership before they allow you to view content. If your child is being bullied via a social networking site, you will need access to their account in order to report the situation to administrators.

The following links explain how to report cyberbullying or inappropriate content on some of the most popular social networking sites.

### Facebook

- [How to report users on Facebook](#)
- [Reporting on Facebook for users without an account](#)
- [Online form for reporting a violation of the Facebook Terms](#)

### Instagram

- [Instagram Tips for Parents](#)
- [Instagram form for reporting violations](#)

### Twitter

- [How to report violations occurring over Twitter](#)
- [Form for reporting an abusive user](#)

### Snapchat

- [Snapchat abuse and safety support](#)
- [Snapchat Guide for Parents](#)

### Tumblr

- [Tumblr Community Guidelines](#)
- Report violations to Tumblr by emailing them at [abuse@tumblr.com](mailto:abuse@tumblr.com)

### YouTube

- [YouTube Reporting Hub](#)
- [Harassment and cyberbullying help](#) from Google, which owns YouTube

## Contacting your child's school

It is crucial to ensure that you have discussed the issue with your child BEFORE going to see their school. During Friendly Schools research, young people have told us the worst thing their parents can do when they are struggling with cyberbullying is to overreact and try to take control of the situation. Young people want and need to solve these problems themselves. Your child does need your help, but your role is to support and guide, rather than dominate them. As parents, we need to act as facilitators for our children, listening non-judgmentally and providing support. This is very empowering and will usually result in the best outcome for your child.

If you and your child do decide to approach the school about a cyberbullying situation, here are some tips that may make it easier:

- Before you approach the school, find out which, if any, strategies your child has already tried, as well as if they were helpful and what they would try next time.
- Phone the school and ask who is best placed to help your child. It may be best to go directly to the classroom teacher, or it could be the year-level coordinator or deputy principal.

- Make a time to talk. It is best for your child to come with you to the meeting, so ensure the time is convenient for all involved. Try to avoid turning up without an appointment.
- Explain what you know. It may help to have some notes or information about the bullying behaviour to show as examples and a record of the timing of these incidents. You should also describe strategies your child has tried and how successful they have been to date.
- Ask for a plan of action. The plan will most likely vary according to the technology involved. If the bullying is occurring through more than one type of technology, the plan may have several components. The school may wish to consult other staff before deciding on a plan of action. This is normal and appropriate.
- Consider setting a date and time for a follow-up meeting to talk about how the situation is progressing.
- If your child did not attend the meeting, ensure you discuss with them what happened and explain the agreed-upon strategy. It is important to ensure your child is comfortable with these actions.

## Contacting the police

You need to establish if your situation involves a crime, as this will determine whether the police can assist you or not. Before you contact the police about an issue, try to answer the following question: Is the situation you want to report a nuisance or a threat?

- If the calls or messages are a nuisance, contact your service provider.
- If the calls or messages are threatening, contact your service provider AND your local police.

If you have thought about your situation and are still unsure, call the Police Assistance Line on 13 444 and direct your questions to them. Do not call 000 unless you are in immediate danger.

The Federal Police have an online exploitation squad who primarily investigate the abuse and exploitation of children. They do get involved in cyberbullying cases, but this is dependent upon the circumstances and severity. If your situation concerns illegal activity of a sexual nature, you can fill out their [Online Child Protection Form](#), which is forwarded directly to the relevant agency.

## Other help and support

If you or your child needs to talk to someone right now, here are some places you can call:

- [Kids Helpline](#)  
1800 55 1800  
Kids Helpline offers 24-hour counselling services for young people aged 5–25 years. Counselling is available by phone (free call from a landline), email and over the web.
- [Lifeline](#)  
13 11 14  
Lifeline provides 24-hour counselling services and crisis support over the phone. Calls from a landline are the same cost as a local call, while calls from a mobile are free.
- [beyondblue](#)  
1300 22 4636  
*beyondblue* is an organisation aimed at helping Australians of all ages deal with anxiety, depression and related conditions. Support is available over the phone (24/7) or via web chat (between 3 pm and 12 am daily). *beyondblue* also runs a website specifically for young people, [youthbeyondblue](#), which contains information about cyberbullying as well as many other issues relevant to children and teens.

In addition, we recommend the following sites and contacts for help and advice around cyberbullying, as well as other youth issues:

- **Cybersmart**  
Cybersmart is a government-run website designed to educate children, young people, parents, teachers and library staff about safe and productive use of the internet.
- **Headspace**  
A project of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, Headspace provides a comprehensive website and one-stop-shop mental health services that are youth-specific.
- **ReachOut**  
ReachOut is an online service that aims to inspire young people to help themselves through tough times. They offer specific advice on cyberbullying [here](#).
- Some counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists are specifically trained to deal with young people. For information on practitioners in your local area, call the beyondblue helpline line on 1300 22 4636. Your local doctor (GP) can also provide information about and referrals to youth-friendly mental health and wellbeing services.