

Massachusetts Muslims, Know Your Rights! Bullying at School

As described in [Silenced Voices](#), our 2025 report on bullying and Islamophobia in Massachusetts' public schools, nearly half (48%) of the Massachusetts students who took part in our survey described being mocked, verbally harassed, or even physically abused because of their faith. For example:

- *Classmates try to pull off a Muslim girl's hijab*
- *Muslim students are called slurs or harassed for taking prayer breaks*
- *Teachers make offensive and false statements about Islam*

If your child is being bullied (or you are a young person who is being bullied), please know that you are not alone – and that there are steps you can take for protection. **Please call CAIR-MA at (617) 862-9159** or send us a [request for help](#) on our website.

What must schools do? In Massachusetts, all schools with students from kindergarten through 12th grade must have a bullying prevention and intervention plan. It must be posted on the school's website. Each school gets to decide on the details but, very generally, the plan must:

- Apply to both staff and students,
- Explain how to make a complaint and what steps the school will take,
- List the kinds of discipline that are possible, and
- Describe how the school can protect the student being bullied.

What should you do? Report the problem to the school and ask for a meeting with school officials. (DO NOT contact the aggressor or their parents!) While the school gets to decide what actions to take, it's important for them to hear your views about how to keep your child safe. You can also suggest how the aggressor should be punished, although privacy laws may prevent the school from telling you what they decide to do. **Call CAIR-MA at (617) 862-9159** if the school doesn't take the bullying seriously.

When is bullying a crime? Many types of bullying don't rise to the level of a crime, but certain acts are indeed crimes and the aggressor could be arrested. Here are common examples:

- *Threat to commit a crime* – spoken or written, including social media posts;
- *Vandalism* – damage to your child's belongings or school property;
- *Assault* – aggressor puts your child in fear of physical harm, but there is no actual physical contact;
- *Assault and battery* – physical contact with your child without their consent, without using any object;
- *Assault and battery with a dangerous weapon* – using an object to hit your child, such as a backpack or sports equipment;

- *Hate crimes* – aggressor commits a crime because of your child’s religion, race, national origin, or certain other reasons. For more information, see our brochure, [Know Your Rights: Hate Crimes & Harassment](#).

When to involve the police. In Massachusetts, schools must call the police if it looks like the aggressor may have committed a crime. But parents can also call the police on their own. Sometimes Muslim parents aren’t sure if they should get the police involved, for various reasons. If you find yourself in this situation, **call CAIR-MA at (617) 862-9159** and we can discuss your concerns and your options.

Harassment Prevention Orders. In Massachusetts, parents can ask their local Juvenile Court (if the aggressor is under 18) or District Court (if the aggressor is 18 or older) for a Harassment Prevention Order, which tells an aggressor to leave your child alone.¹ It doesn’t cost anything to apply and you can file your request in person or online. To qualify for such an order, you must show two things:

- Three separate acts of bullying against your child;
- Each act of bullying was done on purpose, was aimed at your child, and was done to cause your child “fear, intimidation, abuse, or damage to property.”

If there is more than one student who is bullying your child, you will need to file a separate case against each of them.

Please call CAIR-MA before asking for a Harassment Prevention Order. We may be able to represent you. And even if we can’t, we may be able to help you write up your application so you present a strong case.

Filing an education discrimination complaint. If a school does not take proper action in response to repeated complaints of bullying, parents can file a [complaint](#) against the school with the Mass. Attorney General’s Civil Rights Division. There is no cost and you can file a complaint online.²

For more information on each of these topics, to hear what Muslim students had to say about the bullying they experienced, and to learn about other actions that parents, students, and schools can take, please see our 2025 report, [Silenced Voices: Examining Bullying & Islamophobia in Massachusetts Public Schools](#).

Last updated January 2026

¹ Find your local Juvenile Court or District Court [here](#).

² You will be directed to a form called “consumer complaint.” Check the 4th box for “discrimination or civil rights violation.”