

Bullying: What We Know

BULLYING: THE FACTS

Bullying is:

- ❖ Aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength.
- ❖ Bullying can take many forms: physical, verbal, nonverbal or emotional (intimidation through gestures or social exclusion), and cyber (using the Internet, text messaging, or email to slander or embarrass).
- ❖ Bullying is a form of victimization, not a conflict.

The Prevalence of Bullying

- ❖ The incidence of behaviors such as bullying has increased, while school violence has declined in the past several years.¹
- ❖ Studies show that between 15-25% of U.S. students are bullied with some frequency while 15-20% report that they bully others with some frequency.^{2,5}
- ❖ In a survey of students in 14 elementary and middle schools in Massachusetts, more than 30% believed that adults did little or nothing to help in bullying incidents.³

BULLYING: THE IMPACT

Children who bully are more likely than their peers to:^{4,5}

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|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| ❖ Get into frequent fights | ❖ Steal property | ❖ Be truant from school |
| ❖ Be injured in a fight | ❖ Drink alcohol | ❖ Drop out of school |
| ❖ Vandalize property | ❖ Smoke | ❖ Carry a weapon |

Research has also shown that:

- ❖ Children who bully are more likely to report that they own guns for risky reasons, such as to gain respect or frighten others.⁶
- ❖ Boys who were identified as bullies in middle school were four times as likely as their non-bullying peers to have more than one criminal conviction by age 24.⁷

Effects of bullying

- ❖ Children who are being bullied are more likely than their peers to be depressed, lonely, and anxious; have low self-esteem; feel unwell; have more migraine headaches; and think about suicide.⁸
- ❖ Stresses of being bullied can interfere with student's engagement and learning in school, as well as cause fear of going to school.^{9,10}
- ❖ Bystanders to bullying are also impacted. The climate of fear and disrespect that bullying creates negatively impacts student learning.^{10,11}

WHAT WORKS IN BULLYING PREVENTION¹²

- ❖ Programs that show the most promise are comprehensive in approach. They involve the entire school community, including families, and incorporate school-wide interventions, classroom activities, and individual interventions.
- ❖ Effective programs require strong administrative leadership with ongoing commitment and staff development on the part of the adults in the school system.
- ❖ Bullying prevention efforts should begin early - as children transition into kindergarten - and continue throughout a child's education, with no "end date."

The most promising school-based bullying prevention programs incorporate the following characteristics:

- ❖ A focus on creating a school-wide environment or climate that discourages bullying
- ❖ Student surveys to assess the nature and extent of bullying behavior and attitudes
- ❖ Training to prepare staff to recognize and respond to bullying
- ❖ Development of consistent rules against bullying
- ❖ Review and enhancement of the school's disciplinary code related to bullying behavior
- ❖ Classroom activities to discuss issues related to bullying
- ❖ Integration of bullying prevention themes across the curriculum
- ❖ Individual and/or group work with children who have been bullied
- ❖ Individual work with children who have bullied their peers
- ❖ Involvement of parents in bullying prevention and/or intervention activities
- ❖ Use of teacher or staff groups to increase staff knowledge and motivation related to bullying

¹ **U.S. Department of Education.** (2002). National Center for Education Statistics, *The continuation of Education 2002*, NCES 2002-025, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002 and <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

² **Melton, G. B., Limber, S. Flerx, V. Cunningham, P., Osgood, D.W., Chambers, J., Henggler, S., & Nation, M.** (1998). *Violence among rural youth*. Final report to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

³ **Mullin-Rindler, N.** (2003). *Findings from the Massachusetts Bullying Prevention Initiative*. Unpublished manuscript.

⁴ **Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M.D., Haynie, D. L., Ruan, W. J., & Scheidt, P. C.** (2003). Relationships between bullying and violence among US youth. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 157, 348-353.

⁵ **Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P.** (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285, 2094-2100.

⁶ **Cunningham, P. B., Henggeler, S.W., Limber, S. P., Melton, G. B., and Nation, M. A.** (2000). Patterns and correlates of gun ownership among nonmetropolitan and rural middle school students. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 29, 432-442.

⁷ **Olweus, D.** (1993). *Bullying at school: what we know and what we can do*. NY: Blackwell.

⁸ **Limber, S. P.** (2002). *Bullying among children and youth*. Proceedings of the Educational Forum on Adolescent Health: Youth Bullying. Chicago: American Medical Association. Available online: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/39/youthbullying.pdf>.

⁹ **NEA Today.** (1999). *Easing the strain of students' stress*. Departments: Health. September 1999. NEA Washington, DC www.nea.org/neatoday/9909/health.html.

¹⁰ **National Education Association.** (2003). *National bullying awareness campaign*. www.nea.org/schoolsafety/bullying.html.

¹¹ **Banks, R.** (1997). *Bullying in schools* (ERIC Report No. EDO-PS-97-170.) University of Illinois Champaign, Ill.

¹² **Health Resources and Services Administration.** www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov.