

# **Bullying** **In Schools**

## **Fighting the Bully Battle**

**Bullying Fact Sheet Series**

**National School Safety Center**

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## Bullying Fact Sheets Series

The fact sheets contained in this series can be used to educate the school community about the problem and consequences of school bullying. The fact sheets can be used as single-page leaflets or as resources for teaching and training about bullying. The text of the fact sheets could be used in parent letters, bulletins or school newspapers.

### **Bullying Fact Sheets Contained in the Series**

1. What is school bullying?
2. What are the consequences of school bullying?
3. What can a school community do about bullying?
4. What can teachers do about classroom bullying?
5. What can students do about school bullying?
6. What can parents of young children do about school bullying?
7. What can parents of teens do about school bullying?
8. What can community safety partners do about school bullying?
9. How can a caring adult work with a bully?
10. How can a school community promote an anti-bullying message?

### **What is school bullying?**

Bullying is a form of violence that hurts others. School bullying happens at school or during school-sponsored activities when a student or group of students intentionally and repeatedly uses their power to hurt other individuals or groups. Bullies' power can come from their physical strength, age, financial status, popularity, social status, technology skills, or by association (the people they know, who they hang out with, who their family is).

### **What do bullies do?**

They can bully in direct ways, such as:

- hitting, tripping, shoving, pinching, excessive tickling;
- verbal threats, name calling, racial slurs, insults;
- demanding money, property, service; and
- stabbing, choking, burning and shooting.

They can also bully in indirect ways, such as:

- rejecting, excluding, isolating;
- ranking or rating, humiliating;
- manipulating friends and relationships;
- writing hurtful or threatening e-mails and postings on web sites; and
- blackmailing, terrorizing, and proposing dangerous dares.

### **Do boys and girls bully in different ways?**

Traditionally, boys tended to bully in direct and physical ways, and girls tended to bully in emotional or indirect ways. However, influences, such as media, technology and new forms of social power, are beginning to blur the gender lines.

Other things to know about bullying:

- Some students are bullies; others are targets of bullying.
- A student can be both a target and a bully at the same time.
- Some students are bystanders; bystanders can be either passive or active.
- Some acts of bullying at school can result in suspension and/or expulsion.
- Bullying breaks the law when it becomes stealing, assault and battery, extortion, sexual harassment, hate crimes and other criminal acts.
- Administrators, teachers, school staff, students and parents must accept the responsibility to recognize, report and/or intervene with bullying when it occurs.
- Bullying that goes unchecked tends to escalate into more serious forms of bullying or even criminal behavior.

## What are the consequences of school bullying?

School bullying affects the safety and social well-being of the entire school community.

Wanting and needing to belong at school is important to most students. Being put-down, embarrassed, physically hurt or terrorized at school on a regular basis is hurtful for students at any grade level. Bullying can make a student feel unwanted and rejected.

**Students who are targets of bullying** spend their energy at school being afraid and worrying about when and how they will be bullied again. They may suffer direct pain and discomfort when the bullying is physical. They may begin to withdraw from school activities and areas on campus where bullying takes place. They may begin to stay away from school. In the worst cases, some students become ill, depressed and even suicidal. Some students take a vigilante approach and feel the need to fight back with weapons or in other dangerous ways.

**Students who bully** may think that they are in full control of what is happening. They may also think that the only ones being hurt are the targets of their bullying. The fact is that bullying also hurts the one who does it. A bully who learns to use aggression toward others may find the negative behavior a hard habit to break. Some students who bully are less likely to be respected or trusted by others. Bullies may be seen as manipulators or as mean and unpleasant people. Some acts of bullying can result in suspension or expulsion from school and the loss of valuable learning time. Bullying behaviors that continue into adulthood can turn into child abuse, domestic violence and other criminal activities. Studies show that serious bullies tend to have their first serious brush with the law by their mid-twenties.

**Students who observe bullying** at school may begin to think bullying is acceptable school behavior. They may assume that the adults at their school either don't care enough to stop it or can't stop it. Some students may join in with the bully. Other students may fear that they will become the next target, particularly if they share common traits with the target. Some students may risk their own safety to intervene for their close friends or other peers who are being bullied.

**Schools that allow bullying** to continue are promoting violence. Studies show that acts of serious school violence often have their roots in bullying issues. A school may develop a reputation for being non-caring, irresponsible and persistently dangerous. Some schools have faced costly and embarrassing litigation or loss of enrollment for these very reasons. Bullying endangers the academic mission of a school community. Bullying compromises the school safety mission.

## What can a school community do about bullying?

Preventing and responding to school bullying is the work of every administrator, teacher, school staff member, student and parent. It is important for each of these individuals to recognize his or her role and responsibility in creating a school where bullying is not tolerated. As appropriate to their roles, school community members can work together to apply the following steps of effective bullying prevention and response by:

- **Assessing** the scope of the bullying problem and analyzing core causes;
- **Developing** quality policies that define bullying and address appropriate responses to the problem;
- **Establishing** school and classroom rules against bullying;
- **Applying** school discipline rules, policies and sanctions fairly and consistently;
- **Training** teachers and staff about bullying;
- **Educating** students (bullies, targets and bystanders) about bullying;
- **Teaching** parents to understand bullying and its consequences;
- **Establishing** effective systems of supervision and strategies for reporting bullying;
- **Responding** in a timely manner to all reports of bullying;
- **Partnering** with law enforcement and mental health agencies to identify and address cases of serious bullying;
- **Establishing** support programs and resources for both the target and bully; and
- **Promoting** the norm for a bully-free school throughout the entire school community, especially with students.

## What can teachers do about classroom bullying?

Preventing and responding to classroom bullying should not create an additional burden for the dedicated teacher. The same atmosphere that promotes effective teaching and successful student learning can help address the challenge of student bullying. Veteran teachers already plan, deliver, modify, evaluate and debrief lessons and activities. They do this in a manner that reflects a knowledge and understanding of the students they teach. Many new and enthusiastic teachers are armed with the latest content, theories and intent to impact their students' lives in positive ways. Both kinds of teachers can develop and apply a repertoire of strategies that will help prevent, deter and respond to classroom bullying while promoting their academic mission. Strategies may include:

- **Modeling desired attitudes and behaviors;**
- **Fostering student-shared responsibility** for the classroom's social and physical environment;
- **Establishing and communicating rules and sanctions** regarding bullying;
- **Applying classroom rules fairly and consistently;**
- **Identifying and intervening upon undesirable attitudes and behaviors** that could be "gateway behaviors" to bullying and harassment;
- **Managing time and task** so that students remain connected and productive and less likely to engage in undesirable behaviors;
- **Teaching students how to ask for help and how to report** cruelty, bullying, and harassment;
- **Responding to requests of help;**
- **Referring critical bullying cases** to appropriate sources of support;
- **Aligning instructional topics** of courage, reasoning, fairness, justice, responsibility, citizenship, and collaboration with appropriate academic/elective content or extracurricular activities;
- **Promoting personal and social skills development;**
- **Recognizing culture diversity as an influence** on relationships, identity, and social issues.

## What can students do about school bullying?

There are a variety of ways students can be involved with bullying. A student can be a **bully** or the **target** of bullying. A student may even be **both a target and a bully** at the same time. Some students are **bystanders**. Some students may not be aware of bullying at their school and still be affected by the problems it creates.

**A student who is a target of bullying** needs to know that bullies rarely stop what they are doing on their own. In fact, it is more likely that over time a bully will find more serious ways to hurt people. This is why it is important for a target of bullying to tell a responsible and caring adult at school what is happening and to ask for their help. In the meantime, targets can reduce the chances of being harmed by avoiding the times and places they are typically bullied, hang out in safe places at school, and stay close to good friends. It is important to keep reporting bullying until help is provided.

**A student who bullies in return** for being bullied becomes one more bully at school. Some students make the mistake of thinking that carrying a weapon, joining a gang, or planning serious acts of retaliation will solve the problem. More often than not the act of revenge seriously hurts more than just the target— it hurts the bully, the target and innocent bystanders.

**Students who are bystanders to bullying** must realize that they can either be a part of the problem or part of the solution. Bystanders are a powerful majority at any school. Bystanders have the power to help create safe and comfortable schools for themselves and other students. They can use their social power and personal actions to promote respect. They can carry out anti-bullying activities and campaigns. Bystanders should be warned against trying to protect a student or group of students who are being bullied. Peers who intervene risk retaliation or harm. The most important thing they can do is to report bullying when they see it happening to others.

**A student who is a bully** needs help and support to admit the behavior is hurtful and wrong. It is important for students who bully to find respectful ways to express their power when they are with others. Like the target of bullying, a bully can ask for the help of a caring and responsible adult or agree to accept the help when it is offered.

## **What can parents of young children do about school bullying?**

Parents are their children's first teachers. The words and actions children are taught or allowed to use at home often become the words and actions they use in other settings. As families prepare their children to enter the world, lessons about respect and empathy become especially important. Being a positive role model means teaching your child by example. There are many ways parents can promote the respectful and thoughtful behaviors they would like to impart to their children. These may include the following:

### **At home**

- Talk often with your child and listen carefully.
- Ask about your child's school day, activities and friends.
- Ask if your child feels safe and comfortable at school.
- Talk about what bullying means.
- Teach that bullying is unacceptable and can be dangerous.
- Stop bullying when it happens at home.
- Be clear about your expectations and consistently discipline when hurtful teasing and bullying occurs among siblings and peers.
- Help your child understand the meaning and positive roles of friendship.
- Teach that people can be different in many ways.
- Teach and practice basic manners.
- Help your child find and develop his/her personal talents.
- Help your child choose positive and respectful friends.
- Help your child choose TV, music and video programs that promote respect, kindness and understanding.
- Talk with your child about their school experiences and peers.
- Encourage your child to tell you when bullying happens at school.

### **At school**

- Learn the school's rules and sanctions regarding bullying.
- Participate in training the school may offer regarding bullying.
- Stay in touch with your child's teacher.
- As soon as you are aware of a bullying problem, report it to the school.
- Accept help from the school with regard to bullying problems whether your child is the target, the bully or a bystander.

### **Be a positive role model in any setting.**

Caring and responsible parents can use their choices, words and actions to model respectful behaviors and peaceful problem solving.

## What can parents of teens do about school bullying?

As children grow older, parents begin to observe their child's independent nature. They can see the ways their children have come to manage issues such as rules, response to authority, choosing friends, dealing with popularity, and exercising personal and social power. While teens may seem grown-up and independent, it is important for parents to remain active and involved in their children's lives. Parents can promote and reinforce respectful and thoughtful behaviors to help their teens deal with school bullying.

### **Teach that:**

- Bullying is disrespectful and can be dangerous.
- Bullying of a sexual nature is **sexual harassment** and is against the law.
- **Hazing** is a form of group bullying and can be against the law depending on your state.
- Bullying on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation is a form of hate behavior and is in some cases a **hate crime**.
- We live in a world where human diversity is a fact.
- Bullying behaviors that continue into adulthood can create serious personal and professional problems.
- Bullying can have a lifetime of consequences for the person who is bullied and the bully.

### **Work with your school:**

- Learn the school's rules and sanctions regarding bullying.
- Participate in training the school may offer regarding bullying.
- Stay in touch with your teen's teachers and coaches.
- As soon as you become aware of a bullying problem, report it to the school.
- Accept help from the school with regard to bullying problems whether your teen is the target, the bully or a bystander.
- Become a part of bullying prevention efforts and programs at your school

### **Be a positive role model in any setting.**

- Refrain from using foul language or put-downs.
- Demonstrate friendships with others that are based on trust and respect.
- Respect the diversity of others.

Caring and responsible parents can use their choices, words and actions to model respectful behaviors and peaceful problem solving.

## What can community partners do about school bullying?

Community partners can promote student safety by helping schools deal with bullying problems. School bullying is a complex challenge for the entire community. As law enforcement officers, representatives of juvenile justice, business owners, faith community members, attorneys, local mental health experts and other youth-serving professionals, you can share your expertise, resources and skills in the following ways:

- **Help to inform** the school community about bullying.
- **Share specific information** you may have regarding a bullying problem.
- **Participate in problem-solving groups** to address school bullying problems.
- **Offer cultural perspectives** on school bullying problems.
- **Work with others** to create and deliver an effective response to bullying.
- **Help monitor** the effectiveness of a response program.
- **Offer counseling** and other mental health services as appropriate.
- **Serve on a committee** to review school anti-bullying policies or provide insight regarding bullying and matters of law enforcement or civil rights.
- **Consider adapting similar rules and protocols against bullying** for your church, business, or youth-serving agency.
- **Identify students at risk** for criminal activity, provide added supervision/support.
- **Provide support and work with parents** whose children are experiencing bullying problems.
- **Collaborate and coordinate with other community programs** and resources that contribute to anti-bullying efforts.
- **Promote the norm** for a school community that does not tolerate bullying.
- **Volunteer to mentor** bullies and targets of bullying.
- **Demonstrate** to all students the concern and support of the larger community.
- **Model responsible citizenship.**
- **Help prevent future criminal activity** by intervening with bullying now.

## How can a caring adult work with a bully?

The answer to this question can be both simple and complex. The answer depends on what motivates the student to bully in the first place. Be prepared to invest time, energy, and care into a relationship with a student who bullies. It may be the very experience he or she needs to examine and change his/her behavior. Conversations with the student who bullies will help in the following ways:

- validating that there is a bullying problem that needs to be addressed
- identifying options and determining an appropriate course of action
- identifying a caring adult who is interested and willing to help
- referring a serious bullying problem to the appropriate support services.

**Talking with a bully can help** when such conversations are guided by a purpose. Using the following goals to guide an ongoing conversation, help the bully:

- define and understand bullying and its consequences.
- identify the ways, times, places and people he or she bullies.
- understand how bullying hurts others and him/herself.
- explore the reasons why he or she bullies.
- find respectful ways to express and use his or her personal power.

**Note: Talking with bullies as a group is not recommended.** The setting and nature of a group may reinforce negative behaviors, teach bullies how to bully better, or create new struggles for power or status. This group strategy is best left to mental health professionals who have specific training and insights into conducting such activities.

### **Is the problem teasing or bullying?**

Teasing and bullying behaviors are often confused. Some people think that all teasing is bullying while others think that all bullying is harmless teasing. Bullying and its outcomes are always intentional. Teasing and its outcomes are often not intended.

**Students who tease** may be convinced to give up the hurtful behavior when they are helped to realize that their actions are harmful and disrespectful of others. They may also be deterred by the consequences of breaking school rules.

**Students who bully** are motivated by the idea that they have the power to cause hurt, embarrassment, fear or intimidation. Bullies typically have little regard for rules. Efforts to change their behaviors may require intense time, patience, and in some cases, the help of professionals and special programs.

## How can a school community promote an anti-bullying message?

**Using established activities and traditions** is a smart and efficient way to address bullying issues. A school can redesign an existing activity into a strategy that promotes an anti-bullying message. For example:

- **Staff meetings** are opportunities to regularly assess school climate. A simple invitation for a quick discussion of emerging issues and conflicts can help short circuit problems and allow staff members to compare notes on how students are doing.
- **PA announcements** offer an ideal venue for student-generated campaigns that promote a norm for a bully-free school. PA announcements can also encourage and teach students how to report bullying or get appropriate help.
- **School web sites** can offer accurate and appropriate information regarding bullying for students, staff and parents. They can be used to set forth expectations for how bullying will be addressed at school.
- **School mascots and mottos** can be used to promote messages and expectations for the respect, value and safety of all students.
- **Student newspapers** can be used to deliver a series of anti-bullying articles that can help educate students and help keep the anti-bullying message alive.
- **Leadership classes** can integrate bullying information to help promote the power of peers to establish an anti-bullying expectation.
- **School letterhead and business cards** can be enhanced to carry a message that promotes respect and belonging for all students.
- **Suggestion boxes** are an anonymous way to report incidents of bullying at school.
- **Adult mentors** can be trained as “safe contacts.” Students can report bullying problems or ask for help and advice for themselves or others from these mentors.
- **Student handbooks, planners or calendars** can be designed to promote an anti-bullying message and offer tips for asking for help for self or others.
- **Plays and productions** that explore and personalize the issues and consequences of school bullying can be presented.
- **Marques or message boards** can be used to promote anti-bullying messages and a call to action.

## **OUR MISSION**

The National School Safety Center serves as an advocate for safe, secure and peaceful schools worldwide and as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. NSSC provides school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. The National School Safety Center identifies and promotes strategies, promising practices and programs that support safe schools for all students as part of the total academic mission.

## **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

The National School Safety Center believes that schools have the choice to create and maintain safe schools or to return their institutions to safe, secure and effective places of learning. We believe that this work is best done with the help of school safety partners. We believe that today great opportunities exist to apply the best of school safety research and practices to the vision of safe schools for all students.

## **WHAT WE DO**

The National School Safety Center:

- Advocates for school safety as part of the total academic plan and mission for a safe and effective school.
- Trains educators, law enforcers and other youth-serving professionals in the areas of school crime prevention and safe school planning.
- Presents school safety keynote addresses for local, regional and national conferences and workshops.
- Develops and delivers customized school safety training and services.
- Provides international leadership to the safe school movement through its 21 years of experience in the field of school crime and violence prevention.
- Provides on-site technical assistance to school districts and communities facing significant safe school crises and challenges.
- Assesses school site safety for individual schools or school districts interested in developing or analyzing their school safety plans.
- Provides expert witness and trial consultation.
- Publishes an informative and user-friendly web site.
- Furnishes media commentary, information and resources.
- Produces publications and videos highlighting school safety research, practice, strategies, trends, and resources.

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Meet  
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Hilda Clarice Quiroz is a keynote presenter, program developer, training specialist and author for the National School Safety Center. Ms. Quiroz presents at local, regional and national levels. She has written numerous books, articles, pamphlets, and training designs about bullying, hate-bias crimes, school safety, team building and cultural issues. Having teaching experience in both public school and community settings, she serves as a consultant trainer for schools, communities, and law enforcement agencies. She serves as a master trainer for the California Department of Education.

Most recently, Hilda has completed a video about cyber-bullying and a training curriculum and video on the role of schools in homeland security. She received special congressional recognition for her work in the community regarding bullying prevention. She is currently developing a book on bullying. Her current efforts also include the training of more than 6,500 school resource officers and school administrators associated with the federal COPS in Schools Initiative, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Hilda has authored two prevention curricula developed for the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association: *Welcome to School: Helping Kids Belong* and *Talking About Hate Can Make a Difference*.

Recent participant comments regarding Ms. Quiroz's presentations include:

*"An excellent and extraordinary presenter... passionate and honest."*

*"She opens minds with her approach to training."*

*"Hilda is an excellent storyteller... thought-provoking and inspirational."*

*"Her presentation was eye-opening and heartfelt."*

*"Hilda is an excellent instructor. She is joy to listen to..."*

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