



## REDUCING SCHOOL VIOLENCE WITH ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS

*Youth violence is currently viewed as one of the most serious public health problems in the United States. What is of even more concern among parents and educators is a more common and pervasive form of violence- bullying. Bullying is an early form of aggressive, violent behavior. An in-depth analysis of the school shootings occurring over the past decade has shown a strong correlation to experiences with bullying. Although many schools have implemented crisis prevention plans that are reactive in nature, many remain without a program specifically addressing the problem of bullying.*

policy brief

### **What Do We Know About Bullying?**

Bullying may be referred to as the act of one person threatening or physically assaulting another person for no apparent reason. The National School Safety Center considers bullying to be the single most enduring and underrated issue in U.S. schools.

- In 2007, 28% of students ages 12-18 years old reported being bullied at school during the past 6 months.
- Approximately one in seven children is either a bully or a victim of bullying.
- Roughly 282,000 students are physically attacked in American schools monthly.
- Eight percent of urban junior high and senior high students miss one day of school a month because they are afraid to attend.
- A nationwide study showed that 43% of children surveyed indicated that they were afraid of going to the restroom during the school day because they feared being harassed.
- Children who are recognized as bullies by age 8 are three times more likely as other children to break the law before the age of 30.
- Sixty percent of children who are bullies in grades six through nine develop criminal records prior to the age of 24.
- One out of five student perpetrators of school related violent deaths were victims of school bullying themselves.

### **What Happens to the Victims of Bullying?**

Victims of bullying are at great risk, especially in relation to academic and social achievement, often suffering from one or more of the following:

- Chronic absenteeism
- Increased apprehension
- Abandonment from peers
- Reduced academic performance
- Loneliness
- Child or adolescent suicide

*These risks make it vital to address the problem of bullying in our schools.*

### **How Can We Help Schools, Parents, and Children?**

There are five components consistently recommended throughout the research as necessary elements of the school environment for preventing school violence through reducing the incidence of bullying. The anti-bullying comprehensive prevention model incorporates these components in a proactive program targeting students from PreK-12. Early and inclusive intervention is the key to this model. Interventions targeting middle schools and high schools have had limited success, therefore the intervention must begin early. These five components, if properly implemented at the district level and at the school level, will create a consistent program for students and staff.

## **Five Components of the Anti-Bullying Comprehensive Prevention Model**

- **Family Inclusion.** The restructuring of schools must include a new definition of the school that supports the entire family in the educational setting. Schools must provide support to families and students in order to ease the occurrence of school bullying and violence.
- **Evolution of Teacher/Administrator Roles.** This component requires schools to be staffed with personnel trained in values education. All school personnel should be involved in putting into practice an ethical and social skills curriculum in addition to developing an integrated school community in which personnel model these skills for students.
- **Student Success.** One of the most critical factors to student success is individual responsibility. Learning ways to actively satisfy basic needs and effectively cope with challenges will contribute to the development of positive self-esteem and a sense of identity.
- **Conflict Mediation.** Negotiation and mediation procedures should be encouraged through classroom lessons on improving communication skills, perspective-taking, creative thinking, and interpersonal skills. This should begin at the earliest stages of education in order to achieve the best results.
- **Media Intervention.** There are particular strategies teachers should implement in their classrooms. These elements include developmentally appropriate alternative reading material that allows for the resolution of personal and ethical questions; communicating with children in the classroom as they are creating opportunities for the students to make informed choices; and involving parents in discussions about family choices for viewing, listening, and reading.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### **Local Educational Agencies:**

- The School Board and District Level Administrators are responsible for ensuring the implementation of each of the five components at the individual building levels.
- Involve all personnel and actively encourage family involvement in the program.
- Ensure availability of adequate staff training opportunities and materials necessary for implementing the program.

### **State Education Leaders and Policymakers :**

- Include the comprehensive anti-bullying program that includes the five components as a necessary aspect of the Safe Schools Act.
- Support funding for professional development of school employees focused on implementation of an anti-bullying curriculum at all grade levels and training in conflict mediation.
- Support funding for additional resources (reading materials, etc.) in PreK-12 classrooms.

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- (Compiled by Julie Gawrecki, March 2003; Updated August, 2008)

### ***For more information, contact the Center for Family Policy & Research***

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