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Understanding and Addressing Bullying in Schools and Communities

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In recent years, a series of bullying-related suicides in the US and across the globe have drawn attention to the connection between bullying and suicide.

Though too many adults still see bullying as "just part of being a kid," it is a serious problem that leads to many negative effects for victims, including suicide.

Many people may not realize that there is also a link between **BEING** a bully and committing suicide.

What Will it Take?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SMLADgjDMU>



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Statistics on Bullying and Suicide are Alarming:



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- ❑ **SUICIDE is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year, according to the CDC. For every suicide among young people, there are at least 100 suicide attempts.**
- ❑ **Over 14 percent of high school students have considered suicide, and almost 7 percent have attempted it.**
- ❑ **Bully victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims, according to studies by Yale University**
- ❑ **A study in Britain found that at least half of suicides among young people are related to bullying**
- ❑ **10 to 14 year old girls may be at even higher risk for suicide, according to the study above**
- ❑ **According to statistics reported by ABC News, nearly 30 percent of students are either bullies or victims of bullying, and 160,000 kids stay home from school every day because of fear of bullying**

What is Bullying?



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teasing

rumors

leaving
somebody
out

Gossiping

threats

hitting

BULLYING

kicking

mean
words

name-calling

stealing

pushing

damaging
property

Federal Definition



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Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have [serious, lasting problems](#).

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Source: Stopbullying.gov

Evolving Definitions



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- ❑ **repeated acts** of physical, verbal or non-verbal, physical and social exclusion
Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher & pioneer in bullying research (1993)
- ❑ an act which occurs on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system...”
(Georgia, SB250, 2010 pg. 1)

Increasing Specificity



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Iowa, SF 61, 2007

"any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on an actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets specified conditions. Provides that "trait or characteristic of the student" includes, but is not limited to, age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or family status.."

Broadening the Scope

State of Delaware, HB7, 2007

“...bullying means any intentional written, electronic, verbal or physical act or actions against **another person** that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect...”(page1)



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Expanding Assumptions About Bullying



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Who can be a Bully

Students

Teachers/Staff

Principals

Others in the Community

Where bullying can happen

On school campus

Off school campus

In the workplace

Children Who Are More Likely to Bully Others



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There are two types of kids who are more likely to bully others:

- Some are well-connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
- Others are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious, have low self esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

Children who have these factors are also more likely to bully others:

- Are aggressive or easily frustrated
- Have less parental involvement or having issues at home
- Think badly of others
- Have difficulty following rules
- View violence in a positive way
- Have friends who bully others

Remember, those who bully others do not need to be stronger or bigger than those they bully. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources—popularity, strength, cognitive ability—and children who bully may have more than one of these characteristics

Picking on Others is a Learned Behavior



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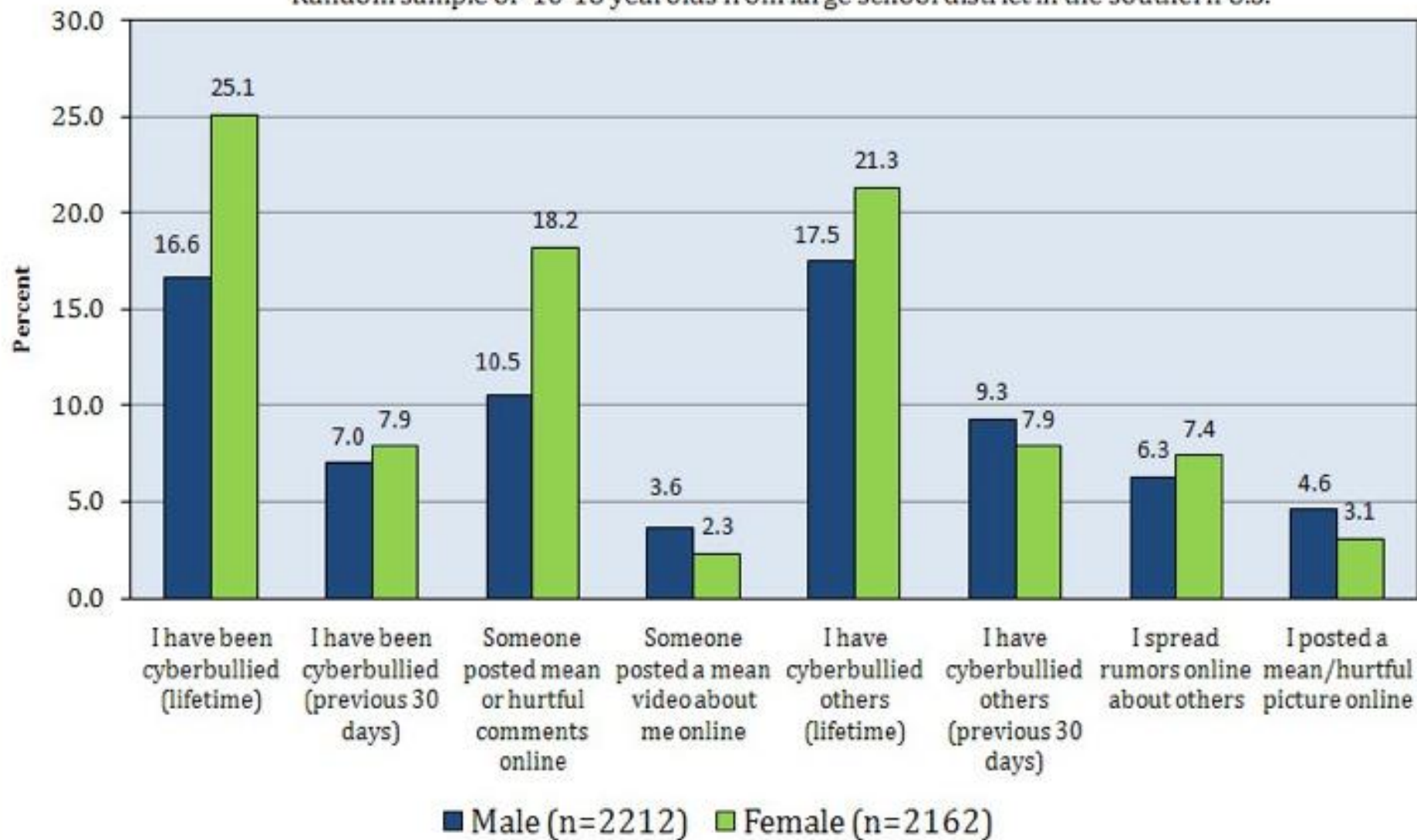
- **Every 7 minutes a child is bullied while on a school playground**
- **85% of these occurrences happen without intervention**
- **Surveys from 2009 show that 100,000 children carry guns to school as a result of being bullied**
- **28% of children carrying guns have witnessed violence in their homes**
- **46% of males and 26% of females admit to having been involved in fights due to being bullied**
- **More than 85% of teenagers say that revenge after bullying is the leading cause of school shootings and homicide**
- **A child commits suicide as a direct result of being bullied once every 30 minutes, with 19,000 bullied children committing suicide over the course of one year**

MORE THAN HALF OF ALL BULLYING EVENTS ARE NEVER REPORTED

Source: Dear Bully: Seventy Authors Tell Their Stories

Cyberbullying by Gender

Random sample of 10-18 yearolds from large school district in the southern U.S.



Bullying Teachers

- ❑ Teachers can be involved in bullying in three ways: as observers, as perpetrators, and as victims. As observers, teachers can help prevent or stop bullying or perpetuate it.
- ❑ The dunce cap, standing in the corner, having one's hand whacked with a ruler, having one's poor grade announced to the class, using degrading words and treatments: all these methods were a common occurrence in educational settings might but now fall under the category of bullying.
- ❑ Other school employees besides teachers can bully students, including coaches, custodians, security personnel, and the front office staff, even the principal.

**TEACHER BULLYING MAY SET THE STAGE FOR
PEER BULLYING**



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Teacher Bullying May Go Unreported for Several Reasons



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- ❑ The victim may not trust the system to support or believe him or her, especially if there are any instances in which the victim had infringed school behavior rules.
- ❑ The victim may also fear retribution by the teacher in the form of a lowered grade or more teacher bullying behavior.
- ❑ The victim may fear retribution by students who are in good standing with the teacher.
- ❑ When teachers bully an entire class, the feeling may be that they have the support of the school and that everyone must know and accept this behavior.

**TEACHERS MAY ALSO BULLY OTHER
TEACHERS & SCHOOL STAFF...**

Considerations



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- ❑ The experience of bullying plays a major role in motivating attacks at school
 - **2/3 of 37 school shootings involved attackers who “felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others prior to the incident” (US Secret Service)**
- ❑ Different perceptions of bullying leads to misunderstandings about what is or is not bullying
- ❑ Lack of a full understanding of bullying leads to incomplete policies on anti-bullying, resulting in ineffective prevention and intervention programs
- ❑ There is a decline in bullying-related problems in schools with a good sense of community
- ❑ Current “whole-school” approaches to the management of bullying, tend to focus on behaviors between students and rarely on the quality of other relationships in the school

So, What Can be Done?

- ❑ One way to stop bullying is to take steps to prevent bullying from starting

- ❑ A few ways to prevent bullying include: providing a bully policy and making sure it is consistently enforced, having consequences for bullies, and educating potential victims of bullying



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Anti-Bullying Policies



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- ❑ A clear definition of bullying and a policy that disallows it and lays out the consequences is one means a school or school district can use to lessen or prevent bullying
- ❑ When bullying is clearly defined, it can be more easily recognized and separated from constructive criticism, discipline, and motivation, all of which are bordering areas
- ❑ It is important that the policy be clear and research-based in order to not be so broad that students and teachers are fearful of being perceived as bullies at every turn when what they say is not praise
- ❑ Policies to prevent bullying should explicitly mention major types of bullying (ie, verbal, social, physical, cyberbullying, and racist, religious, homophobic bullying, bullying of people with disabilities) but it is important that policies should be worded so as not to exclude the bullying of mainstream victims, nor victims who are teachers, staff, administrators, or school board members

Learn More About Policies in Your State



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Interactive map

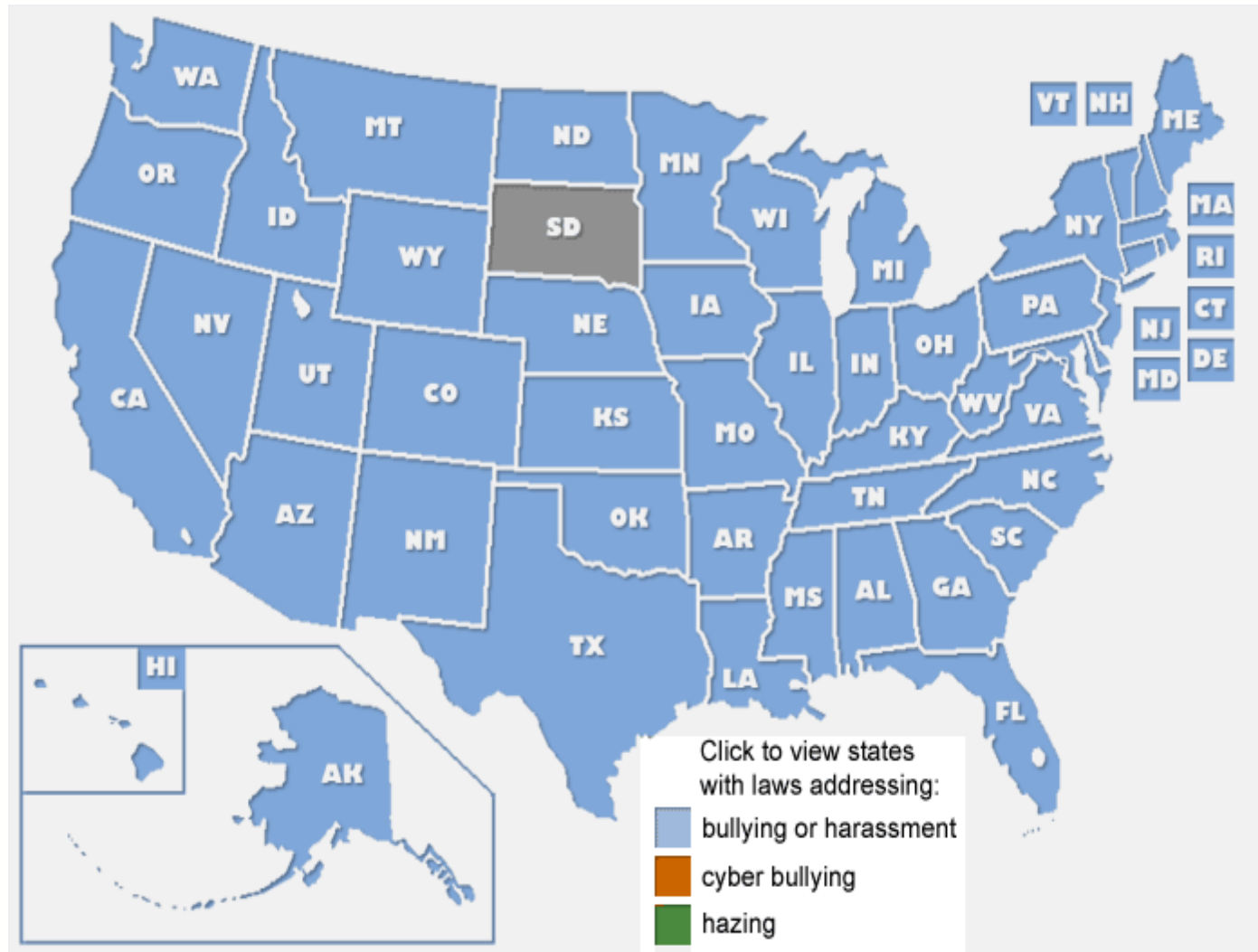
[http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/
public/bullying_laws.page](http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/bullying_laws.page)

States Address Bullying, Harassment, and Hazing



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Implement a Bullying Prevention Program

- Conduct a needs assessment—be honest and find out what the needs are in your school and community
- Questions to ask before and during implementation:
 - How effective is it?
 - Is it comprehensive? Does it include a school-wide, classroom, individual, and community component?
 - What is the level of parent involvement?
 - Is there student input and involvement?
 - Is there a school advisory board?
 - Is there a reporting system?
 - Is there opportunity to learn positive social and behavioral skills?



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Comprehensive Approaches



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Bullying needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way that involves:

- Educating faculty, staff, students, parents and the community
- Creating a safe and supportive school culture
- Making sure everyone understands that they are responsible for helping to solve the problem

Steps for Dealing with Bullies



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- Intervene immediately. Do not overlook a potential bullying situation. It is important to talk to both the victim and the bully separately. If more than one student is involved talk to each one separately.**
- Remind the bully about the rules established in the school. Bullying can be a reportable crime when it involves physical violence, stealing, and forms of slander and libelous statements that can be made online or behind one's back. Remind bullies that by committing these acts, they are susceptible for punishment by the justice system. If this is a first time offense and the results are minimal, make sure the punishment fits the crime. However, if this bully has continually hurt victims, be sure the consequences are more severe.**
- Be sure to call the parents of ALL the children or teens involved to help reach an understanding and possible resolution. It is important for parents to make sure their children are not taking on the characteristics of bullying.**

More Steps to Take

- When talking with the victim, be sure they understand everything possible is being done to ensure a similar instance does not happen again.
- Continue watching the behavior of the bully. As a teacher or administrator, keeping an eye on the bullying situation is the best way to stay on top of it and stop it before it starts.
- Another way to prevent bullying is to help children develop good self-esteem. Bullies target the weak because they know they are an easy target. It is important for children or teens to surround themselves with a positive support group to help remain strong and not the next victim of a bullying attack.

Source: tqe.siu.edu, education-world.com



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Prevent Bullying With Realistic Consequences

- Follow up with appropriate and fair consequences when bullying occurs, whomever the perpetrator and victims are.
- Victims must know that they will get a fair hearing in order to be persuaded to come forward. Bullies must not be perceived as immune on account of longevity or position. Consequences need to be applied consistently in order for a policy to prevent bullying to be effective.
- When bullying involves physical altercations or damage to or theft of property, the consequences of bullying may include criminal prosecution, as well as school sanctions.
- Bullies can be both students and teachers, and they, not to mention schools, school districts, and parents of bullies have been sued for damages.



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Prevent Bullying with Family Education

- ❑ Perceptions about bullying have changed over time, and while a bullying policy can touch organizations such as schools, it is harder to reach families
- ❑ People who come from families in which bullying was the norm have been exposed to behavior models that are not considered acceptable today. They may need explicit models of how to act on thoughts and they may need greater assistance to learn new behavior patterns
- ❑ Community education is difficult and takes time: many people feel that what happens behind their closed front door is their business and private
- ❑ Parents can prevent bullying both by modeling alternative behaviors and explicitly pointing out behaviors that fall into the category of bullying. Differentiating ways of acting and sharing behaviors that are acceptable within a family from what is acceptable in school and other public settings can also help.



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Other Means to Help Prevent Bullying

- ❑ Supervision and appropriate intervention can help stop bullying that is in progress
- ❑ Teach appropriate assertiveness to those who are, or may be, targets of bullying
- ❑ If the bullying is linked to something that can be changed discuss various responses with the person, including changing the behavior, BUT remind those being bullied that asserting his or her right to be different is also appropriate
- ❑ Staff training can help make sure that the school (and state, if applicable) bullying policies are widely understood and applied consistently



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If You Witness Bullying



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Even if people are not bullied or bullying others they can be affected by bullying. Many times, when they see bullying, they may not know what to do to stop it. They may not feel safe stepping in in the moment, but there are many other steps they can take:

- Spend time with the person being bullied. Talk with them. Listen to them.
- Call the person being bullied at home to encourage them.
- Tell an adult who you trust. You can tell them in person or leave them a note. OR Help the person being bullied tell an adult.
- Set a good example. Do not bully others.
- Help the person being bullied get away from the situation.
- Take away the audience by choosing not to watch and walk away.
- It takes a lot of courage for someone to step up on behalf of a bullied person. However, don't use insults or physical violence to defend the victim.
- Look for opportunities to contribute to the anti-bullying culture of your school through creating posters, stories or films.

Make it Safe to Report Bullying



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Some bullying occurs at the rate of “almost every day” according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2007 data. Head off repeat offense by encouraging reports of bullying and **making sure reports are dealt with expeditiously.**

Both bystanders and those who have been bullied need safe avenues for reporting bullying

Establish anonymous or confidential systems for reporting at your school or program

Example: In November, 2011, the Alabama Department of Education unveiled a new portal for Anti-Bullying resources for Alabama Educators, Parents and Students AND to report incidences of bullying

<http://alex.state.al.us/stopbullying/>

Take Action for Them



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<iframe width="420" height="315"  
src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/q5wnExotuys?rel=0" frameborder="0"  
allowfullscreen></iframe>
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Be a Hero—Take a Stand



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Free or Web-based Resources

- www.auburn.edu/antibullying
- stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov
- nces.ed.gov
- stopbullyingnow.com
- youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu
- Teaching Tolerance. Org (Southern Poverty Law Center)
- www.cyberbullying.us/



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