



Informational Session
Bullying in Schools
February 20th, 2013
Chippewa Area Mentor Program



The Role Kids Play in Bullying:

There are many roles that kids can play. Kids can bully others, they can be bullied, or they may witness bullying. When kids are involved in bullying, they often play more than one role. Sometimes kids may both be bullied and bully others or they may witness other kids being bullied. It is important to understand the multiple roles kids play in order to effectively prevent and respond to bullying.

Importance of Not Labeling Kids:

When referring to a bullying situation, it is easy to call the kids who bully others "bullies" and those who are targeted "victims," but this may have unintended consequences. When children are labeled as "bullies" or "victims" it may:

- Send the message that the child's behavior cannot change
- Fail to recognize the multiple roles children might play in different bullying situations
- Disregard other factors contributing to the behavior such as peer influence or school climate

Instead of labeling the children involved, focus on the behavior. For instance:

- Instead of calling a child a "bully," refer to them as "the child who bullied"
- Instead of calling a child a "victim," refer to them as "the child who was bullied"
- Instead of calling a child a "bully/victim," refer to them as "the child who was both bullied and bullied others."

Effects on Kids Who are Bullied: Kids who are bullied can experience negative physical, school, and mental health issues. Kids who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement—GPA and standardized test scores—and school participation. They are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.

A very small number of bullied children might retaliate through extremely violent measures. In 12 of 15 school shooting cases in the 1990s, the shooters had a history of being bullied.

Effects on Kids Who Bully Others:

Kids who bully others can also engage in violent and other risky behaviors into adulthood. Kids who bully are more likely to:

- Abuse alcohol and other drugs in adolescence and as adults
- Get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school
- Engage in early sexual activity
- Have criminal convictions and traffic citations as adults
- Be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses, or children as adults

Effects on Kids who are Bystanders:

Kids who witness bullying are more likely to:

- Have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs
- Have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Miss or skip school

Groups that have a higher Risk of Experiencing Bullying:

- **LGBT Youth:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) youth and those perceived as LGBT are at an increased risk of being bullied. Families of and people who work with LGBT youth have important and unique considerations for strategies to prevent and intervene in bullying.
- **Youth with Disabilities or Other Special Health Needs:** Children with disabilities or other special health needs may be at higher risk of being bullied. There are specific ways you can support these groups.

- **Race, Ethnicity, and National Origin:** It is not clear how often kids get bullied because of their race, ethnicity, or national origin. It is also unclear how often kids of the same group bully each other. Research is still growing. We do know, however, that Black and Hispanic youth who are bullied are more likely to suffer academically than their white peers. Although no specialized interventions have yet been developed or identified, some federal partners have developed campaign materials for specific racial and ethnic minority groups. For example, the Indian Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services has developed a series of materials for American Indian and Alaskan Native youth called “Stand Up, Stand Strong.” When bullying based on race or ethnicity is severe, pervasive, or persistent it may be considered harassment, which is covered under federal civil rights laws.

Tips:

Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting kids. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage kids to answer them honestly. Assure kids that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise. Start conversations about bullying with questions like these: What does “bullying” mean to you? Describe what kids who bully are like. Why do you think people bully? Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying? Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it? What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying? Have you or your friends left other kids out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not? What do you usually do when you see bullying going on? Do you ever see kids at your school being bullied by other kids? How does it make you feel? Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

- Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can’t solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.

- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying “stop” directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don’t work, like walking away
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are being bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

Encourage Kids to Do What They Love: Help kids take part in activities, interests, and hobbies they like. Kids can volunteer, play sports, sing in a chorus, or join a youth group or school club. These activities give kids a chance to have fun and meet others with the same interests. They can build confidence and friendships that help protect kids from bullying.

Model How to Treat Others with Kindness and Respect: Kids learn from adults’ actions. By treating others with kindness and respect, adults show the kids in their lives that there is no place for bullying. Even if it seems like they are not paying attention, kids are watching how adults manage stress and conflict, as well as how they treat their friends, colleagues, and families.

References for You to Visit:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/support-kids-involved/index.html>

Bullyinginfo.org

Glsen.org

Safeschoolscoalition.org

Nea.org/tools/30420.htm

Community.pflag.org

Cfchildren.org

