The Sophie Fund

Brief Guide to Youth Bullying Prevention

Definition: "Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated." Types include physical, verbal, and relational. Cyberbullying involves e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, gaming systems, tweeting, or social media.

Potential Psychological Effects: Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harming behavior (especially for girls), alcohol and drug use and dependence, aggression, involvement in violence or crime (especially for boys), emotional distress, hostility, and delinquency.

Potential Physical Effects: Immediate physical injury, sleep disorders, stomach aches, headaches, heart palpitations, dizziness, bedwetting, chronic pain, somatization, stress-related impact on the immune system and hormones, and impact on brain activity and functioning.

Potential Academic Effects: Impact on grades and standardized test scores starting as early as kindergarten and continuing through high school.

Source: stopbullying.gov, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

For a comprehensive hyperlinked listing of resources on bullying prevention, go to:
www.thesophiefund.org

Facts About Bullying

United States
- 19.0% of high school students were bullied at school in 2016-17.
- 14.9% of high school students experienced electronic bullying.
- More female students (22.3%) were bullied compared to male students (15.6%).
- More female students (19.7%) were electronically bullied compared to male students (9.9%).
- More white students (21.5%) and Hispanic students (16.3%) were bullied compared to black students (13.2%).
- More white students (17.3%) were electronically bullied compared to Hispanic students (12.3%) and black students (10.9%).
- More lesbian, gay, or bisexual students (33.0%) were bullied at school than heterosexual students (17.1%) or students not sure of their sexual identity (24.3%).

New York State
- 21.7% of New York high school students were bullied at school (higher than national average of 19.0%) in 2016-17.
- More female students (24.6%) were bullied compared to male students (18.7%).
- Nearly twice as many gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (34.6%) were bullied compared to heterosexual students (19.4%).
- 17.6% of New York high school students experienced electronic bullying (higher than national average of 14.9%).
- More female students (21.2%) were bullied electronically compared to male students (14.0%).
- More than twice as many gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (31.9%) were bullied electronically compared to heterosexual students (15.2%).

Tompkins County
- Tompkins County school districts reported 109 incidents of discrimination, harassment, and bullying (excluding cyberbullying), and 20 incidents of cyberbullying, in the 2017-2018 school year under the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA).
- The 2018 Communities that Care Youth Survey of schools in Tompkins County and Seneca County found that more than a third of high school students reported feeling depressed on most days.

Source: CDC, School Safety and Educational Climate Reporting

Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

In New York State, DASA prohibits bullying, harassment, and discrimination against students in school. Schools are required to:

- Develop a school strategy to prevent bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- Provide students, staff, and persons in parental relation with information about DASA, including the identity of the DASA Coordinator.
- Enable students and persons in parental relation to make a report.
- Complete a thorough investigation promptly after a report.
- Take prompt action to end harassment, bullying, and/or discrimination.
- Prohibit retaliation against anyone making a report or assisting with an investigation.
- Notify local law enforcement when behavior is believed to constitute criminal conduct.
- Ensure that all school personnel receive a copy of the district policies, including the reporting process, at least annually.
- Provide reports on incidents to superintendent and New York State Education Department.

School procedure for reporting bullying, harassment, and discrimination:

1. Student, staff member, or parent/caregiver experiences, witnesses, or hears about bullying, harassment, discrimination, or hazing.
2. Witness or target finds a staff person if immediate help is needed AND if a safety issue; alleged aggressor(s) are separated and intervention occurs to ensure safety.
3. Bullying Reporting Form is completed by student, staff, or parent/caregiver and given to the appropriate Dignity Act Coordinator.
4. Investigation occurs. Target is interviewed separately from aggressor and necessary supports are put in place to ensure safety. Witnesses and aggressor(s) are interviewed.
5. Parent/caregiver is notified. Notification may occur earlier dependent upon severity and situation. If investigation deems that the event occurred, then every attempt is made to permanently stop the bullying, harassment, discrimination, or hazing by means of consequences, education, restorative practices, and/or remediation.

Source: New York State Education Department and New York State Center for School Safety, and Ithaca City School District

Resources for Students, Parents, Teachers, and Schools

stopbullying.gov
A U.S. government website managed by the Department of Health and Human Services providing information from various government agencies on bullying and how to prevent and respond to it.
www.stopbullying.gov

Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center
Pacer provides innovative bullying prevention resources for students, parents, educators, and others.
https://www.pacer.org/bullying/

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
"The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is the most researched and best-known bullying prevention program available today."
http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/olweus_bullying_prevention_program.page

"The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf

Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)
DASA seeks to provide New York's public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus, and/or at a school function.
http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/

Requirements for Schools (Tool for training school employees)*, New York State Education Department and New York State Center for School Safety*
http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/documents/TrainingMaterialsFnl8-31-16.pdf

Dignity Act: What You Need to Know, *TST BOCES*
https://tstboces.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/BOCES-DASA-Brochure-18-19-web.pdf

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