



Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools

FACT SHEET

FS-SC08

2001, 2008

Bullying Prevention: Recommendations for Schools

The Role of Schools in Preventing Bullying

The school should be a safe and positive learning environment for ALL students. In order to achieve this goal, schools should strive to:

1. Reduce, if not eliminate, existing bully/victim problems among students inside and outside of the school setting;
2. Prevent the development of new bully/victim problems; and
3. Achieve better peer relations at school and create conditions that allow victims and bullies to get along and function better in and out of school.

Recommended General Rules for Improving Overall School Climate

Two general conditions must exist in order to prevent bullying: (1) adults at schools should be **aware** of the extent of bully/victim problems in their own schools; and (2) these adults should **involve** themselves in changing the situation.

Schools and classrooms should establish and stick to rules to prevent bullying. Adults must clearly and consistently communicate that bullying is **not** acceptable behavior. The following rules strive to get all students involved:

1. We will not bully other students.
2. We will try to help students who are bullied.
3. We will make it a point to include ALL students, even those who are usually left out.
4. When we know somebody is being bullied, we will tell a teacher, parent, or adult we trust.

Students should be assured that telling an adult is not "tattling," but instead students are showing compassion for victims of bullying behavior. It is important to note that these rules target all students, not just the bullies or victims. The introduction of these rules establish classroom norms or "structures" that can contribute to the prevention of bullying.

Consequences of Bullying Behavior

Establishing rules against bullying helps create clear positive or negative consequences for following or violating rules. The best results involve a combination of generous verbal praise or other social reinforcements for positive activities and consistent negative consequences for aggressive, rule-violating behavior. Teachers should establish a positive, friendly, and trusting relationship with their class and each individual student. This is especially true for aggressive, students who act-out and may have had negative experiences with adults. It is easier for a student to accept criticism if they feel appreciated and liked. Teachers should also be aware of their own behavior. Teachers often serve as role-models for students. Students will generally not respect the teacher or classroom rules against bullying if the teacher is sarcastic or unfair in the application of the rules.

School-Level Interventions

School-level interventions are designed to improve overall school climate. These interventions target the entire school population.

- *Establish a Bullying Prevention Committee:* This committee can coordinate all aspects of a school's violence prevention efforts, including anti-bullying efforts.
- *Administer an Anonymous Survey:* A student questionnaire can determine the nature and extent of bully/victim problems in the school.
- *Hold a School Conference Day:* Raise school and community awareness and involvement by creating a long-term anti-bullying plan. In addition to school personnel, selected students and parents should participate.

- *Improve Supervision and Outdoor Environment:* Provide an adequate number of adults ("teacher density") during lunch, recess, and breaks in an effort to intervene quickly if student conflicts arise.
- *Involve Parents:* Conduct meetings with parents and disseminate information at the school to make everyone aware of the school's anti-bullying rules and plans.

Classroom-Level Interventions

Classroom-level interventions are designed to improve an individual classroom's social climate. These interventions target the entire classroom.

- *Establish Classroom Rules Against Bullying:* Involve students in creating rules against bullying in order to develop students' personal responsibility for conforming to those rules.
- *Create Positive and Negative Consequences for Bullying:* Establish social reinforcement (praise or verbal rewards) for positive behavior and sanctions for undesirable behavior. The negative consequences should cause discomfort without being perceived as malicious or unfair. Negative consequences should be appropriate and related to the behavior.
- *Hold Regular Classroom Meetings:* Provide a forum for students and teachers to develop, clarify, and evaluate rules for bullying behavior.
- *Meet with Parents:* Hold general classroom or grade-level meetings with parents to improve school-family communication and keep parents informed about anti-bullying efforts.

Individual-Level Interventions

Classroom-level interventions are designed to change or improve the behavior of students in general. These interventions target specific students who are involved in bullying, either as bullies or victims.

- *Serious Talks with the Bully or Bullies:* Initiate immediate talks with the bully/ies. These talks should include:
 - documenting their involvement or participation in bullying,
 - sending a clear, strong message that bullying is not acceptable,
 - warning the bully/ies that their future behavior will be closely monitored
 - warn them that additional negative consequences will be administered if their bullying behavior does not stop.
- *Serious Talks with the Victim:* Talks with the victim and their parents should occur after a bullying incident. These talks should include:
 - documenting the specific bullying episode(s). This might include: How did the bullying start? What happened? How did it end? Who participated and in what way?;
 - provide the victim and their parents with information about the school or teacher's plan of action in dealing with the bully/ies; and
 - persuade the victim to immediately report any new bullying episodes or attempts to the teacher or school administration.
- *Involve the Parents:* When a bullying situation is discovered, the teacher should contact the parents. Depending on the situation, meetings can be held together with the parents of both the bully/ies and the victim. To minimize tension, meetings can also be held with each family separately. A teacher might want to invite the school psychologist, guidance counselor, principal, or vice principal to attend.
- *Change of Class or School:* If anti-bullying measures are in place and the problem persists despite these measures, moving the aggressive student(s) can bring about change. If possible, the aggressive student(s) should be moved before considering moving the victim. This solution should not be taken lightly, and all concerned parents and teachers should plan and consult with each other.

References:

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