

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Tips for Schools/Institutions

Prevention

1. Assess Bullying at Your Institution

Administer anonymous surveys among youth, families and staff/faculty in order to gather information about the nature and extent of bullying in your community as well as perceptions about climate and safety. Use this information to inform curricular and programmatic approaches, focus your intervention strategies and measure progress over time.

2. Create a Team

Charge a committee with oversight of bullying related matters. The committee should keep informed about current policies, practices and trends; implement surveys and evaluations; help to establish and educate staff about protocols for responding to reports of bullying; plan school-wide events; and build relationships with local law enforcement and other key community members who may need to be involved in response to serious incidents.

3. Educate the Community

Provide ongoing professional development and family education for adults on bullying prevention and anti-bias education. Implement curricula and programming that address social and emotional learning, including ethical standards for on and offline communication and interpersonal behavior. Teach youth that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and help them identify strategies for responding to social aggression and acting as allies to targets.

4. Establish Policies

Make sure your institution's anti-bullying, harassment and non-discrimination policies are current, reflect district and state guidelines and include clear definitions and consequences. Establish technology use guidelines and have students/families sign acceptable use agreements. Publicize policies and guidelines in multiple ways.

5. Monitor "Hot Spots"

Ensure that typically unsupervised/unstructured areas (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, locker room, bus, school yard, etc.) are adequately monitored and that students are aware of behavioral expectations in these locations. Provide training to aides and support staff who oversee these areas so that they can respond effectively when bullying occurs.



6. Promote Online Safety

Increase awareness of Internet safety strategies among youth and their families by sending home resources and sponsoring community programs that provide practical information about how to respond to cyberbullying. Institute supervision and monitoring practices that keep relevant staff up-to-date and utilize appropriate blocking and filtering software.

7. Encourage Reporting

Establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for bullying incidents and clear procedures for investigation and response. Make youth aware of these procedures and encourage them to tell a trusted adult about threatening or harassing behavior that they experience or observe. Reinforce the difference between "tattling" and responsible reporting, and impress upon youth the destructive consequences of keeping silent about bullying and bias.

8. Set an Example

Model appropriate conduct on and offline by treating all people with respect; engaging in culturally responsive behavior; avoiding disciplinary responses that humiliate or denigrate youth; using technology in safe and appropriate ways; and intervening in incidents of name-calling and bullying consistently.

9. Be Vigilant

Look for warning signs that a young person in your care might be the aggressor or target of bullying. If you observe social withdrawal, truancy, depression, obsessive technology use, fear or avoidance of technology or other behaviors that concern you, talk with your supervisor or a mental health expert at your institution about how to intervene.

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Intervention

1. Investigate and Respond

Interview the individuals involved in the incident as well as bystanders who may be able to provide information regarding the history and context related to the negative behavior. If the incident involves electronic communication, gather relevant evidence, including emails, texts, screen shots and images (but do not take possession of sexually explicit photos or videos). Determine appropriate consequences for the aggressors in accordance with your institution's policies and the seriousness of the infraction. If relevant, work with Internet service providers to remove offensive content.

2. Consult Law Enforcement

If the incident involves harassment, stalking, physical or sexual assault, threats of violence, distribution of pornography or other behaviors that may amount to a criminal offense, contact your district counsel, school resource officer and/or local law enforcement liaison. If the incident took place away from school grounds, check with legal counsel regarding permissible disciplinary interventions.

3. Follow Up with the Aggressor's Family

Discuss the incident with the aggressor's parents or guardians to establish ongoing communication and consistent expectations between home and your institution. Provide information and education as appropriate so that the aggressor's family understands how best to address the negative behavior and monitor their child's conduct moving forward.

4. Provide Support

Assist the target and the target's family in coping with the impact of the bullying and building skills for dealing with such problems in the future. Make sure not to inadvertently make the target feel responsible for the bullying in any way, or to unintentionally punish the target by limiting access to activities or technology. If necessary, protect targets from further



online victimization by helping them to block offenders, change phone numbers/email addresses/screen names, and file complaints with social networking/media sites and service providers.

5. Educate

Discuss strategies for responding to bullying and being an ally with all youth. Social cruelty and aggression affect the entire community, not just those who are directly involved in an incident. Broad-based education about responsible behavior and technology use can contribute to a climate that is welcoming and inclusive for all members of your institution.

6. Reach Out

Work with local schools, youth groups and community organizations to share information about ongoing problems with bullying (making sure to maintain confidentiality where necessary). Communicating with the different youth-oriented institutions can help to establish consistency with regard to the messages, support and consequences they receive.