



OPA RESOLUTION ON BULLYING IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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WHEREAS bullying is commonly characterized as aggressive behavior that (a) is intended to cause distress or harm, (b) involves an imbalance of power or strength between the aggressor and the victim, and (c) occurs repeatedly over time (Limber, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001);

WHEREAS bullying may take many forms, including: verbal (e.g. name-calling, making racist, sexist or homophobic jokes, threatening, using sexist language), physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, damaging someone's property), relational/social (e.g. spreading rumors, social exclusion), and electronic (any type of bullying that is communicated via electronic media);

WHEREAS research has indicated that bullying involves large numbers of children and youth in Ohio across all socio-economic backgrounds, racial groups that have been studied, and areas of different population density (urban, suburban, and rural settings) (CDC, 2010; CDC, 2012);

WHEREAS bullying is a public health problem as it is associated with increases in victims' suicide risk (Brunstein Klomek et al., 2007; Brunstein Klomek et al., 2010; Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2011), depression (Brunstein Klomek et al., 2007), anxiety (Craig, 1998; Hodges & Perry, 1996; Olweus, 1993a; Rigby & Slee, 1993), somatic problems (Fekkes et al., 2004; Gini et al., 2009), lowered self-esteem (Hodges & Perry, 1996; Olweus, 1993a; Rigby & Slee, 1993), and higher rates of school absenteeism (Rigby, 1996);

WHEREAS children and youth with disabilities, ADHD, and/or Autism may be at particularly high risk of being bullied by their peers (Baumeister et al., 2008; Bell & Spencer, 2006; Bejerot, 2009; Dawkins, 1996; Hamiwka et al., 2009; Humphrey & Symes, 2010; Little, 2001; Twyman et al., 2010; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Weiner & Mark, 2009; Young et al., 2011) and exhibit significantly higher mental health problems than their typical peers following bullying events (Mitra et al., 2013)

WHEREAS children and youth who are lesbian, gay, or trans-gender, or who are perceived to be so may be at particularly high risk of being bullied by their peers (Dawkins, 1996; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995; Hunter, 1990; Nabuzka & Smith, 1993; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995; Rigby, 2002; Yude, Goodman, & McConachie, 1998; Whitney, Smith, & Thompson, 1994);

WHEREAS research suggests that there is no single cause of bullying. Rather, individual, familial, peer, school, and community factors may place a child or youth at risk for bullying his or her peers. (Limber, 2000; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999);



WHEREAS research indicates that perpetrating bullying is related to other problem behaviors, including higher rates of criminal arrests and incarceration (Fox, et al., 2003), vandalism (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), fighting (Nansel et al., 2001; Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, & Scheidt, 2003), drinking alcohol (Nansel et al., 2001), smoking (Nansel et al., 2001), truancy (Byrne, 1994), dropping out of school (Byrne, 1994), carrying weapons (Nansel et al., 2003), high-risk gun ownership (i.e., guns owned for reasons other than sport; Cunningham, Henggeler, Limber, Melton, & Nation, 2000), and other antisocial behaviors (Solberg & Olweus, 2003);

WHEREAS numerous bullying prevention programs, curricula, and strategies have been developed in recent years for use in schools (GLSEN, 2013; National Association of School Psychologists, 2012; Olweus, 1993a; Rossen & Cowan, 2012; Seeley et al., 2011);

WHEREAS existing research indicates that bullying at school may be significantly reduced through comprehensive, school-wide programs that are designed to change norms for behavior (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2011; Catalano et al., 2002; GLSEN, 2013; National Association of School Psychologists, 2012; Olweus, 1993a; Olweus, 1993b; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999; Rossen & Cowan, 2012; Seeley et al., 2011);

WHEREAS, psychologists and school psychologists have played critical roles in conducting research on bullying and in developing bullying prevention interventions (e.g., American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2011; Catalano et al., 2002; Olweus, 1993a; Nansel et al., 2001);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ohio Psychological Association integrate bullying prevention into its violence prevention activities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Ohio Psychological Association encourage appropriate public and private funding agencies to support ecologically valid and culturally sensitive research on bullying behavior and antibullying interventions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OPA integrate its bullying prevention work into initiatives with other associations, governmental entities, and other interested parties in the dissemination of information that will help school administrators and staff, parents, mental health professionals, university faculty and staff, children and youth, and others to prevent bullying; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OPA encourage vigorous evaluations of bullying prevention programs used in schools, after-school programs, and other settings; and utilize available research findings on bullying prevention programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OPA encourage the implementation and dissemination of bullying prevention programs and interventions that have demonstrated efficacy in schools and communities and that are culturally sensitive.



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Role of Psychologists in the Community

Psychologists working in the community have an important role to play in discouraging bullying. Following are some important roles that psychologists in the community can play:

- Psychologists can act as community educators and consultants, providing lectures and workshops that are open to the public and outline warning signs for bullying and ways to respond when a child is engaged in bullying as a bully, victim, bully-victim or bystander. You can visit <http://www.ohioviolencepreventionacademy.com/workshops.php> for a list of workshops in Ohio for children, educators, parents, and professionals.
- Community-based psychologists can also partner with local organizations to promote anti-bullying and anti-violence campaigns. A list of local organization around the Ohio area can be found at <http://cap4kids.org/columbus/parent-handouts/child-abuse/bullying/>.
- Teaching social skills to children who are vulnerable appears to have a positive impact on reducing vulnerability to being bullied at school. Attempts to maneuver through peer relationships and social groups would be greatly enhanced and protected through this uniquely combined approach in bullying prevention and intervention. Social skills training/assertiveness training can be provided by psychologists within the community. Additionally, when bullying behavior has been identified, community-based psychologists can be utilized to provide empathy training and learning effective problem-solving approaches. A list of psychologists experienced in the treatment of bullying victims and perpetrators can also be found on the OPA website.
- Community-based psychologists can also establish support groups/psychoeducational groups for those who have been bullied. Such groups could offer instruction on coping strategies and community-based resources for individuals who are members of particular population groups, such as the LGBT community.
- Psychologists should be aware of empirically-supported bullying interventions such as; *Al's Pals, Bully Busters, Bully Prevention in PBIS, Bully-Proofing Your School, Creating a Safe School, Get Real About Violence, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Second Step, and Steps to Respect*. Community psychologists can partner with local schools as a consultant in the implementation of these programs, as well as to discuss specific situations of bullying that involve a client who has consented to communication with the school.
- Community-based psychologists should create and attend continuing education programs related to bullying and its effects. Checking into programs provided by OPA and APA are a good place to start.

The Educational System and Bullying



History/Background

The State of Ohio requires school districts to have school board adopted bullying policies in place and to report semiannually on reported bullying incidents in the district. Ohio educators, consistent with the legislation of Ohio HB 276, are also designated as mandated reporters of bullying, intimidation, and harassment events to ensure such situations are investigated at the school level.

[ODE Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Model Policy](#)

Schools districts should provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. The links below provide data on incident rates in schools as well as position statements and papers providing background information on bullying in the educational system.



[Ohio \(State Snapshot\) from GLSEN](#)



[NASP Position Statement on Bullying Prevention and Intervention](#)

[Bullying in Schools: An Overview. US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#)

[Bullying and Students with Disabilities, Briefing Paper: White House Conference on Bullying Prevention](#)

[Office for Civil Rights: Dear Colleague Letter on Bullying](#)

Resources

What can mental health providers do outside of school do? One of the best things we can do is to teach children how to handle conflict and respond to teasing. A child who doesn't get upset or angry isn't a "fun" victim. Role play to help a child respond confidently both to being bullied AND to being a bystander. Adults also need encouragement to protect the rights and liberties of students by promoting a positive school climate and establishing that bullying behaviors are not acceptable.



[Bullying Prevention Resources from the Ohio Department of Education](#)

[Safety and Violence Prevention Training from the Ohio Department of Education](#)

[House Bill 19- Teen Dating Violence Prevention Resources](#)

Warning Signs of Bullying

The Ohio Psychological Association's bullying prevention task force has compiled the following resources to help you identify the warning signs of involvement in bullying. A brief description and a link to the resources are provided below:

- StopBullying.gov has identified warning signs that a child is being bullied and warning signs that a child is bullying others. They also provide information about why children do not ask for help when they are experiencing bullying:
 - <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/warning-signs/#bullied>
- Hazelden's *Violence Prevention Works!* website includes a list of warning signs for "Students Who are Bullied" and "Students Who Bully Others". Students who are being bullied often exhibit some warning signs, and the site identifies 11 warning signs that may point to someone experiencing bullying. It's important to recognize the characteristics of students who bully, which may help prevent bullying and allow for early intervention. The site identifies 8 warning signs that may indicate a student is bullying other. *Violence Prevention Works!* "Warning Signs of Bullying" resource is available at:
 - http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/bullying_warning_signs.page
- *Risk Factors For Outcomes of Bullying and Victimization*. A white paper prepared by Susan Swearer for the United States White House conference on bullying prevention, March 20, 2011. *Abstract:* No individual exists in isolation. We are all products of the interaction between our biology and our environment. The "father of social psychology," Kurt Lewin, wrote that behavior is a function of the interaction between the individual and his or her environment (Lewin, 1936). This prophetic formula holds true for our understanding of bullying behavior. Individuals exist within multiple environments: home, school, neighborhood, church, community, and society. Within the interaction between individuals and these environments are risk factors for bullying and victimization. In this paper research on risk factors for bullying and victimization across multiple contexts-- individual, peer, school, family, community, and society will be synthesized. It is important to keep in mind that these factors do not exist in isolation. There is no, one single causal factor for bullying. In fact, it is the interaction between these multiple contexts defined as the social-ecology in which bullying and victimization unfold (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, 2011; Swearer & Doll, 2001; Swearer et al., 2006; Swearer et al., in press). Outcomes of bullying will be reviewed, with the call to address bullying as a social-ecological problem that requires prevention and intervention efforts to target the interaction between individuals and their multiple environments in order to be effective.
 - <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1131&context=edpsycpapers>