

Bullying Prevention for School-Aged Children and Youth

Safe States Alliance recommends supporting bullying prevention among school-aged children and youth by:

- Collaborating with state, territorial, and local members and with all of the institutions that must address prevention and respond to the short- and long-term consequences of bullying. This collaboration should include participation in the [StopBullying.Gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov) collaborative and partnering with law enforcement, mental health agencies, departments of education and juvenile justice, state and county medical associations, emergency medical services, public health programs, schools, faith-based organizations, and parent and youth organizations;
- Disseminating resources that can be used to enable parents, teachers, students, schools, and communities to prevent bullying in a comprehensive manner, including through education, training and policy development to achieve social change;
- Partnering with researchers on the development and evaluation of bullying prevention policy and programmatic interventions at state and local levels; and,
- Encouraging members to participate in existing efforts to prevent bullying within their state and local communities.

Background

Bullying among school-aged children and youth is an important public health issue because:

- Victims of bullying are more likely to suffer long-term negative psychosocial consequences including depression, lower self-esteem, and worsening school attendance and academic performance;^{1,2,3,4,5}
- Attackers in school violence such as shootings are more than twice as likely to report being bullied;⁶
- Parents and professionals repeatedly fail to identify children and adolescents at risk of bullying;^{4,7}
- Perpetrators of bullying are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as drinking alcohol and smoking;³
- Sixty percent of those characterized as perpetrators in grades six through nine receive at least one criminal conviction by age 24;⁵⁸
- Thirty percent of students in grades six through ten report moderate or frequent involvement in bullying, 13 percent as perpetrators, 10.6 percent as victims, and 6.3 percent as both;³
- Approximately 32 percent of all teenagers who use the internet say they have been targets of a range of annoying and potentially menacing online activities – such as receiving threatening messages, having their private emails or text messages forwarded without consent, having an embarrassing picture posted without permission, or having rumors about them spread online;⁹⁶
- Eighteen percent of students in grades six through eight report being cyber bullied at least once in the last couple of months; and six percent said it happened to them two or more times;⁷

- Girls are more likely than boys to say that they have ever experienced cyber-bullying – 38 percent of online girls report being bullied, compared with 26 percent of online boys;^{9,10}
- The 2011 [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that, nationwide, 20 percent of students in grades nine through 12 experienced bullying,¹¹⁸ and
- The 2008–2009 [School Crime Supplement](#) (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics: <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR33081.v1>) indicates that, nationwide, 28 percent of students in grades six through 12 experienced bullying.¹¹

Results for the efficacy of school-based programs for bullying prevention remain mixed, for example:

- The school-based Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) when implemented in Europe showed reductions in bullying of up to 50 percent,^{5,8,12} but results in the US have been less uniform and often of smaller or no effect.^{13,14}
- A meta-analysis that examined effect sizes^a in addition to statistical significance for a number of school-based programs found that effect sizes were generally small and not of practical significance.¹⁵

There are, however, efforts that show promise for progress on this critically important public health issue and that justify greater investment in research and program evaluation. For the most up to date list of ongoing interventions, see [StopBullying.gov](#). Current efforts and programs as of Jan 2014 include:

- As of 2013, 49 states have passed bullying prevention laws,¹² and efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of these laws are underway.
- A large-scale evaluation of OBPP in Pennsylvania schools has shown promising preliminary results.
- Bullying prevention programs that include training in emotional control, peer counseling, and establishing a school policy on bullying have significantly larger effect sizes than programs that do not include these approaches.¹⁴
- Initial results from a randomized, controlled trial of the school-based program *Steps to Respect* suggest that higher levels of program engagement were associated with reduced levels of bullying and other positive outcomes.¹⁶
- [Three Bold Steps for School Community Change: A Toolkit for Community Leaders](#) (Safe Schools/Healthy Students) is a kit that shows how partnerships with people from different parts of a community can create positive, lasting change for students.
- [Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere \(STRYVE\)](#) is a national youth violence prevention effort. STRYVE Online helps communities with access to information and tools, effective strategies, training and technical assistance, and online community workspaces.
- [The G.R.E.A.T Program \(Gang Resistance Education and Training\)](#) has a bullying component. This program has been evaluated by the US Department of Justice <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/198604>

^a Effect size is a measure of the strength of the intervention. For reference, see Kelley, K, Preacher, KJ. (2012) "On Effect Size". *Psychological Methods* 17 (2): 137–152.

References

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