



COMMUNITY INSURANCE CORPORATION

School Safety Newsletter

ISSUE EIGHT

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SEPTEMBER IS BULLYING AWARENESS MONTH

QUIZ: BULLYING



DO YOUR PART TO SEPTEMBER IS BULLYING AWARENESS MONTH

USE YOUR VOICE

57% of the time if another child intervenes it will stop the bullying.

96% of the time, adults miss bullying.

Though bullying has been prevalent for ages, recently, schools have been responding to implement solid policies and procedures for training school staff is recognizing, responding, and ultimately halting the harm experienced by affected students.

In 2009, Act 309 was written into law to improve safety in Wisconsin's schools. A prominent provision of the law responds to school bullying by requiring school district's to adopt policies relating to prohibiting, investigating, and disciplining bullying. The Act also sets forth the fourth Wednesday of September as Bullying Awareness Day. This year, Bullying Awareness Day is Wednesday, September 25th.

As a part of professional development, teachers and administrators can refer to both the warning signs and the "Do's" and "Don'ts" in preventing and responding to bullying in schools and classrooms.

THE WARNING SIGNS

Simply put, bullying has three main components:

- » unwanted, aggressive behavior;
- » a real or perceived power imbalance, and repetition;
- » the potential to be repeated over time.

When bullying moves from simple conflict to persistent persecution, a number of warning signs may present themselves. The student being bullied may:

- » leave school with torn, damaged or missing clothing, books or other belongings;
- » has unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches;
- » has few, if any, friends with whom to spend time;
- » seems afraid to be in school, leave school, ride the

school bus, or take part in organized activities with peers;

- » has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to perform poorly;
- » appears sad, moody, teary or depressed;
- » complains frequently of headaches, stomach aches, or other physical ailments; or
- » avoids the cafeteria or doesn't eat at all.

Any student may be a target of bullying, but there are certain characteristics that put students at higher risk.

Stopbullying.gov, the federal government's anti-bullying website, lists risk factors for students who have greater potential of being bullied:

- » Are perceived to be different from their peers, such as being overweight, underweight, wear different clothing, being new at school, or being unable to afford what other students see as "cool."
- » Are perceived to be weak or unable to defend themselves
- » Are depressed, anxious, or have low self-esteem
- » Are less popular than others and have few friends
- » Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention

Students who report that they're being bullied deserve teachers' and administrators' utmost trust. Typically, students will resist reporting bullying as admitting they're being targeted is embarrassing itself. Students may also fear reporting bullying as it more bring more attention to the situation and lead to escalation.

**BULLYING,
CONTINUED****THE DO's**

It's no mystery that some anti-bullying policies do more harm than good. Below are tips that can be used to appropriately intervene when bullying occurs.

Stop the bullying immediately.

Block eye contact and physically stand between the bullied student and the bully(ies). Do not escalation the tension by trying to sort out the facts on right away. Talk to each party separately once they are calm.

Stick to your school's rules.

Address the school's rules with regards to bullying. Speaking in a matter-of-fact tone in describing what you heard and saw. This will let all students know that bullying is always unacceptable and not tolerated.

Support the bullied student.

Do this in a way that allows the student to retain their dignity and to feel safe from retaliation. Make a point to maintain confidentiality and speak to the student privately if they are upset. Pay close attention to the student following the incident to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Offer guidance to bystanders.

Let bystanders know how they might appropriately intervene or get help the next time they witness a bullying incident. Respond to bystanders saying you either noticed their inaction to the situation, or that you're pleased with how they responded and tried to help.

Impose immediate consequences.

Do not rush either party to make amends or apologize - until the parties have calmed down, these actions may be insincere. The consequences should be addressed in a school policy and should be clearly stated and connected to the offense.

Notify Colleagues and Parents

Let the bully know that he or she is being watched.

Follow up and intervene as necessary.

Support the bullied child and the bully, enabling them to vent feelings and recognize their own behavior. The bully may need to learn new methods of using his or her power and influence in the classroom.

THE DON'Ts**Don't confuse bullying with conflict.**

Bullying is a form of victimization, and addressing it as "conflict" downplays the negative behavior and the seriousness of the effects. Educators should strive to send the message that "no one deserves to be bullied," and to let the bully know that the behavior is wholly inappropriate.

Do not use peer mediation.

It can be very upsetting for a child who has been bullied to face his or her tormentor in mediation. Giving both parties an equal voice can empower the bully and make the bullied student feel worse. In addition, there is no evidence that peer mediation is effective in stopping bullying.

Do not use group treatment for bullies.

Some schools use therapeutic strategies such as anger management, skill-building, and self-esteem building to reach the bully. In practice, group members can actually reinforce each others' bullying and antisocial behavior.

Adapted from "Misdirection in Bully Prevention and Intervention" and other tip sheets.

BULLYING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CYBERBULLYING

With online interactions becoming a more prevalent form of communication among younger populations, bullying has entered into the digital realm through social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube and through more common means like texting.

Recent studies have suggested that nearly 20% of today's youth will experience cyberbullying before adulthood, and 10% identifying themselves as being both victims and offenders of the practice.

Though often similar in form and technique, bullying and cyberbullying have many differences. The most prominent difference is the anonymity that comes when bullies hide their identity from their victims. It's as easy as hiding behind a vague screen name or email. Another difference is the audience - bullies on social networking sites can make their bullying viral - viewed by many friends and fellow students in an instant. Social networking sites and technology in general empower offenders who may not bully in person, largely because sending a text or posting to a social networking site allows the bully to be free of understanding the pain they're inflicting.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING?

The warning signs that a student is a victim of cyberbullying are the same as bullying. The response to a cyberbullying incident that reveals itself at school should be handled the same as bullying as well.

Striving to create a positive school climate has numerous benefits, and recent studies have revealed a correlation between students who are victims of cyberbullying and their negative attitudes towards school and school climate. These students were asked and responded negatively to statements such as, "feel safe at school," "enjoy going to school," "feel that teachers really try to help them succeed," and "feel that eachers at school care about them."

Developing and promoting a safe and positive climate will go a long way in eroding the tactics and motivations of bullies and lead to victims feeling more comfortable seeking emotional support from school staff and increased focus on learning.

BULLYING QUIZ: HOW INFORMED ARE YOU?

Choose the most correct answer.

1. Most bullying typically takes place at the following times and places:

- A. After school as the child travels home
- B. In the morning, on the way to school
- C. During school hours while children are in unstructured activities (i.e. recess, in the hallway or bathroom, etc.)
- D. During school hours and while students are in class

2. Which of the following statements about the ways in which boys and girls bully is true?

- A. Boys tend to bully with physical behaviors while girls bully with words
- B. Girls tend to bully with physical behaviors while boys bully with words
- C. Boys and girls tend to bully in essentially the same way
- D. Both boys and girls use a combination of physical behaviors and bullying with words

3. When a bully harasses another child, the victims tend to be which of the following?

- A. About the same age
- B. Older
- C. Younger
- D. Bullies will pick on older kids, kids their age, and younger kids

4. When victims are bullied, they tend to do which of the following in response to the bullying incident?

- A. They immediately tell their teacher or principal
- B. They immediately tell their parents
- C. They may wait a while, but they will likely tell school figures and their parents
- D. They will likely keep the incident to themselves

5. The age period in which children bully the most is the following:

- A. Elementary School
- B. Middle School
- C. Elementary School or Middle School
- D. High School

6. Most bullying happens when adults are present.

- A. True
- B. False

7. When kids tell an adults about the bullying that they have experienced, adults generally take them seriously and give them the support they need.

- A. True
- B. False

8. There often are bystanders (those kids who are not bullies or victims, but who observe the interaction) of bullying incidents. The effect on bystanders is often as follows:

- A. Bystanders are not affected because they are not directly targeted by the bully
- B. Bystanders are not affected because they feel more in control of the situation
- C. Bystanders are negatively affected, but the consequences of observing a bullying incidents wears off in a short amount of time
- D. Bystanders are also negatively affects and steps should be taken to educate and support them as well

9. In terms of social skills, children who bully have which of the following characteristics:

- A. They have high levels of social skills and social intelligence
- B. They have high levels of social skills, but poor social intelligence
- C. They have low levels of social skills and social intelligence
- D. They have low levels of social skills, but strong social intelligence

10. Children who are bullied often report the following symptoms:

- A. Anxiety
- B. Loneliness
- C. Low self-esteem
- D. All of the above

ANSWER KEY FOUND ON FOLLOWING PAGE

Quiz developed by Education.com

BULLYING QUIZ ANSWER KEY

1. **C**
Most bullying (2 - 3 times as much) happens in school rather than on the way to / from school; generally bullying during school hours occurs when there is limited or no adult supervision, including lunchtime, between class periods, and recess.
2. **A**
Boys tend to engage in more direct physical bullying; girls in more indirect: boys often use behaviors such as pushing, shoving and girls use words to spread rumors and name-calling. However, there are conflicting findings. Physical bullying is constant across most grades.
3. **C**
Bullies often pick on younger students, rather than older students or peers of the same age. Boys and smaller children are at the greatest risk for physical bullying. Weakness can also be defined as social status within the school culture. "Weaker" students may be the ones that do not have many friends or who do not belong to the popular cliques.
4. **D**
Many youth feel disrespected by authority figures and may not disclose violent incidents because of fears of distrust. They often have a lack of confidence that adults can, or will, do their best to protect them from harm.
5. **C**
The incidence of bullying looks like a bell curve - bullying peaks between grades 4 - 7. Bullying steadily declines as students get older, but it never totally disappears. Research suggests that student change tactics (i.e. reports of sexual harassment increase at about the time reports of bullying decrease). Studies in Canada and the UK of students in grades 1 - 8 show that as they get older, students are more likely to join in bullying and less likely to help victims.
6. **B / False**
Bullies typically time their bullying so they are not caught! However, observational data have shown that often adults are aware or attending when bullying occurs. Most disturbing is that when adults do observe bullying or when students tell them, their responses are often not helpful in terms of reducing aggressive behavior.
7. **C**
B / False
Students are often advised to work it out on their own but without support or cues on how to do that. Studies show that bullying is often tacitly accepted by adults and many even say that bullying helps "build character."
8. **D**
Studies show that all three participant groups (bullies, victims, bystanders) are affected by bullying. The passive role of bystanders leads to a sense of powerlessness, fear of being victimized, and anxiety that they'll do the wrong thing in the social group. In addition, they can become desensitized to negative behavior and many repress feelings of empathy for bullying victims.
9. **A**
Many bullies actually have high levels of social skills and social intelligence. Particularly during the middle school years, some bullies are actually quite popular among their classmates who perceive them as especially "cool." Many classmates admire their toughness and may even try to imitate them.
10. **D**
Bullying experiences increase the vulnerabilities of children. Other possible side effects include:
 - » depression
 - » psychosomatic symptoms
 - » social withdrawal
 - » school refusal / absenteeism
 - » poor academic performance
 - » physical health complaints
 - » running away from home
 - » alcohol and drug abuse
 - » suicide