PREVENTING BULLYING

Through Science, Policy, and Practice

The National Academies of Sciences • Engineering • Medicine
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HIGHLIGHTS OF CONCLUSIONS FROM COMMITTEE
Bullying, long tolerated as just a part of “growing up,” is now recognized as a major and preventable public health problem.

Growing concerns about bullying and its short and long-term consequences.
New communal avenues for bullying — chat rooms, instant messaging, social media sites — are near universally accessed by youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Site</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different social media</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Lenhart (2015, p. 2).
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOCUSED IN THESE KEY AREAS

Clarifying the Scope of Problem: Prevalence of Bullying

Social Context and Bullying including the Role of Stigma

Biological & Psychological Consequences

The Role of Prevention Programs & Policies
PREVALENCE OF BULLYING

National surveys show bullying behavior is a significant problem that affects a large number of youth:

- Cyberbullying: 7-15%
- School-based bullying: 18-31%
### CURRENT NATIONAL DATA SOURCES WITH DIFFERENT PREVALENCE RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding organization</th>
<th>National Crime Victimization Survey</th>
<th>School-based Youth Risk Behavior Survey</th>
<th>Health Behavior in School-aged Children Survey</th>
<th>National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Department of Education</td>
<td>CDC and state and large urban school district school-based YRBSs conducted by state and local education health agencies</td>
<td>World Health Organization (WHO-Euro)</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Justice and CDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimate of school bullying from most recent report</strong></td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>17.9% (for assault by a non-sibling peer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimate of electronic bullying from most recent report</strong></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>9.0% (for Internet/cell phone harassment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT NATIONAL DATA SOURCES WITH DIFFERENT PREVALENCE RATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitional and measurement inconsistencies make it difficult to assign one prevalence rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sets focus predominantly on children who are bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much less is known about perpetrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the national data sets assess exposure as a bystander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of nationally representative data on groups most at-risk of bullying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRENDS IN STUDENTS WHO ARE BULLIED OVER TIME

Percentage of Students Bullied (%)

Year


34.3 36.1 29.8 31.7 25.3 28.0 27.8 20.1 21.5 19.6

SCS / NCVS: School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey

YRBS: School-Based Youth Risk Behavior Survey

HBSC: The Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey

NatSCEV II: National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence
TRENDS IN CYBERBULLYING OVER TIME

Percentage of Students Cyberbullied (%)

Year

2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2013

SCS / NCVS: School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey
YRBS: School-Based Youth Risk Behavior Survey
HBSC: The Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey
NatSCEV II: National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence

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ONLINE CONTEXT FOR BULLYING

- Single bullying event can go “viral”
- Potential for anonymity
- 24/7 “inescapable experience”
FIGURE 3-2
BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT.
SOURCE: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF BULLYING

Composition of peer groups, shifting demographics, changing societal norms, and modern technology are factors that must be considered to understand and effectively react to bullying in the United States.

Research on bullying is largely descriptive, which generally fails to fully address contextual factors that affect bullying.

Community norms, neighborhood and acculturation serve as important moderators of bullying outcomes.

Individual variables such as age, gender, personality, and social status, as well as classroom norms favoring the bully or victim affect roles in bullying situations.

Bully is a group phenomenon, with multiple peers taking on roles other than perpetrator and target. Peers are a critical factor because they influence group norms, attitudes, and behavior.
Prevalence increases for subgroups of children—particularly those that are most vulnerable:

- **LGBT Youth:** Prevalence is double that of heterosexual youth
  - 25.6% - 43.6%

- **Youth with Disabilities:** Over-represented in bullying dynamic.
  - 1.5 times as much
  - Wide range in literature stem from measurement & definition, disability identification, comparative groups

- **Obese Youth:** At increased risk but difficult to attribute to a single physical attribute; often co-exists with other factors
RISK FACTORS REQUIRING MORE RESEARCH IN RELATION TO BULLYING

• Socioeconomic Status
  ✓ Conflicting studies

• Immigration Status
  ✓ Inconsistencies in studies

• Minority Religious Affiliations
  ✓ Hypothesis only; need empirical documentation to assess link

• Youth with Multiple Stigmatized Statuses
  ✓ Largely unknown area

• Urban Youth vs Rural Youth
  ✓ Rural vs urban inconsistencies in literature
STIGMA AND BULLYING

Stigma is a characteristic or social identity that is devalued in the eyes of others.

The role of stigma is evident in youth that are expressly targeted for bullying.

Stigma is apparent in specific types of bullying that some youth face.

Role of stigma and its consequences are evident in discrimination research, and less in bullying research.

There should be increased cross-fertilization between the empirical literatures on school bullying and discrimination due to social stigma.
Evidence suggests children who are bullied experience a range of somatic disturbances, including sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal concerns, and headaches. Bullying can affect changes in stress response systems that increase risk for mental health problems, cognitive problems, and emotional dysregulation. Being bullied during childhood and adolescence has been linked to depression, anxiety, and alcohol/drug abuse in adulthood.
The Evidence Shows:

• Bullying has significant short and long-term psychological consequences for involved children

• Individuals who are involved in bullying in any capacity are more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide

• High-status bullies have been found to rank high on assets and competencies, but have also been found to rank low on psychopathology

There is not enough evidence to conclude that bullying is a causal factor for youth suicides or a causal factor in school shootings. Data are unclear on the role of bullying as one of the precipitating factors in school shootings

Individuals who both bully others and are bullied are at the greatest risk for poor psycho-social outcomes however, contextual factors can affect this risk
Existing evidence suggests both social-cognitive and emotion regulation processes may mediate the relation between bullying and adverse mental health outcomes.

- Early Abuse and Trauma
- Chronically Activated Stress System
- Child’s Support System
- Length of Bullying Experience
FIGURE 5-1
MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION SPECTRUM.

SOURCE: Adapted from Institute of Medicine (1994, Figure 2.1, p. 23).
PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES: SCHOOL BASED

- **Universal prevention programs**: Reduce risks and strengthen skills for all youth within a defined community or school setting.

- **Selective preventative interventions**: Target youth who are at risk for engaging in bullying or at risk of becoming a bullying target.

- **Indicated preventative interventions**: Tailored to meet the youth’s needs, of greater intensity, for those who are already displaying bullying behavior or are being bullied.

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• Vast majority of bullying prevention research has focused on universal school-based programs

• Effects of these programs appear to be modest

• Multi-component programs are most effective at reducing bullying

• Positive relationships with teachers, parents and peers appear to be a protective factor against bullying
Limited research on selective and indicated models for bullying prevention programming.

There are relatively few developed and tested programs for subgroups of youth who are at risk for involvement in bullying.

Suspension and “zero tolerance” policies appear to be ineffective.

Further research is needed to determine the extent to which peer-led programs are effective.

School climate, positive behavior support, social and emotional learning, and youth violence prevention programming may also be effective.
### TABLE 5-2 Summary of Ecological Contexts in which Selected Universal Multicomponent Prevention Programs Operate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL</th>
<th>PEERS</th>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>HEALTHCARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olweus Bullying Prevention Program</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KiVa Antibullying Program</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps to Respect</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Behavior Game</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising Healthy Children</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fast Track</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Committee-generated; program information was obtained from the Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development website [http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/programs](http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/programs) and the National Institute of Justice CrimeSolutions.gov website.

**NOTE:** The information provided in Table 5-1 is meant to illustrate core features of program elements and focus rather than provide a detailed assessment of all aspects of a program or its demonstrated effects. The table is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all prevention programs.
### SAMPLE PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>Peers</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Comm</th>
<th>HC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping Power Program (CPP)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incredible Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Check-Up (Formerly Adolescent Transitions)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Triple P</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Family Therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Strategic Family Therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wraparound/Case Management</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisystemic Therapy</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities that Care</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDED PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Use MULTI-TIERED approaches, leveraging universal, selective and indicated programs and activities

Make your efforts school-wide to address the social environment, culture and climate. Focus on “hot spots” and have clear anti-bullying policies

Utilize data about incidents and prevention programs and activities to monitor progress in addressing bullying and make changes

Engage families to help with making students feel comfortable about disclosing if they are being bullied; help build child coping skills

Integrate bullying prevention efforts with other existing programs and supports -- few violence prevention programs were developed to specifically address bullying
NONRECOMMENDED APPROACHES

- Zero tolerance: automatic suspension or expulsion for bullying related behaviors
- Encouraging youth to fight back
- Youth facilitated programs like peer mediation, peer-led conflict resolution, forced apology and peer mentoring (face-to-face interaction vs. peer abuse of power)
- Conflict resolution approaches, even when facilitated by adults
- One-day awareness raising events or brief assemblies don’t produce sustainable change in climate or bullying behaviors
### Actors:
U.S. Departments of: Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice

### Actions:
Sponsor the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based programs

### Goal:
To address bullying behavior
All 50 states and the District of Columbia have adopted laws to address bullying.

49 states and the District of Columbia include laws about electronic forms of bullying.

Law and policy have the potential to strengthen state and local efforts to prevent, identify and respond to bullying.

Few studies examine the effects of existing laws and policies in reducing bullying behavior.

Evidenced-based research on the consequences of bullying can help inform litigation efforts in case discovery and planning, pleadings and trial.

Development of anti-bullying laws should be evidence-based.

PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES: FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL LEVEL
U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, State Attorneys General, and local education agencies

Partner with researchers to collect data on an ongoing basis on the efficacy and implementation of anti-bullying laws and policies

Convene a multi-disciplinary annual meeting in which collaborations around anti-bullying laws and policies can be more effectively facilitated, and in which research on relevant laws and policies can be reviewed

Report research findings on an annual basis to both Congress and the state legislatures

To strengthen anti-bullying laws and policies and be informed by evidence-based research
FUTURE RESEARCH ON BULLYING PREVENTION

- Improve the adoption and implementation of evidence-based programs, integrate with other efforts in your school and community.
- Peers and bystanders vs. peers as potential leaders or implementers of intervention programs.
- Train paraprofessionals to be included in bullying prevention (e.g. bus drivers, cafeteria workers); engage SRO’s in school safety teams.
- Include parents in bullying prevention efforts; train health care providers to screen for bullying related issues.
- Continue to investigate the role of social media as a platform for bullying but also as an opportunity for education and prevention.
IN SUMMARY

Prevalence Rates Notable, Particularly Among the Most Vulnerable

Need for Consistent Definitions and Research Approaches to Further the Science

Need for Evidence Based Policies and Practices to Address the Problem
To learn more about the Committee or to access the report, please visit our website: www.nas.edu/scienceonbullying

Help us spread the word on social media: #ScienceOnBullying, #BullyingPrevention

Webinars related to the Report

Look for us at the following conferences to hear more about the Report:

International Bullying Prevention Association conference in New Orleans (November 2016)
RESOURCES

http://www.stopbullying.gov

http://www.stopbullying.gov/videos/2012/08/misdirections.html

Forthcoming materials from the National Academies
STUDY SPONSORS

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development
- Health Resources and Services Administration
- National Institute of Justice
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- The Semi J. and Ruth W. Begun Foundation
- Highmark Foundation