BULLYING

A *Preventable* Threat to Our Children
Bullying unnecessarily traumatizes millions of children and youth every year.
FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

• Bullying is a common form of violence in our society.

• Between 15 and 30 percent of students are bullies or victims.

• A study of over 15,000 6-10th graders estimates that
  – 3.7 million youths engage in moderate or serious bullying each year.
  – more than 3.2 million are victims of moderate or serious bulling each year.

(American Medical Association, 2001)
FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

• Bullying among younger students is also common:
  – Between 19 and 27% of boys in grades 4-6 reported being bullied in the past 3 months*
  – Between 23 and 26% of girls reported being bullied in the past 3 months*

Preventing bullying must be a top priority for parents and schools!
BULLY

• Repeatedly directs physical, verbal or psychological aggression or harassment towards others who cannot defend themselves, with the goal of gaining power or dominating another individual.

• More prevalent in boys than girls, though this difference decreases when considering indirect aggression (such as verbal threats).
VICTIM

• Repeatedly is exposed to aggression from peers in the form of physical attacks, verbal assaults, or psychological abuse.

• More likely to be boys and weaker (physically and socially) than peers.

• Generally do not have many, if any good friends and may display poor social skills and academic difficulties in school.
BYSTANDER

• Stands by and watches as another student is the victim of bullying.
• Does nothing to intervene in the situation even though they experience discomfort.
• Generally motivated by a fear of becoming a victim themselves if they stand up for the victim.
• May even encourage the bullying by egging the bully on.
Bullying affects a child’s ability to be successful in school.
FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

• Being a bully or victim is associated with school drop-out, poor psychosocial adjustment, criminal activity, and other negative long-term consequences.

• Both boys and girls can be bullies and victims.

• Bullying involves a spectrum of aggressive behaviors that ranges from overt acts of physical violence to more subtle (yet equally destructive) patterns of verbal or relational cruelty.
MORE FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

• Nearly 25% of teachers report that they do not think it is necessary to intervene in bullying.

• Over two-thirds of students believe that schools respond poorly to bullying, with a high percentage of students believing that adult help is infrequent and ineffective.
WHERE DOES BULLYING OCCUR?

• Bullying is two to three times more likely to occur at school as on the way to and from school.

• Bullying takes place:
  – in the classroom,
  – on the playground,
  – in hallways,
  – in gyms,
  – in locker rooms, and
  – in bathrooms.
Children need to believe that adults will protect them!
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Establish clear consistent consequences for bullying behavior that all children understand.
  – Incorporate positive behavioral interventions
  – Clearly define unacceptable behavior
  – Do not rely solely on punishment
  – Include loss of privileges or other consequences for bullying behavior
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Institute school-wide discipline plans that address behavior and its underlying causes.
  – Involve the entire school community, including students and parents.
  – Reinforce the values of empathy, caring, respect, fairness, and personal responsibility.
  – Place this plan prominently throughout the school to serve as a reminder.
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Train all school personnel to prevent and intervene with bullying.
  – Teachers
  – Administrators
  – Support personnel
  – Bus drivers, playground monitors, after-school program supervisors

• Maintain a focus on supervision.
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Never ignore bullying behaviors
  – Intervene immediately when bullying occurs.
  – Model appropriate behaviors.
  – Praise children when they do the right thing.
  – Offer children alternatives to bullying.
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Teach children to work together.
  – Encourage children to stand up to a bully or reach out to excluded peers.
  – Teach children that being a silent bystander enables bullying to continue.
  – Celebrate acts of kindness.
  – Reinforce the availability of adult support.
  – Transform the “silent majority” into a “caring majority”.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY:

NASP
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Distinguish between “ratting” and “reporting.”
  – Many adolescents do not want to get their peers in trouble, particularly if the bully is popular.
  – Ensure confidentiality.
  – Establish a non-threatening way for students to report bullying.
  – Identify which staff handle bullying issues. But, all staff should be trained and responsible.
  – Make it clear that students can contact any trusted adult.
WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

• Be visible and vigilant.
  – Common areas: hallways, cafeterias, locker rooms, playgrounds
  – Be aware of behavior on the bus and on the way to and from school for children who walk—these can be important parts of a child’s school day.
Create a culture in which:

• Adults stop all bullying immediately.
• All students learn positive behaviors.
• All students, parents, and staff become part of the anti-bullying solution.
• The needs of individual students are met.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• Be aware of changes in your child’s behavior or attitudes.
  – Bullied children give signals that something is wrong.
  – Note withdrawal, reluctance to go to school, physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, or problems sleeping.
  – Talk to your child about his or her concerns.
  – Reassure them that you will work with the school to stop the bullying behavior.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• **Inform** the school if your child is being bullied.
  – Become involved in school programs to counteract bullying.
  – Volunteer at the school to get first-hand knowledge of the school environment and your child’s peer group.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• Teach children strategies to counter bullying.
  – Stand up for themselves verbally, by saying “I don’t like what you said or did” or “You can say whatever you want, but it is not true”.
  – Walk away from the bully.
  – Use humor.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• Teach children to:
  – Think of positive images or statements about themselves to bolster self-esteem.
  – Get help from an adult.
  – Stay out of hidden corners and within sight of adult supervisors.
  – Stay with a group of friends.
  – Avoid provoking the bully – lots of bullying is “payback”.

Praise children for appropriate social behaviors.

- Model interactions that do not include bullying or aggression.
- Catch your child doing something good and offer positive reinforcement.
- Encourage children to support their peers.
- Monitor television and video games.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• **Foster** positive social relationships and activities.
  – Help your child identify peers with whom they get along.
  – Suggest things they can do together.
  – Find a variety of activities that your child enjoys and does well. This can help build self-esteem and confidence.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• **Use** alternatives to physical punishment.
  – Children who are spanked too harshly or too often learn that physical aggression is okay.
  – More effective consequences for inappropriate behavior include removal of privileges or addition of extra chores.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

• **Supervise** children at all times.
  – Intervene as bullying behavior is happening.
  – Have the child practice alternative behaviors.
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Contact your school psychologist or counselor if you are concerned about your child or want more information.