Bullying: The Tip of the Iceberg

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Overview

• The Problem of Bullying
• Best practices
• HRSA’s Stop Bullying Now! Campaign
• MCH Involvement
Bullying Defined

• Bullying is aggressive behavior intended to cause harm or distress
  – Usually repeated over time
  – Involves an imbalance of power or strength
Direct Bullying

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting…
- Taunting, teasing, racial slurs, verbal harassment
- Threatening, obscene gestures
Indirect Bullying

- Getting another person to bully someone for you
- Spreading rumors
- Deliberately excluding someone from a group or activity
- Cyber-bullying
How common is bullying?

• *National sample of 15,600 students in grades 6-10*
  - 19% bullied others “sometimes” or more often
    - 9% bullied others weekly
  - 17% were bullied “sometimes” or more often
    - 8% were bullied weekly
  - 6% reported bullying *and* being bullied “sometimes” or more often

Nansel, et.al., *JAMA* 2001;285:2094-2100
Gender Issues in Bullying

• Boys report being bullied by boys; girls report being bullied by boys and girls
• Boys are more likely than girls to be physically bullied by their peers
• Girls are more likely to be bullied through rumor-spreading, sexual comments, social exclusion
Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

• Children may be at more risk if they have:
  – learning disabilities
  – ADHD
  – medical conditions and/or disfigurement
  – obesity
  – speech impediments
Children Who Are Bullied

- Tend to be quiet, cautious, lack confidence
- Boys may be physically weaker than peers
- Girls may develop physically earlier than peers
- May find it easier to associate with adults than with peers
Warning Signs

- Appears sad, moody, teary, depressed or anxious
- Has few, if any, friends
- Has lost interest in school work
- Seems afraid of going to school
- Has trouble sleeping/bad dreams
Bullying: Tip of the Intentional Injury Iceberg?
Consequences of Bullying

Children who are bullied have:

• lower self esteem;
• higher rates of depression;
• higher absenteeism rates;
• more suicidal ideation; and
• more health concerns.
# Health Consequences of Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Bullied</th>
<th>Not bullied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep problems</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal pain</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling tense</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unhappy</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderate indication</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong indication</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fekkes, et.al., *Pediatrics*, 2003; 144:17-22
Bullying and Behavioral Health Outcomes

• Depression and suicidal ideation are common outcomes of being bullied.

• Associations are stronger for indirect vs. direct forms of bullying.

Van der Wal, et.al., *Pediatrics*, 2003;111:1312
More Often, Children Who Bully:

- Get into frequent fights
- Be injured in a fight
- Steal, vandalize property
- Drink alcohol
- Smoke
- Be truant, drop out of school
- Report poorer academic achievement
- Perceive a negative climate at school
- Carry a weapon
Longitudinal Study of Children Who Bullied

- 60% of boys who were bullies in middle school had at least one conviction by age 24.
- 40% had three or more convictions.
- Bullies were 4 times as likely as peers to have multiple convictions.

Olweus: *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (1993)
Bully/Victims Tend to...

• be hyperactive, restless, have difficulty concentrating.
• be hot-tempered, attempt to fight back if provoked.
• be clumsy and immature.
• have difficulty reading social signals.
• try to bully weaker students.
Concern About Bully/Victims

• Display the social-emotional problems of victimized children AND the behavioral problems of children who bully (Nansel, et al.)
  – Poor relationships with classmates
  – Lonely
  – Poorer academic achievement
  – Higher rates of smoking alcohol use
  – More frequent fighting
Study of Children in Los Angeles Schools

- **Peer Ratings**
  - Who do children most want to avoid: bully/victims

- **Teacher Ratings**
  - Who is least popular: bully/victims and victims
  - Who has the most conduct problems: bully/victims
  - Who is seen as the most disengaged from school? bully/victims

The 2002 U.S. Secret Service report:

- School killings were rarely sudden, impulsive acts. Most were planned.

- Before most incidents, other people knew the student was considering a violent attack at the school.

- No consistent profile of potential attackers could be developed.

- *Most attackers felt bullied or persecuted and had engaged in behavior that worried others before the attack.*
Bullying: A subset of intentional interpersonal injury

More studies should examine the relationship of bullying and being bullied and the risk of more serious violence.

Bullying: Emerging Frontiers

- Bullying video game
- Cyber bullying
- Relationship to gangs
Cyber Bullying

- 25% of girls and 11% of boys had been cyber bullied at least once.
- 13% of girls and 9% of boys had cyber bullied someone else at least once.
- Who did the cyber bullying?
  - student at school (53%)
  - didn’t know (48%)
  - friend (37%)
  - sibling (13%)
Best Practices in Bullying Prevention & Intervention
Injury Prevention Intervention: 3 E’s

1. Educate and persuade to promote behavior changes.

2. Make environmental/engineering modifications to create safer surroundings.

3. Enforce legal requirements and prohibitions to reduce risk.
10 Steps for Schools

1. Focus on the school environment
2. Assess bullying at the school
3. Seek out support for bullying prevention
4. Form a group to coordinate efforts
5. Train all staff in effective bullying prevention & intervention strategies
10 Steps for Schools, cont.

6. Establish and enforce school rules and policies
7. Increase adult supervision
8. Intervene consistently and appropriately
9. Focus classroom time on bullying prevention
10. Continue the effort over time
Primary Prevention Strategies and Tactics

- Prevent development of bullying behaviors
- Reduce opportunities for expression
- Lessen social acceptance
- Dismissal of bullying
- Develop positive parenting skills
- Change environmental climate
  - policies/rules
  - consequences
- Involve and empower youth
- Empower bystanders
Number of State Laws Related to Bullying

- 1999: 0
- 2000: 1
- 2001: 5
- 2002: 15
- 2003: 20
- 2005: 25

# statutes
State Laws on Bullying

[Map showing state laws on bullying with states highlighted in green, yellow, and white.]
“Take A Stand. Lend A Hand. Stop Bullying Now!” Campaign Goals

- Raise awareness about bullying
- Prevent and reduce bullying behaviors
- Identify appropriate interventions for "tweens" (youth ages 9 through 13) and those who influence them
- Foster and enhance linkages among partners
Campaign Components

• Interactive Web site (www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)
  – Animated Serial Comic (“webisodes”)
  – Guidance, content-rich games for youth
  – Resource Kit of practical advice for adults (Spanish, too)
  – Parallel Spanish website with adult content
  – Links to partner groups and activities
  – Contact us

• TV, radio, and print public service announcements for tweens & adults
Campaign Components

- **Resource Kit**: Custom resources geared toward specific disciplines/specialty areas
  - 30 tip sheets/fact sheets for adults
  - 8 of the tip sheets/fact sheets were created in partnership with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
  - Database of books, videos, prevention programs

- **Communications Kit**: Tools to help promote SBN Campaign
Campaign Components

• Spanish Resource Kit
• Partners: Over 80 organizations, non-profit groups, & government agencies
• TIME for Kids™ Partnership
Awareness: Department of Health & Human Services, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Svcs Administration, Center for Mental Health Services (public domain)

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus
Key Elements of Campaigns

• Most successful community-based campaigns include
  – Cohesive, consistent, coordinated effort
  – Engagement by relevant, diverse audiences
  – Local media
  – Youth involvement
Essential Ingredient: YOUTH

- Youth are KEY spokespeople
- Youth-led programs provide
SBN! Campaign: What’s Ahead?

- U.S. Department of Education partnership
- Campaign Partners support/communication
- Maintenance of Spanish resources
- Technical assistance/training
- Sustained/targeted promotion to raise awareness
- New prevention resources
- New Web site content
What MCH Can Do

• Screening questions during wellness exams
• Convene partners to improve coordination
• Support development of safe school policies
• Partner with schools to implement programs
• Assist in program evaluation
What MCH Can Do, cont.

- Promote training and continuing education
- Implement and support public education for families and school personnel
- Contribute public health expertise including epidemiologic expertise
- Encourage after-school and community programs to focus on bullying prevention
What Can MCH Do, cont.

• Advocate for policies that reduce bullying and increase resources for prevention
• Provide consultation in the area of data collection and analysis
• Assist families and caregivers in responding to signs of bullying
Always remember the faces behind the issue
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