

# Preventing Bullying

## What is bullying?

Bullying is a form of youth violence and an adverse childhood experience (ACE). CDC defines bullying as any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.<sup>1</sup> Common types of bullying include:

- **Physical** such as hitting, kicking, and tripping
- **Verbal** including name calling and teasing
- **Relational/social** such as spreading rumors and leaving out of the group
- **Damage to property of the victim**

Bullying can also occur through technology, which is called electronic bullying or cyberbullying.<sup>1</sup> A young person can be a perpetrator, a victim, or both (also known as “bully/victim”).

## How big is the problem?

Bullying is widespread in the United States. Bullying negatively impacts all youth involved including those who are bullied, those who bully others, and those who witness bullying known as bystanders.

- **Bullying is common.** About 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property. More than 1 in 6 high school students reported being bullied electronically in the last year.<sup>2</sup>
- **Some youth experience bullying more than others.** Nearly 40% of high school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and about 33% of those who were not sure of their sexual identity experienced bullying at school or electronically in the last year, compared to 22% of heterosexual high school students. About 30% of female high school students experienced bullying at school or electronically in the last year, compared to about 19% of males. Nearly 29% of White high school students experienced bullying at school or electronically in the last year compared to about 19% of Hispanic and 18% of Black high school students.<sup>2</sup>
- **Bullying is a frequent discipline problem.** Nearly 14% of public schools report that bullying is a discipline problem occurring daily or at least once a week.
  - Reports of bullying are highest in middle schools (28%) followed by high schools (16%), combined schools (12%), and primary schools (9%).
  - Reports of cyberbullying are highest in middle schools (33%) followed by high schools (30%), combined schools (20%) and primary schools (5%).<sup>3</sup>

**1 in 5** high school students reported being **bullied** at school in the last year.



More than **1 in 6** high school students reported being **cyberbullied** in the last year.



## What are the consequences?

Bullying can result in physical injury, social and emotional distress, self-harm, and even death. It also increases the risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school. Youth who bully others are at increased risk for substance misuse, academic problems, and experiencing violence later in adolescence and adulthood.<sup>4</sup> Youth who bully others and are bullied themselves suffer the most serious consequences and are at greater risk for mental health and behavioral problems.

## How can we prevent bullying?

Bullying is preventable. There are many factors that may increase or decrease the risk for perpetrating or experiencing bullying. To prevent bullying, we must understand and address the factors that put people at risk for or protect them from violence. CDC has developed a resource, *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors*, to help communities take advantage of the best available evidence to prevent youth violence.<sup>5</sup> This resource is also available in Spanish and can be used as a tool in efforts to impact individual behaviors as well as the relationship, family, school, community, and societal risk and protective factors for violence. The approaches in this resource, particularly universal school-based programs that strengthen youths' skills and modify the physical and social environment, have been shown to reduce violence and bullying or key risk factors.

Different types of violence are connected and often share root causes. Bullying is linked to other forms of violence through shared risk and protective factors. Addressing and preventing one form of violence may have an impact on preventing other forms of violence.



### Promote family environments that support healthy development

- Early childhood home visitation
- Parenting skill and family relationship programs



### Provide quality education early in life

- Preschool enrichment with family engagement



### Strengthen youth's skills

- Universal school-based programs



### Connect youth to caring adults and activities

- Mentoring programs
- After-school programs



### Create protective community environments

- Modify the physical and social environment
- Reduce exposure to community-level risks
- Street outreach and community norm change

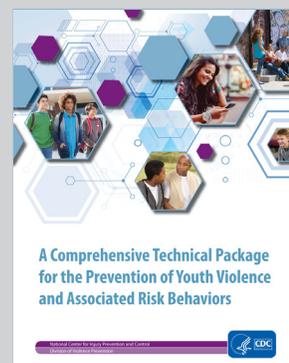


### Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk

- Treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and further involvement in violence
- Hospital-community partnerships

## A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors

A **technical package** is a collection of strategies based on the best available evidence to prevent or reduce public health problems. The **strategy** lays out the direction and actions to prevent youth violence. The **approach** includes the specific ways to advance the strategy through programs, policies and practices. The **evidence** for each of the approaches in preventing youth violence and associated risk factors is also included.



## References

1. Gladden RM, Vivolo-Kantor AM, Hamburger ME, Lumpkin CD. *Bullying surveillance among youths: Uniform definitions for public health and recommended data elements, Version 1.0*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Education; 2013. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-definitions-final-a.pdf>.
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3. Diliberti, M., Jackson, M., Correa, S., and Padgett, Z. (2019). *Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2017–18* (NCES 2019-061). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.
4. Farrington D, Baldry A. Individual risk factors for school bullying. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 2010; 2(1):4-16. Available from <https://doi.org/10.5042/jacpr.2010.0001>.
5. David-Ferdon C, Vivolo-Kantor AM, Dahlberg LL, Marshall KJ, Rainford N, Hall JE. *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>.