STATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Anti-Bullying Strategies

Bullying has become a serious problem in our schools, as evidenced in the statistics below. This behavior takes different forms, direct and indirect which can result in different types of bullying -- i.e., physical, psychological/emotional, verbal and cyber bullying. This type of aggression can be carried out by a group or an individual. The three important contributing factors in bullying incidents are that it occurs over time, is usually repeated and involves an imbalance of power and control. While more youth violence may occur on school grounds, strategies are needed to assure student safety no matter where it happens. Everyone can play a role in stopping bullying.

Why Anti-Bullying Strategies are necessary:

- More youth violence occurs on school grounds as opposed to on the way to school. (However, youth violence can happen anywhere).

- Every 7 minutes a child is bullied on the school playground and most of the time *no one* intervenes.

- 1 out of 4 kids are bullied. An American Justice Department school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics studies show that this month 1 out of every 4 kids will be abused by another youth.

- School bullying statistics surveys show that 77% of students are bullied mentally, verbally and physically. Cyber bullying statistics are rapidly approaching similar numbers.

- In a recent school bullying statistics study, 77% of the students said they had been bullied. And 14% of those who were bullied said they experienced severe (bad) reactions to the abuse. Many have tried to stop cyber bullying according to cyber bullying statistics.

- 1 out of 5 kids on a school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics study admit to being a bully, or doing some "Bullying."

- Each day 160,000 students miss school for fear of being bullied.

- A school bullying statistics reveals that 43% of students fear harassment in the bathroom at school.

- A school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics poll of teens ages 12-17 proved that they think violence increased at their schools.

- The same school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics poll also showed that 282,000 students are physically attacked in secondary schools each month.

Citation: http://www.how-to-stop-bullying.com/bullyingstatistics.html)

Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to address this issue: from the educational institutions, to the parents, to the children and youth, to the entire community.

Educational Institutions roles:

- **Institute** Anti-Bullying Committees or Task Forces in each school, university and college.
- **Enforce** anti-bullying legislation, rules and regulations for each school, university and college.
- **Develop** school district-wide policy statements which clearly define and accurately describe how bullying incidents are to be handled.
- **Inform** students, parents and community members of the anti-bullying policies, programs, and initiatives designed to impact bullying
- **Send** a clear message that bullying is wrong and that it is not to be tolerated. However, understand the possibly negative ramifications of adopting any strict anti-bullying policy that is overly punitive -- i.e., "No Tolerance."
- **Consider** establishing both rewards and consequences to change the culture of the school, if bullying is prevalent. To promote a caring majority of students, consider utilizing a reward system for behavior that defends students who are victimized.
- **Decide** in advance the scale of consequences for bullying behavior and communicate these consequences to parents, as well as apply discipline evenhandedly and equitably to all students.
- **Use** a scale of disciplinary approaches for inappropriate behaviors that range from being onlookers, to being active bystanders, to the students who are actually engaging in bullying behaviors. Consequences should match the infraction.
- **Acknowledge** students' concerns about *any* type of conflict among students, and be especially mindful of allegations and incidences of bullying behavior. Understand that conflict is not the same as bullying. Conflict occurs between two parties of equal power. Bullying implies the existence of an imbalance of power.
- **Create** and provide educational materials, which give accurate information about bullying and its effects on both those who are bullied and those who are accused of bullying.
- **Request** that parents and students sign an anti-bullying agreement that encourages students not to bully and to report incidents of bullying.
- **Institute** learning sessions for all students in the school, not just for students assigned to prevention or pre-intervention groups.
- **Require** that students, who are repeatedly engaged in inappropriate behavior, attend intervention training and classes.
- **Support** victims of bullying and reporters of bullying by providing counseling or encouragement to the victims
- **Consider** instituting a process for investigating the reasons behind bullying incidents and provide a mechanism for mediation and/or resolution.
- **Develop** and implement a multi-tiered warning system for students accused of bullying, including parent-school conference meetings, before making an arbitrary decision to suspend a student without investigating the problem.
- **Conduct** a survey to learn about concerns and issues of the students as it relates to bullying.
- **Recognize** and reward schools in which bullying has been minimized and eliminated.
- **Provide** training for all school district professionals and student leaders/mentors to effectively deal with and eliminate bullying in the schools. This training could be offered to interested adults, family members and parent-school groups**.**
- **Request** principals of each school to select at least one school employee who has regular contact with and availability to students (and whom students feel they can trust) to confidentially mediate and/or facilitate effective conversation about the negative impact of bullying behaviors.

- **Adopt** anti-bullying strategies such as no-blame, common concerns, peer support and group/school-wide discussion circles.
- **Understand** that children accused of being bullies need just as much help as those being bullied, and that bullying behavior may be connected to personal or social problems.
- **Notify** parents or guardians immediately about any bullying incidents which involve their child or children.
- **Initiate** investigations of alleged bullying incidents in a timely manner (possibly within twenty-four (24) hours).
- **Encourage** kids to not take pleasure or satisfaction in bullying and/or to not see bullying as a sense of power. Instead encourage young people to see these qualities as being negative and unacceptable.
- **Look** at bullying as emotional abuse and treat it in the same way institutions work to end physical and sexual abuse.
- **Introduce** depression screening for eighth graders before they enter their freshman year that would provide them with solid emotional support systems.
- **Provide** free counseling in the schools, universities and colleges for students who are experiencing emotional disturbances which might be the result of bullying and/or the misuse and abuse of social media/social technology.
- **Educate** young people about their peers' sensitivity to being teased or taunted due to their weight, their general appearance, their sexual orientation, their race, their religion or any other such issue. Encourage tolerance, sensitivity and understanding.
- **Strive** to develop a culture of caring, helping, inclusion and positive communication among students. Isolated students are those who are most likely to be victimized by bullying.

Parent/Family/Community/Organizations roles:

- **Collaborate** with the school district to develop an anti-bullying campaign, which would include classes and/or opportunities, for all students to learn about bullying and its prevention within schools and communities.
- **Acknowledge** students' concerns about *any* type of student conflict, including bullying.
- **Understand** the differences between conflicts (arguments, single incidents of fighting, etc.) and bullying behavior. Know that conflict is not the same as bullying. Conflict occurs between two parties of equal power. Bullying implies an imbalance of power.
- **Report** any issues of bullying to the school principal, key administrator, and/or school officials, such as a guidance counselor.
- **Volunteer** during lunch and recess to help eliminate opportunities for students to bully; provide additional adults to monitor and assist students.
- **Encourag**e parents and guardians to pay close attention to sudden and/or dramatic changes in their child's behavior. Look out for children who seem to have no friends at school, or 'happy' children who suddenly become withdrawn or pretend to be ill to avoid going to school.
- **Ensure** parental involvement in every facet of their children's lives; model non-violent attitudes and behaviors and teach children appropriate social and communication skills.
- **Teach** children to respect themselves and to respect others as well. Understand and practice the Golden Rule – *"Do unto others what you would have them do unto you."*
- **Have** workshops for parents, caregivers, and people of all ages on the detrimental effects of bullying.
- **Investigate** and apply for grants which will enable schools, religious and social organizations help address the issues of bullying.

Youth roles:

- **Practice** appropriate social skills and interactions toward peers.
- **Participate** in open lines of communication with parents, grandparents, family members, guardians, and teachers about any conflict with peers.
- **Report** any bullying interactions to parents, grandparents, and/or family members.
- **Know** that people who bully normally require a clique or gang, and that bullying others occurs most often when there is an audience to watch**.**
- **Decide** not to be part of the "crowd."
- **Don't** encourage bullying**;** violence is not the answer**.**
- **Learn** to respect yourself and to give respect to others. Remember and practice the Golden Rule – "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you."
- **Strive** to develop a culture of caring, helping, inclusion and positive communication among students. Isolated students are those who are most likely to be victimized by bullying.
- **Continue** to talk about the issue of bullying with other people until bullying is conquered.
- **Stop bullying**!