



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



Stand Up to Bullying: A Safe Learning Environment for All Students

When we fail to prevent bullying, the results impact learning, safety, and personal well-being. Targets of bullying often feel isolated, lonely, or depressed. Sometimes they attempt suicide. Schools can become violent, dangerous places where children feel unsafe and less able to concentrate and learn.

Bullying is an early warning sign that some students may be heading down a path of more serious antisocial behavior. Bullies are more likely to drop out of school and commit other antisocial acts such as truancy, fighting, theft, intoxication, and vandalism. Bullies are more likely to become adult criminals. Moreover, victims of repeated bullying can explode in ways that harm themselves and others. The Columbine High School massacre is one example.

In Connecticut and throughout the United States, bullying is a very serious issue:

- Nearly three in ten (29 percent) Connecticut high school students – and 35 percent of the state's 9th graders – reported having been bullied on school property in the past year. (2007 Connecticut School Health Survey)
- Over 50 percent of Connecticut ninth graders who reported being bullied at school said it was because of their weight, size, or physical appearance. (2005 Connecticut School Health Survey)
- Eight percent of Connecticut high school students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past year. Of those students, nearly one-quarter were threatened or injured six times or more. (2007 Connecticut School Health Survey)
- In one year, 31 percent of Connecticut high school boys had personal property stolen or deliberately damaged at school. (2007 Connecticut School Health Survey)
- Among U.S. students who reported low grades, victims of bullying were more likely to report receiving D's and F's than other students. (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2005)
- High school boys in Connecticut who were bullied about their perceived sexual orientation were four times more likely than other boys to have attempted suicide at least once in the past year. (2005 Connecticut School Health Survey)
- In one year, 29 percent of Connecticut high school girls felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities; 10 percent of high school students attempted suicide. (2007 Connecticut School Health Survey)

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- Bullying played a major role in several school shootings. (U.S. Secret Service, 2002)

What is bullying? A person is being bullied when he or she is the target, repeatedly and over time, of negative actions undertaken by one or several other individuals who are more powerful than the target in some way.

Commission on Children Urges Schools to Adopt Anti-Bullying Best Practices

Bullying prevention efforts should be based on rigorous scientific research. Creating an untested program and calling it “bullying prevention” doesn’t mean it will work.

Proven anti-bullying programs that have been determined to be best practices are the best bet for Connecticut schools. Several nationally recognized anti-bullying strategies take a whole-school approach. Anti-bullying models that focus on the whole school reap the fullest gains.

For example, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a model program. First developed in Norway after a number of bullying victims committed suicide, the program has now been implemented in several hundred schools in the United States and around the world. It produced a 50 percent reduction in bullying and other antisocial behavior in Norway and a 20 percent reduction in a South Carolina test.

As a whole school approach, Olweus aims to increase awareness and knowledge about bullying, to initiate action on the part of all adults in the school community, to engage students in creating clear rules against bullying and aggressive behavior, and to develop support systems for the bully and the target.

State Action Must Begin by Helping Schools Implement Proven Approaches

The Connecticut Commission on Children supports:

- Re-funding of the Safe Learning Grant Program to assist school districts in developing a school environment where children learn in safety without fear of physical or verbal harm or intimidation
- Regular statewide review and analysis of the effectiveness of bullying policies adopted by schools
- Distribution of information about best practices to reduce bullying, promote school safety and engage students, teachers, administrators and parents in ensuring a safe learning environment
- Technical assistance to help school districts achieve a safe learning environment.

For more information, contact the Connecticut Commission on Children at 860-240-0290 or www.cga.ct.gov/coc/bullying.htm.

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