Whitley County Community Forum on Bullying

A Summary Report

OVERVIEW

In collaboration with Cumberland River Green Dot, Whitley County Health Department hosted a community forum on bullying on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, in Williamsburg, Kentucky, from 4 pm to 6 pm. The event's purpose was to provide an opportunity to talk about how bullying affects youth in our community and what we can do to change the attitudes of those who tolerate bullying. The prompting for the event included two recent youth who died from suicide, where bullying was identified in social media and media as a contributing factor.

The identified audience for the event was adults in Whitley County and high school-aged youth accompanied by a parent or caregiver. The Health Department extended a special invitation to leadership at the three school districts serving the county, local law enforcement, and Whitley County Board of Health members. Twenty-six adults participated in the forum.

FORUM OBJECTIVES

- Provide an overview of bullying.
- Identify how bullying impacts Whitley County.
- Discuss best practices in responding to and preventing bullying.
- Define Green Dot Community.
- Make recommendations for our community response to issues related to bullying.
- Identify at least one personal action to address bullying.
- Produce a report summarizing the forum.

FORUM AGENDA

Using the Community Action Toolkit from stopbullying.gov and the accompanying training module slides as a basis, the Health Department crafted an agenda for the event that would allow for participant contributions while reducing the opportunity for confrontation or singling out participants.

The Health Department placed questions on large pages posted around the meeting space. As participants signed in, they received small sticky notes with instructions to answer the first three questions by noting their answer on a sticky note and placing it on the corresponding large page: Why are you here today? What types of bullying does our community face? Where is bullying happening? At the subsequent breaks, staff revealed additional questions: How is bullying affecting our community? What recommendation do you have for an organization or business to address bullying? What is one thing you will do in your role to address bullying? At each break, participants could change or add to any previous question answer.

Health Department staff updated and adapted slides from stopbullying.gov (included later in this report). Participants heard the Center for Disease Prevention and Control's Unified Definition of Bullying, received statistics, risk factors and protective factors around bullying, and best practices for preventing and responding to bullying. Community Green Dot is a violence prevention program that provides bystander

intervention training and proactive non-violent community norms socialization. Representatives explained the program and provided an update on community activities and accomplishments.

Agenda		Approximate Time
Sign-In and Gathering Boards: Status of Bullying in Our Community	All	10 minutes
Welcome and Introductions	Marcy Rein, Director Whitley County Health Department	5 minutes
Introduction to Bullying	Kathleen Croley, Health Educator Whitley County Health Department	35 minutes
Gathering Boards Break: Impact of Bullying on Our Community	All	10 minutes
Preventing and Stopping Bullying: Do's and Don'ts	Marcy Rein, Director Whitley County Health Department	15 minutes
Green Dot Community	Angelika Weaver, Victim Advocate, City of Williamsburg, and Cumberland River Green Dot	30 minutes
Gathering Boards Break: What We Can Do	All	10 minutes
Questions and Closing	All	5 minutes

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Incorporate ongoing comprehensive bullying prevention and response programs that include policy, training, and a pro-social climate.

- Consequences for bullying others will be developmentally appropriate and proportional.
- Adults will commit to modeling respectful behavior and addressing bullying wherever it happens and feel supported by their organization's leadership, the parents of the youth they serve, and the community.
- Youth will be believed when they report bullying behavior and will have access to trauma-informed support.
- Youth will have opportunities to participate in bystander training at least annually.

## Implement cyber-safety training for youth, parents, and adults working with youth.

- Maximize opportunities for multi-agency collaboration.

Expand Green Dot and other pro-social violence prevention activities.

- Expand the volunteers able to provide Green Dot training.
- Engage in school-based clubs to promote youth-led culture change.
- Provide opportunities for regular community conversations about bullying and violence prevention.

GATHERING BOARDS DATA

Why are you here today?
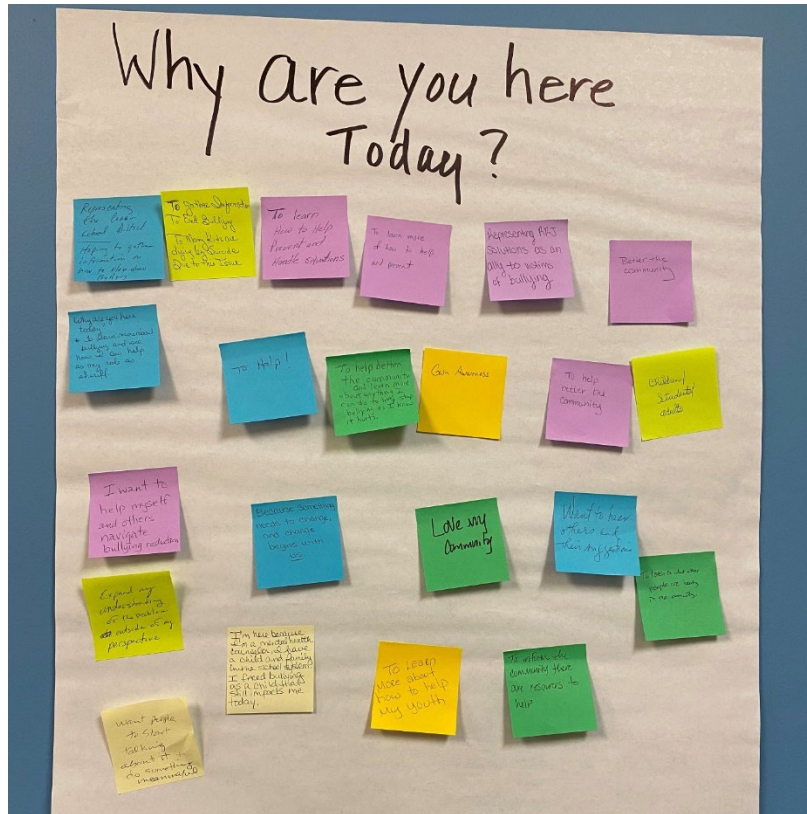
COMMON THEMES
- To learn
- To help support
- To improve community

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES
- To inform the community there are resources to help.
- Representing the Corbin School District.
- Hoping to gather information on how to slow down bullying.
- To Gather Information to end bullying.
- Too many kids are dying by suicide due to this issue.
- To learn how to help prevent and handle situations.
- To learn more of how to help and prevent.
- Representing RRJ Solutions as an ally to victims of bullying.
- Better the community.
- Children, students, adults.
- To help better the community.

- Gain awareness.
- To help!
- To help better the community and learn more about anything I can do to help stop bullying as I know it hurts.
- To listen to what other people are hearing in the community.
- To learn more about bullying and see how I can help in my role as Sheriff.
- I want to help myself and others navigate bullying reduction.
- Expand my understanding of the problem outside of my perspective.
- Want people to start talking about bullying and do something meaningful.
- I'm here because I'm a mental health counselor.
- I have a child and family in the school system.
- I faced bullying as a child that still impacts me today.
- Because something needs to change, and change begins with us.
- Love my community.
- Want to hear others and their suggestions.
- To learn more about how to help my youth.

What types of bullying does our community face?
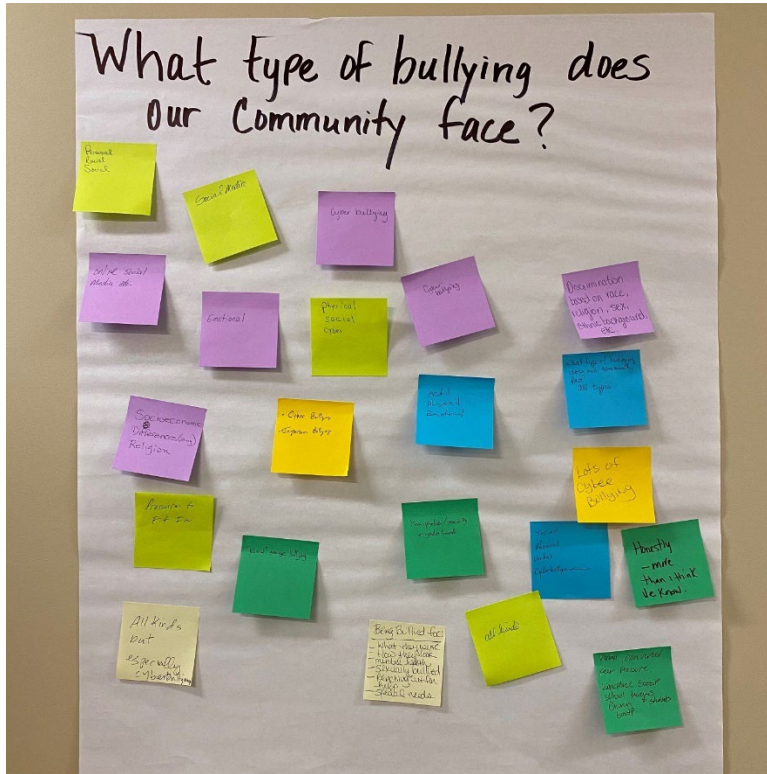
COMMON THEMES

Types of bullying
- Cyberbullying
- All types
- Physical
- Social

Why
- Gender or sexual identity
- Religion
- Race

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES
- Social, physical, verbal, cyberbullying.
- Homophobia, sexuality and bender based.
- "Normal" teenage bullying.
- All kinds.
- Being bullied for: What they wear, how they look, mental health, sexually bullied, reaching out for help, special needs.
- Pressure to fit in.

- Verbal, non-verbal, peer pressure, workplace gossip, schoolteachers and students, church gossip.
- Honestly – more than I think we know.
- Online social media etc.
- Social media.
- All kinds but especially cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying.
- Lots of cyberbullying.
- Physical, social, cyber.
- Personal, racial, social.
- Emotional.
- Socioeconomic, differences (any), religion.
- Cyberbullying, in-person bullying.
- Mental, physical, emotional.
- All types.
- Discrimination based on race, religion, sex, ethnic background, etc.

Where is bullying happening?

COMMON THEMES
- Everywhere
- Schools

- Virtually

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

- School, homes, community.
- In our churches and in our schools.
- Everywhere.
- Everywhere.
- Everywhere.
- Schools, work, online.
- Homes, schools, work, everywhere in the world!
- Everywhere.
- Everywhere.
- Schools, homes, community.
- In person at school, online, social media.
- Home, social media, school/work, everywhere.
- Everywhere.
- Everywhere.
- Everywhere in the county.
- Online.
- On social media, at school, in the work place.
- Social media.
- Schools, social media/online, church, home, college.
- Schools, virtual.

How is bullying affecting our community?
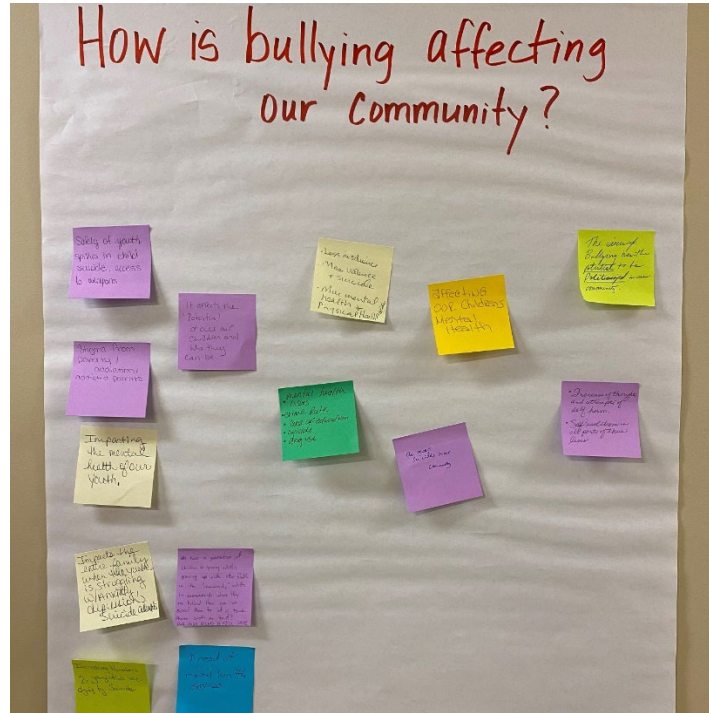
COMMON THEMES

- Increased self-harm and suicide
- Poor mental health

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

- Impacts the entire family when the youth is struggling with anxiety, depression, suicide attempts.
- Increased need of mental health services
- Increasing numbers of young kids are dying by suicide.
- Less resilience, more violence and suicide, more mental health and physical health problems.
- Impacting the mental health of our youth.
- It affects the "potential" of all our children and who they can be.
- Safety of youth, spikes in child suicide, access to weapons.
- We have a generation of children and young adults growing up with little faith in the "community" adults in environments where they are bullied. How can we expect them to let us teach them with no trust? Our kids need to feel safe.
- The recent suicides in our community.
- Mental health issues, crime rate, lack of education, suicide, drug use.
- Affecting our children's mental health.
- The issue of bullying has the potential to be politicized in our community.
- Increase of thoughts and attempts of self-harm. Self-isolation in all parts of their lives.
- Stigma from poverty/addiction/addicted parents.

What recommendation do you have for an organization, agency, or business to address bullying?
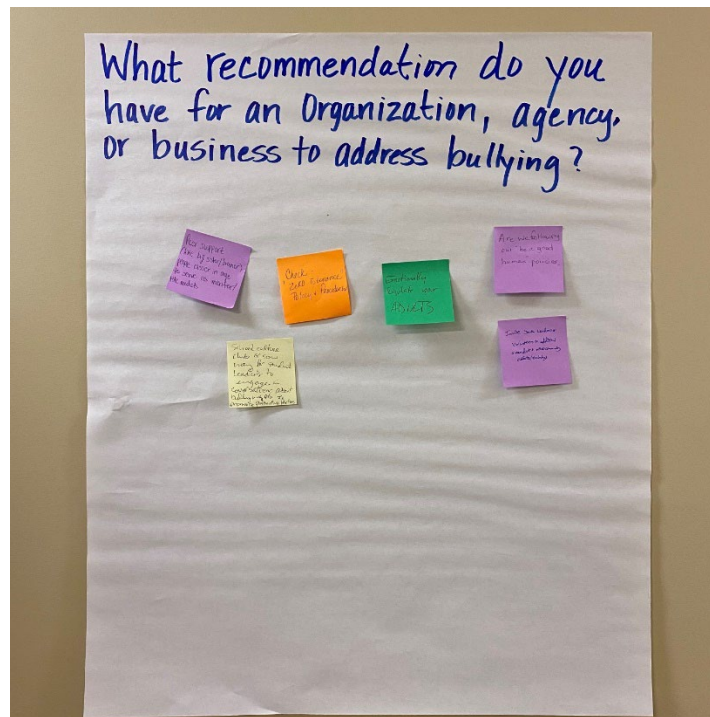
- School culture club or some way for student leaders to engage in conversations about bullying etc. and promote protective factors.
- Invite youth leaders and volunteers to additional Green Dot and other community efforts and trainings.
- Are we following our "be a good human" policies?
- Emotionally regulate your adults.
- Check "Zero Tolerance" policy and procedures.
- Peer support (like big sister/brother) people closer in age to serve as mentor/role models.

What is one thing you will do in our role to address bullying?
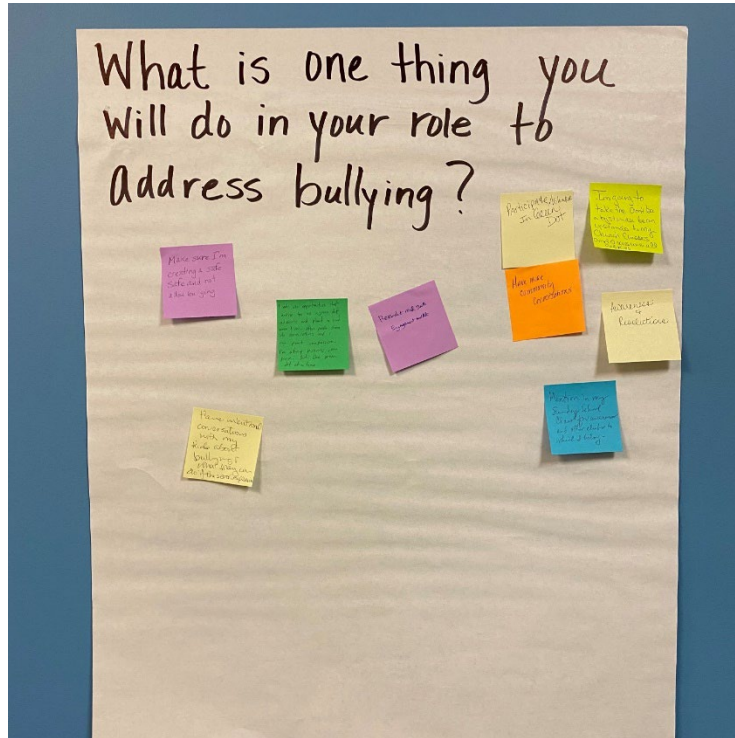
- Have intentional conversations with my kids about bullying and what they can do if they see it or experience it.
- Have more community conversations.
- Participate and volunteer in Green Dot.
- Awareness and resolutions.
- I am going to take the Don't Be A Bystander, Be An Upstander to my church classes and discuss with all our kids.
- Mention in my Sunday school class for awareness and other clubs to which I belong.
- Research and read Youth Engagement Toolkit.
- Make sure I'm creating a safe space and not allow bullying.
- I will use opportunities that arise to be a Green Dot advocate and plant a seed when I can. Often people share life stories/efforts, and I can plant compassion. I'm a tiny business, one person. But. One green dot at a time.

SLIDES

Note: Some formatting may differ from the actual presentation due to conversion.

WELCOME!
PLEASE...

- SIGN IN

- MAKE YOUR NAMETAG

- USE STICKY NOTES TO ANSWER GATHERING BOARD QUESTIONS
  - WHY ARE YOU HERE TODAY?
  - WHAT TYPES OF BULLYING DOES OUR COMMUNITY FACE?
  - WHERE IS BULLYING HAPPENING?
    - ONE STICKY PER ANSWER
    - USE AS MANY STICKIES AS YOU'D LIKE

OBJECTIVES

- Provide an overview of bullying

- Identify how bullying impacts Whitley County

- Discuss best practices in responding to and preventing bullying

- Define Green Dot Community

- Make recommendations for our community response to issues related to bullying

- Identify at least one personal action to address bullying

- Produce a report summarizing the forum

WHAT IS BULLYING?

- Bullying is any **unwanted aggressive behavior(s)** by another youth or group of youths…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.

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-definitions-final-a.pdf

IS THE BEHAVIOR UNWANTED AGGRESSION OR IS IT ROUGH PLAY?

"Unwanted" means that the targeted youth wants the aggressive behaviors to stop

- Two children may enjoy taunting each other in a playful manner. This is not bullying.

Cues for adults

- Relationship between the children
- Expressions, body language, atmosphere

REPEATED BEHAVIOR

- *Must either*
  - Experience multiple incidents of aggression (there is a pattern), OR
  - There is a strong concern that a single aggressive behavior has a high likelihood of being followed by more incidents of aggression

WHAT CONSTITUTES A POWER IMBALANCE?

Physical characteristics

- Age, size, strength

Popularity or association with popular peers

Background/demographic characteristics

- Member of a majority/minority group, socio-economic status

Abilities or skill

- Academic, physical, artistic

Access to money, resources, information

Being outnumbered

Presence of weapons

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Which of the following is NOT a key component of the Uniform Definition of Bullying published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention?

A. Unwanted aggressive behavior

B. Physical or verbal actions

C. Observed or perceived power imbalance

D. Behavior is repeated or highly likely to be repeated

MODES OF BULLYING

- *Direct*
  - Aggressive behaviors occur in the presence of targeted youth
  - Examples
    - Face-to-face interactions (pushing, hitting)
    - Direct harmful written or verbal communications (taunting, mean notes)

TYPES OF BULLYING

Physical

- Hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, tripping, pushing

Verbal

- Taunting, name-calling, threatening words, notes or sexual comments

Relational

- Designed to harm reputation and relationships

- Social isolation, spreading rumors, posting embarrassing images

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

- Which of the following is true? Indirect modes of bullying…

A. Involve aggressive behavior(s) that are not directly communicated to the youth

B. May include spreading rumors

C. May include encouraging others to exclude someone

D. All of the above

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT BULLYING

HOW MANY?

- 22% of students ages 12-18 were bullied at school in 2019

https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719

HOW ARE YOUTH BULLIED?

15% are the subject of rumors

14% are made fun of, called names, or insulted

6% are excluded from activities on purpose

5% are pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on

4% are threatened with harm

2% had others try to make them do things they did not want to do or had property destroyed by others on purpose

https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_230.65.asp

GENDER - BULLIED

- *Girls more likely to report being bullied (25% vs. 19%)*
  - Girls are more likely to be the subject of
    - Rumors (19% vs. 12%)
    - Being made fun of, called names, or insulted (16% vs. 12%)
    - Being excluded from activities on purpose (9% vs. 4%)
- *Boys are more likely to be the subject of*
  - Pushing, shoving, tripping, or spitting (6% vs. 4%
 - 43% of transgender youth report bullying at school)
    https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/reports_factsheet_publications.htm https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719

GENDER - BULLIES

- Boys are typically bulled by boys

- Girls are typically bullied by girls and boys

- Boys are more likely to bully others (1.7x)

- Boys are more likely to be both bullied and to bully (2.5x)

GRADE

BULLYING BY GRADE (2019)

%
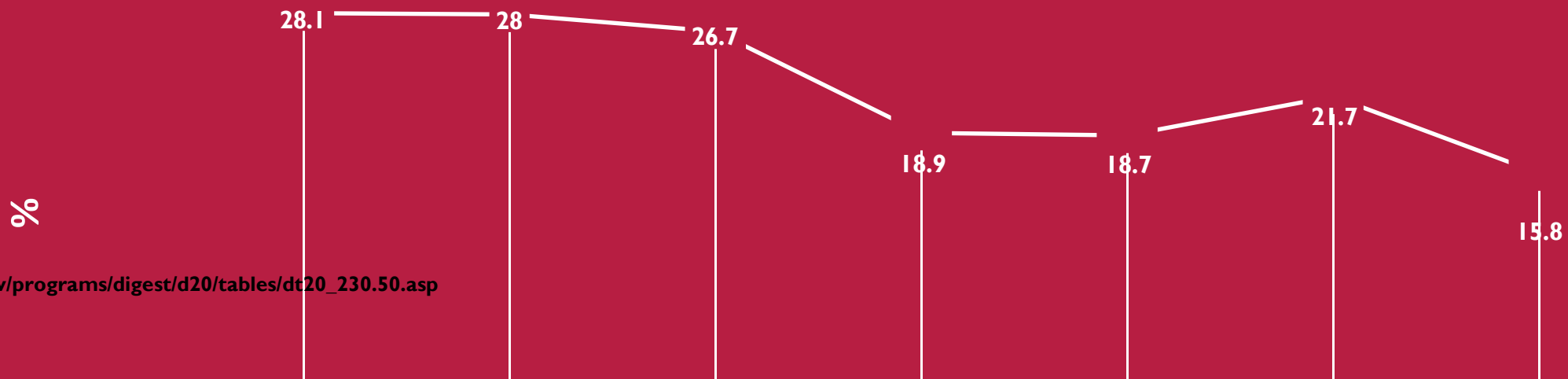
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_230.50.asp

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
% Bullied	28.1	28	26.7	18.9	18.7	21.7	15.8

WHERE DOES BULLYING HAPPEN?

Hallway or stairwell (43%)

Inside classroom (42%)
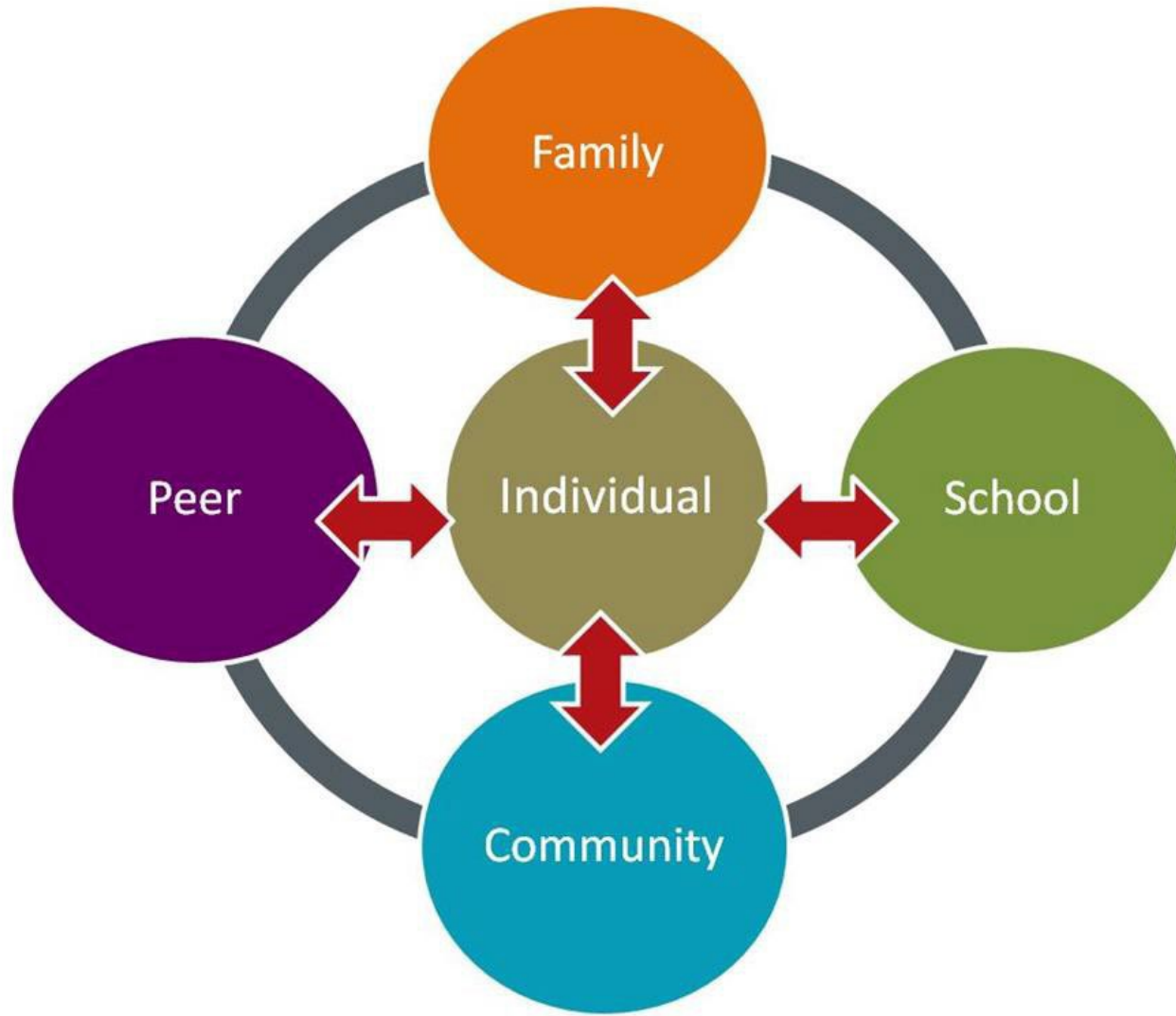
Cafeteria (27%)

Outside on school grounds (22%)

Cyberbullying (15%)

Bathroom or locker room (12%)

School bus (8%) https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019054.pdf

RISK FACTORS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS RELATED TO INVOLVEMENT IN BULLYING

Individual temperament	Social competence	Alcohol and drug use
Presence of a disability	Social isolation	Sexual orientation or

EXAMPLES OF PEER FACTORS RELATED TO BULLYING INVOLVEMENT

Exposure to aggressive, violent, delinquent peers

Having at least one close friend

Peer support

- Parental warmth and engagement

- Parental conflict

- Parental use of drugs and alcohol

- Domestic violence

- Parents in jail

- Child maltreatment

EXAMPLES OF FAMILY FACTORS RELATED TO INVOLVEMENT IN BULLYING

EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL FACTORS RELATED TO INVOLVEMENT IN BULLYING

- School climate
  - Students' sense of belonging to the school
  - Degree of respect and fair treatment
- Good adult supervision
- Awareness and responsiveness of staff

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY FACTORS RELATED TO INVOLVEMENT IN BULLYING

- NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

- Connection to adults in neighborhood

PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR BULLYING

- *Individual and family factors*
  - Secure, caring, and self-confident children
  - Supportive parenting and the modeling of positive relationships
  - Consistent and affectionate parent-child interactions
- *Peer and school factors*
  - Close, positive friendships with peers
  - Engaged and responsive teachers and school staff
  - Inclusive, nurturing, and safe schools

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf

PROTECTIVE COMMUNITY FACTORS

- Cultural norms and beliefs that are pro-social and non-violent

- Positive adult-child connections

- Safe neighborhoods

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf

WHO GETS BULLIED?

- Any child may be targeted

  - Some are at higher risk

    - Learning disabilities

  - ADHD

  - Autism

  - Special health care needs or chronic diseases

  - Over or underweight

  - LQBTQIA+

  - Language other than English spoken at home

BULLYING AFFECTS HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMICS

- *Being bullied is associated with*
- Internalizing problems
  - Depression, anxiety, panic disorder, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Psychosomatic problems
  - Headaches, stomach pain, sleeping problems, poor appetite
- Academic problems
- Externalizing behavior

BIOLOGICAL MECHANISM

Genetic research, neuroimaging studies, and studies of the body's stress response system reveal harmful biological changes associated with bullying

Being bullied affects the body's stress response system, which can affect academic outcomes

Recognizing "invisible scars" that bullying can leave is an important step in promoting well-being of youth

THOSE WHO BULLY OTHERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO

- Exhibit antisocial or delinquent behaviors (such as fighting, stealing, and vandalism)
- Dislike school and drop out of school
- Drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes
- Carry a weapon
- Think about and attempt suicide
- Come from homes with intimate partner violence

MANY DO NOT REPORT BULLYING TO ADULTS

- 50-75% of youth do not tell school personnel but are more likely to tell parents
  - Varies by age and gender
    - Older youth and boys are more reluctant to report bullying

WHY ARE THEY RELUCTANT TO REPORT?

1 Negative messages about "tattling" and

2 Concern about retaliation

3 Gender stereotypes

4 Lack of confidence in adults' actions

PEER ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES

Most have negative feelings and feel sympathy for bullied peers

90% of elementary students said they felt sorry for those bullied

Sympathy is somewhat greater among younger children and girls

Sympathy does not translate into action

When bystanders try to help a bullied child, they are often effective in stopping it

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

- The two most common forms of bullying that children experience are:

A. Being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on and being the subject of rumors

B. Being threatened with harm and being excluded from activities

C. Being the subject of rumors and being made fun of, called names, or insulted

D. Being cyberbullied and being verbally bullied.

GATHERING BOARDS BREAK

HOW IS BULLYING AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITY?

DO YOU WANT TO MAKE ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO YOUR OTHER RESPONSES?

PREVENTING AND STOPPING BULLYING

DON'TS AND DO'S

DON'T: ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES

Also referred to as "Student Exclusion" policies

- Concerns
  - They potentially affect a large number of students
  - Threats of severe punishments may actually discourage reporting
  - Bullying can be an early marker of other problem behaviors. Children who bully need positive, pro-social role models, including adults and students in their school.

- School safety may occasionally demand that a student be removed from a school environment, but these situations should be rare.

DON'T: RELY ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEER MEDIATION

Often used to address conflicts among students

Concerns

Bullying is a form of victimization, not conflict

Mediating a bullying incident may send inappropriate messages to the students involved

Mediation may further victimize or traumatize a child who has been bullied

ISSUES WITH CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEER MEDIATION

Trauma-informed

- Recognize that children who have been bullied may have experienced trauma
- Need special care to address the trauma
- Avoid practices that may re-traumatize

Restorative practices

- Focus on restoring relationships and repairing the harm done
- May be appropriate in some cases
  - Requires considerable time and training by professionals
    - Not common to most peer mediation programs in schools

DON'T: GROUP THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT

Group treatment with children who bully

- May involve anger management, skill-building, empathy-building, and self-esteem enhancement

Well-intentioned but often counter-productive

- Group members can serve as poor role models and reinforce each others' antisocial and bullying behavior

- Assumptions that bullying often leads directly to suicide

- Unhelpful and potentially harmful

  - Encourages sensationalized reporting in the media

  - Fails to recognize causes of suicide are complex

    - Individual, relational, community and societal factors contribute to the risk of suicide

  - Perpetuates the false belief that suicide is a *natural response* to being bullied

DON'T: OVERSTATE OR SIMPLIFY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BULLYING AND SUICIDE

DON'T: RELY ON SIMPLE, SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

- *Short-term, piecemeal approaches*
  - Bullying may be the topic of a staff in-service training, PTO meeting, school-wide assembly, lessons taught by individual teachers
  - May be good first steps
  - Unlikely to reduce bullying on their own

DON'T

|	
Ignore	Ignore it. Don't think children can work it out without adult help
Facts	Immediately try to sort out the facts
Force	Force other children to say publicly what they saw
Question	Question the children involved in front of other children
Talk	Talk to the children involved together. Do it separately.
Patch	Make the children involved apologize or patch up relations on the spot

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

- Which of the following is NOT a common "don't" in bullying prevention and response?

A. Overstating or simplifying the relationship between bullying and suicide

B. Group therapeutic treatment for children who bully

C. Using peer mediation to address bullying problems

D. The use of developmentally appropriate and proportional consequences for bullying others.

DO FOCUS ON THE SOCIAL CLIMATE

- Bullying prevention requires changes in the social climates of schools and organizations

- Students feel connected to schools where they know, care about, and support one another and have common goals

- Changing social norms around bullying requires commitment, time, and effort but can have a positive effect on behavior

- Increasing adult supervision is also important

DO SEEK OUT SUPPORT FOR BULLYING PREVENTION

Early and enthusiastic support is critical from leaders of schools and youth programs
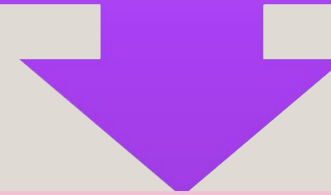
Adults must be willing to address bullying wherever it happens if bullying prevention strategies are to be fully implemented

Commitment from a majority of the youth-serving adults is also important

DO COORDINATE AND INTEGRATE PREVENTION EFFORTS

Bullying prevention should be coordinated and integrated with other related efforts

School-based teams should represent staff, parents, and youth leaders

Inter-agency, multidisciplinary approaches will avoid costly duplication and ensure greater success

Training in bullying prevention and response

DO SET POLICIES AND RULES ABOUT BULLYING

- All schools have policies

- Establish and communicate clear rules about bullying behavior and expectations if bullying is witnessed

- Apply developmentally appropriate and proportional consequences for bullying others

DO RESPOND CONSISTENTLY AND APPROPRIATELY WHEN BULLYING HAPPENS

Separate	Separate children involved
Make	Make sure everyone is safe
Meet	Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs
Stay	Stay calm. Reassure the children involved, including bystanders
Model	Model respectful behavior when you intervene

DO FOLLOW UP

Provide — Provide protection plans and support to children who are bullied

Plan — Plan intervention strategies for children who bully and supporters of bullying to learn alternative behaviors

Adopt — Adopt a trauma-informed approach

Consider — Consider referrals to mental health professionals within or outside of school settings when needed

DO SPEND TIME TALKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH ABOUT BULLYING

Talk about bullying and how to prevent it

Hold class meetings for staff and students

Incorporate lessons about bullying, positive behaviors and social-emotional health Youth Engagement Toolkit (

Youth Engagement Toolkit
https://www.stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/youthengagement_brieftoolkit_compliant.pdf
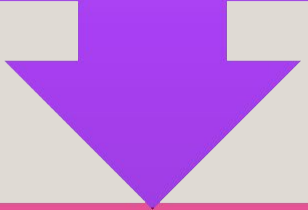
BE MORE THAN A BYSTANDER

https://youtu.be/StPGbbBBrI0

RESOURCES

- www.stopbullying.gov

- http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/index.html

- http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/creating-safe-and-respectful-environment-our-nations-school-buses-training-toolkit

- https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/

- https://www.stompoutbullying.org/

- SAMHSA's Mobile app KnowBullying

DO CONTINUE EFFORTS OVER TIME

No end date

Continually assess prevention needs and outcomes, revise strategies and champion the benefits in children's lives and to the community

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

- Which of the following is NOT considered a best practice in bullying prevention and response?

A. Work to improve the social climate of your schools and organizations to one where youth and adults notice if children are being left out, made fun of, or bullied in other ways

B. Identify a motivational speaker who can identify simple solutions to bullying in your school or organization

C. Coordinate and integrate bullying prevention efforts with related efforts

D. Provide training in bullying prevention and response

GREEN DOT COMMUNITY

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR AN ORGANIZATION, AGENCY, OR BUSINESS TO ADDRESS BULLYING?

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WILL DO IN YOUR ROLE TO ADDRESS BULLYING?

DO YOU WANT TO ADD OR CHANGE ANY OF YOUR OTHER RESPONSES?

GATHERING BOARDS BREAK

QUESTIONS?