

Bullying Affects All Our Children

Every day in our schools, children are threatened, teased, taunted, and tormented by bullies. Approximately 15 percent of students are either bullied regularly or are themselves bullies. Another study found that as much as 75% of students observe bullying in their school. Bullying affects everyone in the school because it creates a fearful and unsafe school climate.

What is bullying?

Bullying is characterized by three criteria:

- It is aggressive behavior or intentional "harmdoing;"
- It is carried out repeatedly and over time; and
- It occurs within an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power.

Bullying can be direct or indirect. Direct bullying is the kind of action that the word 'bullying' usually brings to mind, and is usually physical or verbal in nature. Physical bullying includes punching, kicking, biting, or strangling. Verbal bullying includes name calling, threatening, taunting, and gossip.



Indirect bullying is more subtle and more difficult to detect. Types of indirect bullying include social isolation, intentional exclusion, making faces, obscene gestures, and manipulating friendships.

Bullying is two to three times more likely to occur at school than on the way to and from school. Generally, boys are much more likely to engage in bullying behavior than girls. Girls who bully are more likely to use indirect forms of bullying. Most bullying occurs between students in the same grade.

Effects on victims:

- Victims lose self-esteem and become anxious and insecure.
- Victims may feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive, and may start to view themselves as failures.

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When your child bullies others

I was called to my 13-year-old son's school today because he stole some money from another boy during lunch. This wasn't the first incident. A few weeks ago, the principal called because Keith made another boy take the blame for graffiti that he wrote on the school bus. No matter what we tell him, he constantly seems to get into trouble. What can I do?

You certainly have reason to be concerned about your son's behavior. He is acting like a bully and needs your help to put on the brakes. The principal was right to call. The school can set a clear standard—no bullying—and make sure your son understands the consequences for violations of this rule. You, too, need to make clear that you disapprove of bullying. You need to help your son develop empathy—which is the ability to understand how other people feel—and to care about others' feelings. You will probably want to impose consequences on your son for his unacceptable behavior. Be firm, but do it in a loving way. Right now, your son needs *your* empathy, understanding, and love. By providing this, you can show the power of caring about others in a positive way.

This still leaves the bigger part of the problem—getting to the reasons for your son's behavior. You have to talk with him to determine why he is being a bully. What leads your son to behave in such hurtful ways?

With your help, or with the assistance of a professional, your son can understand his own motives for bullying. Some young people are bullies because they are bored and crave excitement; some do it to feel powerful; some engage in this behavior as a response to family problems; some do it

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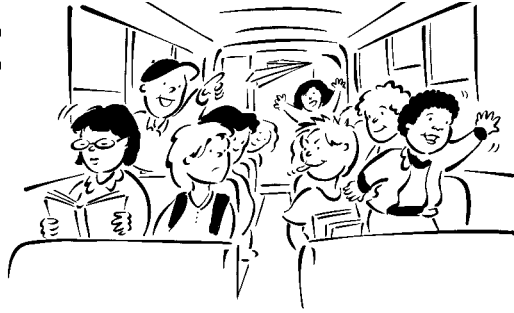
What's a Bully Look Like?

Boys are more likely than girls to be bullies. Girls, however, are more likely to engage in sneakier forms of harassment. Children who bully:

- May be physically bigger and stronger than their victims.
- Have strong needs to dominate and control their peers.
- Are often hot-tempered, easily angered, impulsive, and are easily frustrated.
- Have difficulty conforming to rules.
- Are good at talking themselves out of situations.
- Are defiant and aggressive toward adults and authority figures. Adults may be frightened of the bully.
- Tend to have a positive view of themselves (average or better than average self-esteem).
- Are more likely than their peers to engage in other antisocial behaviors.
- Are more likely to be less popular (particularly primary school students).
- Are more likely to have negative attitudes toward school and get lower grades (particularly junior high school students).

From the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, www.colorado.edu/cspv

Just for Kids: How to Deal with a Bully



Bullies like to feel more powerful than their peers. Bullies can make kids feel helpless. It is okay to be scared. But you can also take a stand against bullies.

What to do if you are bullied:

- Tell your parents. Telling is not tattling. Your parents can help you figure out what to do.
- Tell a trusted teacher, school counselor, or principal. If you are scared or uncomfortable, bring a friend or a parent. You can write down what happened, how it happened, and who is bullying you.
- Do not retaliate against the bully or get angry. You can sometimes lighten a tense situation with humor.
- Respond evenly and firmly or else say nothing and walk away. A bully likes to feel powerful and likes to see that he or she has upset you.

How to prevent being bullied:

- Develop friendships. A bully is more likely to leave you alone if you are with your friends, especially if you stick up for each other.
- Get into social and physical activities, where you can make friends with people who like the same things you do.
- Act confident. Hold your head up, stand up straight, make eye-contact, and walk confidently. A bully will be less likely to single you out if you show self-confidence.

How to avoid bullying situations:

- Sometimes the best way to prevent being bullied is to avoid situations where bullying can happen.
- Sit near the bus driver on the school bus.
 - If you walk to school, take a different route.
 - Leave home a little earlier or later to avoid the bully.

- Do not bring expensive items or lots of money to school.
- Take different routes through the hallways or walk with a teacher to your classes.
- Avoid unsupervised areas of the school and situations where you are isolated from your teachers and classmates.
- Make sure you are not alone in the locker room or bathroom.

How to help a victim of bullying:

- Try to help the victim without putting yourself at risk. However, doing nothing implies that you think that it is okay to bully and hurt others.
- Do not join in if you see that someone is being bullied.
- Get a teacher, parent, or other responsible adult to come help. This is not tattling.
- Encourage the victim to tell his parents or a trusted teacher. Be willing to go with him.
- Tell a trusted adult yourself if the victim doesn't want to report the bullying. Do not let the bully know that you reported the situation, or he may become aggressive toward you.

This article is excerpted from "Safe Communities—Safe Schools, Bullying Prevention: Recommendations for Kids" from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, www.colorado.edu/cspv.

When your child bullies others

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for attention and to be popular with their peers. You need to ask him very detailed questions:

- Did you plan to take the other boy's lunch money beforehand, or was it a sudden urge?
- Why did you pick on that particular person?
- What were you thinking when you did it? (Ex: I need the money; I'll look cool.)
- How did you feel when you did it? (Ex: excited, thrilled, frightened, powerful)
- How do you think the other boy felt?
- What's happening in your life or in our family that may be upsetting you?

When you understand the details of what happened, you can determine how to help your child. For example, if your son stole

money because he saw it sitting on a lunch tray and had a sudden urge to grab it, he will need to learn to recognize his impulses, and to stop them. If he planned to steal money, pre-selected a victim, and stole because he wanted to look important, he will need to learn positive ways to make friends and gain peer acceptance.

We have to help our children learn healthy and socially acceptable ways to cope with urges and anger, and to satisfy their emotional needs appropriately. A big challenge? Yes. But it's part of growing up and becoming a good citizen.

This article is part of an excellent booklet entitled, "Helping Your Children Navigate Their Teenage Years: A Guide for Parents," published by the White House Council on Youth Violence, December 2000. You can download the booklet at www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/SVP-0013/default.asp.

Bullying can take many forms...

- Physical attacks such as hitting, kicking, pushing, choking
- Verbal attacks or harassment, such as name-calling, threatening, taunting, malicious teasing, rumor spreading, slandering
- Social isolation, intentional exclusion, making faces or obscene gestures, manipulating friendships or relationships

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- Physical injury or threats of physical injury interfere with victims' concentration and learning.
- Victims may develop psychosomatic symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches.
- Constant self-devaluation may lead to depression and suicide.

Effects on bullies:

- Students (particularly boys) who bully are more likely to engage in other antisocial or delinquent behavior in adulthood.
- Bullies are four times as likely as non-bullies to be convicted of crimes by age 24.

Effects on school social climate:

- Students tend to feel less safe and are less satisfied with school life in schools where bullying occurs.
- When bullying is ignored, students may learn to regard bullying behavior as acceptable. This may result in more bullying behavior and other, more severe problems.

Is your child being bullied?

Children oftentimes will not tell their parents that they are being victimized. Here are some signs that might indicate your child is being bullied:

- Has unexplained bruises, injuries, cuts, and scratches.
- Seems isolated from peers and may not have friends.
- Appears to be fearful about attending school, walking to and from school, or riding the bus.
- Has difficulty sleeping, poor appetite, headaches, and stomach pains (particularly in the morning).
- Asks for or takes extra money from family (money that may go to a bully).
- Appears anxious, distressed, unhappy, depressed, or tearful when he or she comes home from school.
- May lose interest in school work and experience a decline in academic performance.
- Talks about or attempts suicide.

General characteristics of possible victims

There are typically two types of victims: the passive/submissive victim, and the provocative victim. Passive/submissive victims signal to others through attitudes and behaviors that they are insecure individuals who will not retaliate if victimized. The provocative victim is characterized by having both anxious and aggressive patterns. Provocative victims are generally boys.

Passive/Submissive Victim Characteristics:

- Display "body anxiety." They are afraid of being hurt, or have poor physical coordination.
- Have poor social skills and have difficulty making friends.
- Are cautious, sensitive, quiet, shy, and have poor self-esteem.

Provocative Victim Characteristics:

- Exhibit some or all of the characteristics of passive or submissive victims.
- Are hot tempered and attempt to fight back when victimized—usually not very effectively.
- Are hyperactive, restless, have difficulty concentrating, and create tension.

What can parents of the victim do?

- Encourage your child to share his problems with you. Your child may be embarrassed, ashamed, and fearful. Listen attentively and reassure him that he will not have to face the problem alone.
- Praise your child for specific accomplishments and traits. Help her to identify and develop her talents and positive attributes, and to take pride in her accomplishments. A confident child is less likely to be targeted by bullies.
- Help your child to develop friendships. Encourage your child to interact with new peers. An environment with new peers can provide a new chance for a victimized child.
- If your child's behavior (i.e., provocative victim) is contributing to being bullied, help your child change his behavior without suggesting that he is responsible for being victimized. Work with your child to improve his social skills.

What can parents of a bully do?

- Make clear to your child that you take the bullying seriously, and will not tolerate such behavior in the future.
- Develop consistent family rules. Use praise and reinforcement when your child follows the rules. Use consistent, non-hostile, negative consequences when he breaks them. Set a good example for your child by following these rules yourself. If your child observes aggressive behavior by you, he or she is more likely to act aggressively toward peers.
- Spend more time with your child. Monitor and supervise your child's activities. Know your child's friends, where they spend their free time, and what they do with that free time.
- Build on your child's talents and help him or her develop less aggressive and more appropriate reaction behaviors.
- Maintain contact with your child's school. Support the school's efforts to modify your child's behavior. Enlist help from the school to try and modify your child's behavior.
- Seek help from a mental health professional.

From the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, www.colorado.edu/cspv

- If your child is willing, encourage her to participate in physical activity or sports. This can result in better physical coordination and less "body anxiety" which, in turn, can increase your child's self-esteem and improve peer relations.
- Maintain contact with your child's school. Keep a detailed record of bullying episodes and communication with the school. Help develop a plan of action for the school to follow.
- Seek help from a mental health professional.

Excerpted from "Bullying Prevention: Recommendations for Parents," from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/Default.htm

How To Talk To Your Children About Violence

Research shows that despite the extensive media coverage, students are safer in school than outside it. However, because parents have traditionally assumed that children are protected in a school environment, they may find talking to their children about school violence difficult, and may be unsure what they, as parents, can do to prevent such incidents in the future.

One basic rule of thumb is to respond to your child's questions with age-appropriate answers:

Children five and younger need to be sheltered from violent media images. Do not allow very young children to watch TV news, because young children have difficulty separating fictional and real violence, and they may be upset by graphic images. If preschoolers are exposed to

violent images, provide brief and simple explanations using concrete and familiar examples. The concept of death may be more comprehensible to very young children when explained in terms of what is absent: When people die they do not eat, talk, or cry. Young children may have difficulty understanding that death is not temporary. In addition, reassure your young children by nonverbal communications such as demonstrations of physical affection and adherence to a normal routine.

Children ages six to twelve should watch the news with parents. Use this shared time as an opportunity to talk about your children's reactions and feelings. Take this opportunity to discuss the importance of their children making friends with all other children, rather than excluding, teasing, or bullying unpopular ones. Stress how important it is for children to talk to adults about signs of anger or unhappiness they may observe in their classmates. Also, if you can, take an active role in school safety by going to PTA meetings and talking to the principal.

Discuss with your **middle and high school children** the consequences of using violence



to resolve conflict. Encourage your high-schoolers to take an active role by joining with other students to work against violence. Encourage them to develop such activities as peer-based conflict resolution and mediation programs, teen courts and mentoring programs. Invite your older children to attend PTA meetings when school safety needs are discussed and planned. High school students, like younger students, should understand the importance of avoiding cliques, which can alienate unpopular students, as well as the importance of helping adults identify students who are a potential risk.

Questions Parents Can Ask Their Children's Schools



The most important thing that parents can do to prevent school violence is to maintain an active involvement in their children's education. In addition, parents can ask questions to assess the safety of schools in their community.

- **Are all students connected to others in their school community?** Every young person needs a connection to at least one adult—teacher, counselor, religious/spiritual representative, or mentor—in addition to his or her parents.
- **Are our schools in good condition, and do they have the resources they need?** Many schools are overcrowded and in need of major repair. Make an inventory of your school's needs, and help to organize community resources in order to meet those needs.
- **Do parents and family members have opportunities to get involved?** All parents should try to be involved in their children's learning for at least 30 minutes a day.
- **Are academic and behavioral standards rigorous?** Students rise to the expectations and standards set for them. Schools should raise standards for performance to meet or exceed national excellence. They should also set high standards for behavior that are respectful of others, appreciate diversity, and rely on peaceful conflict resolution.
- **Will there be a good teacher in every classroom?** Make it a community goal to encourage bright young people or those changing professions in mid-career to plan for careers in teaching. Make sure that teachers meet state licensing standards.
- **Are there enough quality after-school care programs?** The highest rates of juvenile crime occur between 2 and 7 p.m. Ensure that your community's schools are kept open in the afternoons and during the summer to meet the needs of the children of working parents.
- **Are students taught skills for resolving conflict without violence?** Learning how to resolve disputes peacefully and respectfully should be part of every school. Programs such as peer mediation, conflict resolution training, and diversity awareness training, as well as academic instruction based on cooperative learning, teaches skills to students that will lead to safer and more effective problem solving.

What Students Can Do About Violence

Students can play a major role in violence prevention. There are lots of activities that you can engage in, whatever your age. Here are some activities that students across the nation have used.

By yourself:

- Listen to your friends if they share troubling feelings or thoughts. Encourage them to get help from a trusted adult. If you are very concerned, seek help for them.
- Know your school's code of conduct and follow it. Avoid being part of a crowd when fights break out. Refrain from teasing, bullying, and intimidating peers.
- Be a role model—take personal responsibility by reacting to anger without physically or verbally harming others.
- Seek help from your parents or a trusted adult if you are experiencing intense feelings of anger, fear, anxiety, or depression.

In your community:

- Help develop and participate in activities that promote understanding of differences and that respect the rights of all.
- Participate in violence prevention programs at school such as peer mediation and conflict resolution. Employ your new skills in settings outside of school, too, such as your home, neighborhood, and community.
- Work with school staff to create a safe process for reporting threats, intimidation, weapon possession, drug selling, gang activity, graffiti, and vandalism.
- Work with local businesses and community groups to organize youth-oriented activities that help young people think of ways to prevent school and community violence.
- Volunteer to be a mentor for younger students and/or provide tutoring to your peers.
- Create, join, or support student organizations that address violence. Here are a few examples of nationwide groups:

Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) supports nonviolence and is open to middle and high school students.

Students learn about alternatives to violence and practice what they learn through community service projects. Call 1-919-661-7800 or check out their web site at www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/save.htm.

SADD, once known as Students Against Drunk Driving, is now Students Against Destructive Decisions. SADD believes that young people can have fun, enjoy life, and nurture positive personal relationships without the distraction and distortion of alcohol and other drugs. Visit their web site, www.saddonline.org, or call toll-free 1-877-SADD-INC (877-723-3462).

Students Taking a Right Stand (STARS) helps students in grades 6-12 to refrain from using alcohol and other drugs, and to learn positive living skills such as positive peer pressure and caring confrontation. Call 800-477-8277, or visit their website, www.cyi-stars.org.

The Student Pledge Against Gun Violence organizes a yearly Day of National Concern About Young People and Gun Violence. In 2000, the pledge was signed by more than 2.4 million students nationwide! Check out their web site at www.pledge.org or call 507-645-5378.

One Individual Can Make A Difference

You can also use your own talents and efforts to start a unique program or event in your own community! Many individual students have taken the initiative to do their part to work against violence.

- Cody Hill, a freshman at Lincoln High School in Portland, Oregon, organized a Guns Aren't Fun exchange during a Blazers basketball game at the Portland Memorial Coliseum, so children could exchange their toy guns for other toys. "They may not think about it consciously," said Cody, "but playing with guns desensitizes kids to what real guns can do."
- Rashad Williams, a track star in the San Francisco Bay area, was moved by the plight of fellow athlete Lance Kirklin, a Columbine High School shooting victim. In order to help out with Kirklin's medical bills, tallying more than \$500,000, Rashad lined up sponsors and entered the annual Bay to Breakers, a 7.5-mile footrace. When the mayor and the media got wind of what Rashad was

What Parents Can Do To Stop School Violence

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) lists 12 actions parents can take to address the problem of violence in our schools.

- Remove firearms from your home, or at least ensure that they are locked, well-secured, and stored separately from ammunition.
- Take an active role in your children's schools.
- Act as role models. Settle your own conflicts peaceably and manage anger without violence.
- Listen to and talk with your children regularly.
- Set clear limits on behaviors in advance. Discuss punishments and rewards in advance, too.
- Communicate clearly that you don't tolerate violent behavior.
- Help your children learn how to find solutions to problems.
- Discourage name-calling and teasing.
- Insist on knowing your children's friends, whereabouts, and activities.
- Work with other parents to develop standards for school-related events and activities, and require adult supervision.
- Make it clear to your children that you support school policies that help create a safe school environment.
- Join with other parents through school, neighborhood, civic, or religious organizations, or through youth activity groups. Talk to each other about concerns regarding youth and violence in your community.

Find the NCPC on the Web at <http://www.ncpc.org>.

doing, thousands of dollars began to pour in. In June, Rashad was able to deliver a check for \$18,000 to Kirklin in the Denver Health Medical Center.

What Teachers Can Do About Violence

For most teachers and students, schools are safe, and incidents of violence are declining. Teachers do, however, still face a risk of violence every day. Below are key strategies teachers can employ to prevent violence and foster safe learning environments for students.

Teach Violence Prevention

Preventing violence requires a sustained effort in the classroom and the entire school. Teachers should integrate violence prevention into their regular lessons and teach it throughout the school year. For example, they can integrate the teaching of social skills such as encouraging empathy, developing anger management, and supporting tolerance into their general curricula.

Provide Clear and Consistent Discipline

A clear and consistent school policy on discipline lays the foundation for violence prevention efforts. Kids need structure, discipline, and standards, whatever their ages. In fact, student opinion surveys have shown that kids themselves want structure and discipline. (They may not admit this to you, but it's true.)

However, support is more important than punishment. Discipline systems should be more than a means to control persistent or severe behavior problems. Discipline systems and policies can be much more productive when they take a constructive problem-solving approach.

Promote Positive Classroom Discipline

Individual teachers typically develop their own classroom rules that blend with their school's disciplinary policy. Teachers and administrators should remember that it takes a sustained effort to ensure that students understand the policy.

Many school employees feel that reading and reviewing the rules once is sufficient. However, research shows that many of the concepts included in disciplinary policies. We do not expect children to learn algebra or chemistry in one day, and we should not expect them to learn and understand disciplinary policies in one day.

Many teachers involve students in forming classroom policies, letting the kids help make the rules. Teachers from elementary school to high school report that involving students gives them a sense of ownership of the rules and the belief that if the rules are violated, they are hurting themselves. However, teachers should also be careful not to make too many rules.

Prevent Bullying and Hazing

Bullying and hazing can create a climate of danger in a school. Kids want their teachers' help and support in responding to bullies, although most often they do not ask for fear of social consequences or because they believe adults will do nothing. Teachers can build trust with their students by acting to stop bullying.

Hazing is increasingly recognized as an organized form of bullying that can be both inherently dangerous and part of a climate tolerating violence. Initiation rights that rise to the level of hazing are common with groups ranging from school athletic teams to social cliques to street gangs. Schools and teachers may face civil suits if they tolerate even traditional hazing.

Get to Know Your Students

Open communication is essential to identifying kids who need help. In elementary school, building a relationship with students is relatively easy, since teachers work with the same class all day. In high school or middle school, where a teacher might work with 150 kids each day, establishing a bond with students is much more challenging.

Creating trust and respect is a reciprocal process. Teachers who treat their students with respect earn their students' respect in turn. Creating a climate of trust, care, and respect is critical to creating effective learning and work environments.

Involve Parents

Teachers can make parents their allies. Parents are more likely to reinforce your expectations for good student behavior if teachers establish ties early rather than wait until a child is in trouble. For example, teachers can have students and parents sign a behavior contract early in the school year that spells out the teacher's expectations and the penalties for student misbehavior.

Parents who are not aware of the discipline policies are prone to side with their children and might feel that the school employee's actions (especially suspension or expulsion) are arbitrary or biased.

Use the Early Warning Signs of Violence

Teachers who learn and understand the early warning signs of violence will be in the strongest position to intervene to help troubled kids. Understanding is the first step in the process of early intervention because it gives people the knowledge to recognize when a student may need help. An important balance must be found, however, between responding to the signs of a child who may need help and being harmful by labeling or overreacting to a situation.

This article is an excerpt from "Fact Sheet No. 3: What Teachers Can Do About Violence" by the National Resource Center for Safe Schools.

Girls & Violence

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- First, a counseling component that is comprehensive and addresses the many problems of delinquent and at-risk young women, including sexual abuse and violence in teen relationships.
- Second, successful programs include educational and occupational support.

- Third, they address the needs of young women not able to remain with their families and provide young women with access to caring adults and organized community activities.

Finally, because male violence and aggression against young women are often a factor in female delinquency and violence, separate programs need to be developed for aggressive and violent men and boys.

This would minimize the risk of females being victimized and, in turn, reduce the risk of girls' participation in violence.

This article is an excerpt from "Girls and Violence" by Jeanne Weiler. The full article is available online through the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, ED# 430069. You can download this article at www.eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig143.html.

Early Warning Signs & Resiliency Factors for School Violence



Violence is everyone's business. Everyone has a personal responsibility for reducing the risk of violence. Community members who understand early warning signs will be better prepared to take action in a crisis. However, they should also take care not to misinterpret these signs. Adults and fellow students must avoid inappropriately labeling or stigmatizing individual students who appear to fit a specific profile.

Here are vital principles for understanding and responding appropriately to early warning signs:

- Do no harm; first and foremost provide help
- Understand violence and aggression within a larger context
- Avoid stereotypes
- View warning signs against developmentally typical behavior
- Do not overreact to a single sign; children typically exhibit multiple warning signs

Early warning signs indicate a need for investigation. No sign alone is sufficient to predict violence. Parents, students, and school staff should use early warning signs to identify and refer youth who may need help. Mental health counselors can help determine appropriate intervention. Early warning signs include:

- Social withdrawal
- Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone
- Being a victim of violence
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted
- Expression of violence in writings and drawings
- Uncontrolled anger
- Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors

- History of discipline problems, or history of violent and aggressive behavior
- Intolerance of differences and prejudicial attitudes
- Drug and/or alcohol use
- Affiliation with gangs
- Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms
- Serious threats of violence

Imminent Warning Signs

Unlike early warning signs, imminent warning signs indicate that a person is close to being a threat to self or others. These signs are usually presented as a series of behaviors or threats. These signs might include:

- Serious physical fighting with peers or family members
- Severe destruction of property
- Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons
- Detailed threats of lethal violence
- Possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons
- Other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide

When a child exhibits imminent warning signs, safety must always be the first consideration. Action must be taken immediately. Parents should be informed, and intervention by school authorities and possibly law-enforcement officers is needed.

Resiliency Factors

Studies suggest that aggression is learned at an early age. Prevention programs that start early in childhood and continue throughout adolescence have the best chance of success. Such programs promote resiliency factors that protect children from becoming violent as well as making them less vulnerable to the effects of violence.

Resiliency factors include:

- Positive role models
- Development of self-esteem
- Supportive relationships with teachers and friends
- Sense of hope about the future
- Strong social skills
- Close bond with a nurturing adult outside the family
- Empathy and support from the mother or mother figure
- The ability to find refuge and a sense of self-esteem in hobbies and creative pursuits, useful work, and assigned chores
- The sense that one is in control of one's life and can cope with whatever happens

Addressing Multiple Factors

Schools should incorporate effective prevention programs that recognize how safety issues interact with children's social, emotional, and academic environment. Effective prevention, intervention, and crisis-response strategies operate best in school communities that:

- Focus on academic achievement
- Involve families in meaningful ways
- Develop links to the community
- Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff
- Discuss safety issues openly
- Treat students with equal respect
- Create ways for students to share their concern
- Help children and adolescents feel safe expressing their feelings
- Have in place a system for referring students who are suspected of being abused or neglected
- Offer extended day programs for children and after-school activities for adolescents
- Promote good citizenship and character
- Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions
- Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace

This article is an excerpt from "Fact Sheet 1: Early Warning Signs and Resiliency Factors for School Violence" by the National Resource Center for Safe Schools. A more comprehensive report, entitled Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools can be downloaded from www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/earlywrn.html

Girls & Violence

Girls' involvement in delinquency and crime, though still less than boys', appears to have increased significantly in the last two decades. There is little knowledge about the causes of girls' violence, and few studies have been conducted on young women's crime and delinquency. However, researchers studying this complex question have found significant differences between violent acts by girls and boys, and suggest strategies for preventing girls' violence.

The Nature of Girls' Crime

Girls are involved in more violent crime than they were 10 years ago. For example, their murder arrest rate is up 64 percent. Still, only 3.4 percent of girls' arrests in 1994 were for violent crimes. Changes in the way girls are charged with crimes may explain part of the increase in arrests for violence. For example, a girl who, in self-defense, shoves her parents out of the way as she tries to run away is now likely to be arrested for assault, a criminal offense. Previously, she might have been arrested only for the lesser status offense of running away. Status offenses—such as running away, prostitution, or curfew violations—continue to comprise most of girls' arrests.

Differences Between Girls' and Boys' Violence

Violent crimes committed by girls differ significantly from boys' offenses. Boys are two to three times more likely to carry weapons, and girls are more likely to use knives than guns, boys' weapon of choice. Girls are more

likely than boys to murder someone as a result of a conflict rather than during a crime, and to fight with and/or murder family members. Girls remain less likely than boys to be arrested in general, and far less likely to be arrested for violent crimes (such as homicide, forcible rape, or aggravated assault) and serious property offenses (such as burglary or arson). The ratio of boys' to girls' arrests has changed very little over the decade, as the recent increases in the arrest of girls parallel increases in boys' arrests. This suggests that the upward trend simply reflects overall changes in youth behavior.

Girls' Participation in School-Related Violence

Most aggressive acts in school, such as physical fighting, bullying, and carrying weapons, are done by males and aimed at males. One study reported that while nearly 18 percent of boys carry a weapon to school only 5 percent of girls do so. Another study showed, however, that in schools where large numbers of boys carry weapons, there is a correspondingly high rate of girls with weapons, although boys may carry guns while girls carry knives.

Causes of Girls' Violence

Current research on adolescent violence and delinquency considers how social class, race, ethnicity, and culture interact to cause young women to behave violently. It also helps explain why girls join gangs: to develop skills to survive in their harsh communities and temporarily escape a dismal future.

Women jailed for crimes are much more likely than males to report previous sexual or physical abuse. In addition, violent

young women are more likely to come from troubled or violent families. Their home life, characterized by poverty, divorce, parental death, abandonment, alcoholism, and frequent abuse, leaves them quick to anger, distrust, and revenge.

One researcher suggests that a major factor in girls' aggression toward other girls is a general negative view of females based on a personal low sense of self-worth, resulting from sexual abuse and an internalized belief in women's inferiority. Another study of young African American and Latina women incarcerated for serious offenses identified additional factors which propelled them toward violence: leaving home or being kicked out; considerable free time without adult supervision; and an "inadvertent drift" into violence and crime as their lives began to fall apart.

In general, school failure increases young people's risk for violence and delinquency, although poor school performance appears to have a stronger effect on girls than boys. While high grades and positive self-esteem seem to depress girls' involvement in violence and delinquency, boys' high grades raise their self-esteem, which sometimes increases risk-taking and greater delinquency.

What Can We Do

To serve young women effectively, programs must develop culturally-sensitive, gender-specific approaches. A review of the few existing programs effective with at-risk young women suggests that three common elements combine to support them in all facets of their lives:

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