

# Maryland School Mental Health Alliance\*

## *Bullying and Bullying Prevention Information for School Clinicians*

### Definition

Signs of bullying include physical and/or verbal assault, public taunting, ostracism, and other forms of intentional personal injury. Bullies come in a variety of forms: they can be large and aggressive, as well as short and cunning. Victims of bullying display lower levels of self-confidence and typically react to threats passively (i.e., withdrawal and avoidance). Both bullies and victims constitute a fringe group within a school setting; while the former covets power, the latter lacks it. As social outsiders, bullies and their victims exhibit lower levels of personal security.

### Why do we care?

*When compared to their developmental peers:*

- Students who bully their peers are more likely to react aggressively to conflict in the classroom.
- Students who bully their peers are more likely to engage in disruptive behavior.
- Students bullied by their peers are more likely to display signs of depression.
- Students bullied by their peers are less likely to gain acceptance by classmates.
- Students bullied by their peers are more likely to bring a weapon with them to school.

### What can we do about it?

- **Touch base with parents to see how the student's behavior at home relates to their behavior in school.** If the student bullies their peers, they could suffer from abuse or neglect. If student is bullied by one of their peers, they may suffer from learned-helplessness or low self-esteem.
- **Maintain close contact with teachers to see if your student avoids certain classes or school settings.** This may also contribute to your understanding of the bullying dynamics.
- **Empower the child by equipping them with alternative ways to resolve conflict.** Provide examples of passive, aggressive and assertive behavior. Highlight the benefits of assertion.
- **Ask teachers if it would be possible for you to present on consequences of bullying.** Explain to students the negative cycle of bullying and how it can have fatal consequences.
- **Become familiar with the bullying prevention curriculum in your school.** For example, in Maryland, state law requires that all public schools include a bullying prevention component within their curriculum. See Maryland State Department of Education website for more information:  
[http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/student\\_services\\_alt/bullying/](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/student_services_alt/bullying/)

### Helpful Forms and Handouts

- Stop Bullying Packet: <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/assets/downloads/ksstopbullying.pdf>.
- Preventive Bullying!: <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/assets/downloads/kspreventingbullying.pdf>.
- Bullying Fact Sheet: <http://www.childline.org.uk/pdfs/info-bullying-parents.pdf>.

- Guide for Teachers and Administrators: <http://www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/>.

### **Additional Resources**

Cohen, A., & Canter, A. (2003). Bullying: Facts for parents and teachers. *National Association of School Psychologists*. [http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/bullying\\_fs.html](http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/bullying_fs.html).

Levy, B.M. (2004). Name calling and teasing: Strategies for parents and teachers. *National Association of School Psychologists*. [http://www.naspcenter.org/pdf/name-calling%20template%209\\_04.pdf](http://www.naspcenter.org/pdf/name-calling%20template%209_04.pdf).

Sassu ,K.A., Elinoff, M.J., Bray, M.A., & Kehle, T.J. Bullies and victims: Information for parents. *National Association of School Psychologists*.  
[http://www.naspcenter.org/pdf/bullying%20template%209\\_04.pdf](http://www.naspcenter.org/pdf/bullying%20template%209_04.pdf).

*\*Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*