

Bullying Prevention FL Children and Youth Cabinet

Bullying is often talked about, but perhaps underappreciated in terms of its damage or what can or even should be done about it.

20% of girls and 25% of boys report being either V/B or both. Kids will increasingly report incidences of bullying to peers and adults through 8th grade, but then self-reports decline, yet observed rates are much higher than self-reports. Some of this may be that adolescents stop talking to adults. It has also been theorized that we have stopped being effective in our response to their attempts when they are younger to get help.

Yet, there are real health effects of Bullying for V/B –

- For those bullied 3X more HA, 2X sleep problems, 2X GI, 3X moderate depression, 8X severe, suicidal ideation can be 6X higher [National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence. [1186 young people between the ages of 10-17 years]
- Bullies, too, are more likely to be at risk – for school drop-out, truancy, drug use, juvenile justice encounters, and undiagnosed learning and attention and behavioral health problems.
- The worst outcome is possible too. The Secret Service examined 41 school shooters involved in 37 attacks. Among their key findings were that many had experienced long-standing bullying and harassment. 2/3 of the attackers had felt persecuted, threatened, attacked or injured before the incident. And before most attacks, other people knew the student was considering something violent.

It is important to recognize that more youth are affected by bullying than only those who recognize themselves as V/B. But observers are also an incredibly important consideration – 77% of 3rd-6th graders have been involved in what has been described as the “bullying circle”--those who are neither the bully nor the victim, but may not be entirely passive either. Such children may enjoy or egg on the bully, try to defend, comfort the victim, or to intervene or interrupt the process.

The bullying expert Olweus has pointed out that the bullying circle is an opportunity for prevention and teaching. Children can be taught to intervene on behalf of their community, for each other, and taught that they have responsibility for each other.

We all have to learn the difference between reporting and tattling.

- Of course, much childhood bullying is carried out by typically developing young children who are learning to socially navigate, and bullying behavior among elementary school children is common enough to be considered a normal developmental phenomenon to be anticipated, not unlike temper tantrums or sibling rivalry.

- It is something people should learn or be taught to grow out of. We interfere with temper tantrums and other negative behaviors of childhood.

Bullying Prevention

- Community response
- Character building
- Standing up for those around you
- Responsibility to community
- Reporting vs. Tattling
- Adults/Whole Community (individuals, families, schools, community centers, places of worship, camp)