

# School-Based Approaches to Identifying, Intervening, and Preventing Bullying Behaviors

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

# *Empowerment* **INITIATIVE**

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# School-Based Approaches: Using Partnerships to Reduce Bullying

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- Empowerment Initiative (<http://empowerment.unl.edu>).
- Working with schools and school districts since 1999.
- Partnership between individual schools, districts, and the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.
- Using data to make decisions about effective bullying prevention and intervention strategies.
- Participatory Action Research Model and IRB approval.
- Researchers work together with school personnel, students, mental health professionals, and parents.



# The Empowerment Initiative

(<http://empowerment.unl.edu>; @Empowerment\_UNL)

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- The Empowerment Initiative supports **translational research** designed to foster positive, accepting communities free from bullying and other negative behaviors.
- Studies and outreach focus on identifying and addressing the complex personal, social and cultural factors underlying such behaviors, thereby advancing practical solutions to promote healthy relationships within families, schools and communities.



# Translational Research

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“The final test of the value of science is its **applicability.**”

(President Woodward of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1907)





# Therapeutic Interventions

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- Understand the connection between bullying and mental health issues.
- Bullying prevention can be the linchpin for school mental health advocacy.
- Develop a strong community referral system.
- Assess and treat depression and anxiety—linked to bullying/victimization.

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*“In the school setting, the nurse can have a dramatic impact on planning and coordinating care via education of faculty, students, and parents regarding the foundations of bullying.”*

(Cooper et al., 2012, p. 280)



# How Can School Nurses Help?

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- Be supportive adults.
- Be aware of warning signs and assess for them.
- Implement informal screening methods.
- Collect data.
- Help students problem-solve.
- Collaborate with parents, school staff, and community members to facilitate prevention and intervention efforts.
- School-community connections.





# Respond to Reports of Bullying

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- Nurses can be the trusted adult to whom students can report bullying.
- Nurses should know as many students in the school.
  - School nurse's offices are commonly designated as one of the safest places in schools (Vessey, 2011).
  - Students may be more apt to confide in a school nurse than teachers or other school staff.

# Assess for Warning Signs

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- Frequent visits to nurses offices (Vernberg et al., 2011).
- This is true for victims and perpetrators.
- Students in grades 3-5 who had high levels of victimization and aggression went to the nurse's office with somatic complaints, illnesses, or injuries more often than youth with lower levels (Vernberg et al., 2011).
- Look for specific patterns to nurse office visits, such as when a child comes to the nurse's office regularly during recess, lunch, etc.



## Assess for Warning Signs (cont.)

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- Injuries that may be the result of aggressive encounters with peers.
- Frequent absences from school.
  - Students may want to stay home to avoid being victimized.
- Lack of friendships/isolation.
- Not wanting to go back to class or out to recess.
- Somatic complaints (e.g., stomach aches, headaches, trouble sleeping, loss of appetite).



# Bullying Screening and Assessment

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- Ask students about their school day and conduct informal bullying assessments.
  - Open the door to these discussions, encourage youth to speak up, and follow-up consistently.
- Know that a student may not voluntarily offer information when not asked directly.
  - For example, inquire about why an injury happened, how recess is going, what usually goes on during the time they went to the nurses office.



# Bullying Screening and Assessment

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- Questions to ask in order to “unpack the day”
  - A good place to start is examining peer and adult relationships in general:
    - Who do you eat lunch with?
    - Favorite and least favorite classes?
    - Who do you hang out with?
    - Is there an adult at school you can talk to?



# Bullying Screening and Assessment

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- Questions to ask about bullying:
  - Have you been bullied this year?
  - How often is this happening?
  - Did you know the person who bullied you?
  - Have they bullied you before?
  - How were you bullied?
  - Where were you bullied?
  - Could you defend yourself? What did you do?
  - How did the bullying affect you?
  - How can I help?



# Bullying Screening and Assessment

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- Help identify and screen for internalizing and psychosomatic symptoms
  - Look for psychosomatic symptoms such as poor appetite, poor sleep patterns, chronic pain, and/or panic symptoms
  - Look for symptoms of anger, depression, anxiety, and/or withdrawal
  - Make referrals to the school psychologist, social worker, counselor when necessary



# Collect Data

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- Maintain records and/or logs of office visits
  - Record specifics when bullying incidents are reported (who, what, where, etc.)
  - Track number of absences and reasons for absences/missed classes
  - Examine data for patterns
  - Make recommendations and intervention decisions that are based on the data you collect
    - For example, if data indicate one student frequents the nurses office during recess, increased supervision during recess, structured play activities, and increased positive peer support may be appropriate intervention components





# Facilitate Problem-Solving

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- Help students problem-solve and offer strategies
  - Encourage the student to generate his/her own ideas
  - Worksheet activities from bullying intervention programs (e.g., *Bully Busters*) may stimulate discussion and provide structure when problem-solving
- Specific strategies
  - Teach respectful conflict resolution
  - Do not arrange face-to-face meetings with the bully and victim
  - Help the student identify supportive adults and peers who he/she can talk to
  - Encourage reporting



## Advocacy and Referrals

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- School nurses are in an ideal position to coordinate with families, other school staff, and mental health professionals in the community.
- Be an anti-bullying advocate.
  - Join committees or task forces that are devoted to schoolwide, *evidence-based* anti-bullying efforts
- Encourage parents to communicate openly with school personnel and their children about bullying.
  - Provide behavior management resources to parents when possible; referrals to school mental health staff
- Refer to community mental health providers who are experts in bullying intervention.



## LPS District Policy

Policy 5482 – Lincoln Public Schools provides physically safe and emotionally secure environments for all students and staff. Positive behaviors (non-violence, cooperation, teamwork, understanding and acceptance of others) are encouraged in the educational program and are required of all staff. Inappropriate behaviors, including but not limited to bullying, intimidation and harassment, must be avoided by all students and all staff. Strategies and practices are implemented to reinforce positive behaviors and to discourage and protect others from inappropriate behaviors.

### RESOURCES:

- **LPS Social Workers**
  - School Social Worker - Kris Lewis (klweis@lps.org)
  - School Counselors - Rachael Kluck Spann, Renee McClure, Jodie Green
- **Nonfiction books**
  - "Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High School -- How Parents and Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence"  
By Barbara Coloroso
  - "Bullyproof Your Child for Life: Protect Your Child from Teasing, Taunting, and Bullying for Good"  
By Joel Haber, Jenna Glatzer
  - "Girl Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying"  
By Cheryl Dellasega, Charisse Nixon, Elina D. Nudelman
- **Websites**
  - [www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)
  - [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
  - [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)

Schoo Middle School

# Bullying Prevention Plan



As a student of Schoo Middle School  
I pledge not to bully or be a hurtful  
bystander. I pledge to stand up for kids  
who are being bullied by telling an adult.

## Personalized

Students who need a lot of support will receive personalized interventions

- Used for repeated incidents
- Student Assistance Process (SAT)
- School Community Intervention Program (SCIP)
- Contact School Resource Officer
- Student Services Meeting - LPSDO
- Target Bullying Intervention Program

## Focused

Students who have repeated problems will receive focused interventions

- Planner Activities
- Bibliotherapy
- Videotapes
- Non-Aggression Agreement
- Small Groups:
  - Friendship Groups
  - Anger-Management Groups
- Parent Contacts
- Problem-Solve with Counselor or Administrator

## Comprehensive

All students will receive comprehensive prevention services

### Counseling Curriculum - Education

- Classroom presentations by counselor
- Creating a safe & caring school climate
  - positive behavior supports (PBS)
- SOAR activities•SOAR activities
- Second Step Curriculum
  - Counselors, Health Classes, LACA

### Counseling Action Plan

Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and inter-personal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

### Reporting

- Where & how to safely share

### Interventions for Adults & Staff

- Staff presentation at faculty meeting
- Parent presentations
- Counselor PLC work

### Communication

- School climate survey
- Parent calls & letters home

## Schoo Middle School - Mission Statement

To *educate, enrich, serve* and *support* the Schoo Middle School Community in Order to Prepare Students for the Future.



# CBT for Depression and Anxiety in Bullies, Victims, and Bully-Victims\*

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- ACTION: A Workbook for Overcoming Depression (Stark et al., 1996)
- Keeping Your Cool: The Anger Management Workbook (Nelson & Finch, 1996)
- Coping Cat (Kendall, Kane, Howard, & Siqueland, 1990)
- Cognitive-Behavioral Group Treatment for Adolescents with Social Anxiety (Albano, Marten, Holt, Heimberg, & Barlow, 1995)
- Coping Power (Lochman, Wells, & Lenhart, 2008)
- Referrals to counselors/psychologists/psychiatrists.

\*[www.workbookpublishing.com](http://www.workbookpublishing.com)



# Target Bullying Intervention Program (T-BIP; Swearer, 2005)

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- Alternative to in-school suspension for bully perpetrators.
- Has been implemented in elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Parents choose the consequence for bullying behavior for their child: (1) in-school suspension or (2) the T-BIP.
- Parental consent and student assent obtained. Both have to agree to participate.
- Three hour intervention: assessment; one-to-one cognitive-behavioral session with a counselor, school psychologist or school social worker; feedback session.



# Best Practices in Bullying Prevention

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- Involvement in bullying (bully, bully-victim, victim, witness) is a mental health problem and we must develop effective mental health promotion efforts in schools
- Healthy adult role modeling
  - **Everyone** must make a commitment to be positive role models and citizens.
  - Do you practice positive conflict resolution in your own life?
  - Do you treat everyone with dignity and respect?
- Positive peer and sibling relationships
- Positive home-school collaboration
  - Healthy relationships between parents and teachers
  - Positive relationships between teachers, students and administrators



# Best Practices in Bullying Intervention

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2008 meta-analysis by Ttofi, Farrington, & Baldry found that reductions in bullying were associated with:

- Parent training
- Increased adult supervision
- Non-punitive disciplinary methods
- Home-school communication
- Effective classroom rules
- Effective classroom management
- Use of training videos (i.e., “Stories of Us;” “Bully Dance”)





# Bullying Prevention and Intervention Programs\*

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- Research-based bullying prevention and intervention programs include:
  - *Steps to Respect (now incorporated in Second Step)*
  - *Second Step*
  - *Bully Busters*
  - *Bully-Proofing Your School*
  - *The Peaceful Schools Project*
  - *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*

\*Empirical support defined by data published in peer-reviewed journal articles or chapters and research conducted in U.S. schools



# Video Resource

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## “Bully Dance” video

Bullfrog Films

Box 149

Oley, PA 19547

(610) 779-8226

Web: [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com)



## Video Resource: Stories of Us-- Bullying

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- [www.storiesofus.com](http://www.storiesofus.com)
- *Stories of Us* is a unique series of education resources for primary and secondary students. Students collaborate in brainstorming the subjects, develop the scripts and perform all key roles. Every word of dialogue is their own, and every detail approved by the students. The *Stories of Us* videos are compelling as they draw upon the collective experience of the students, holding a mirror to their reality with such authenticity that some students watching them are convinced they are real.

# Video and training resource

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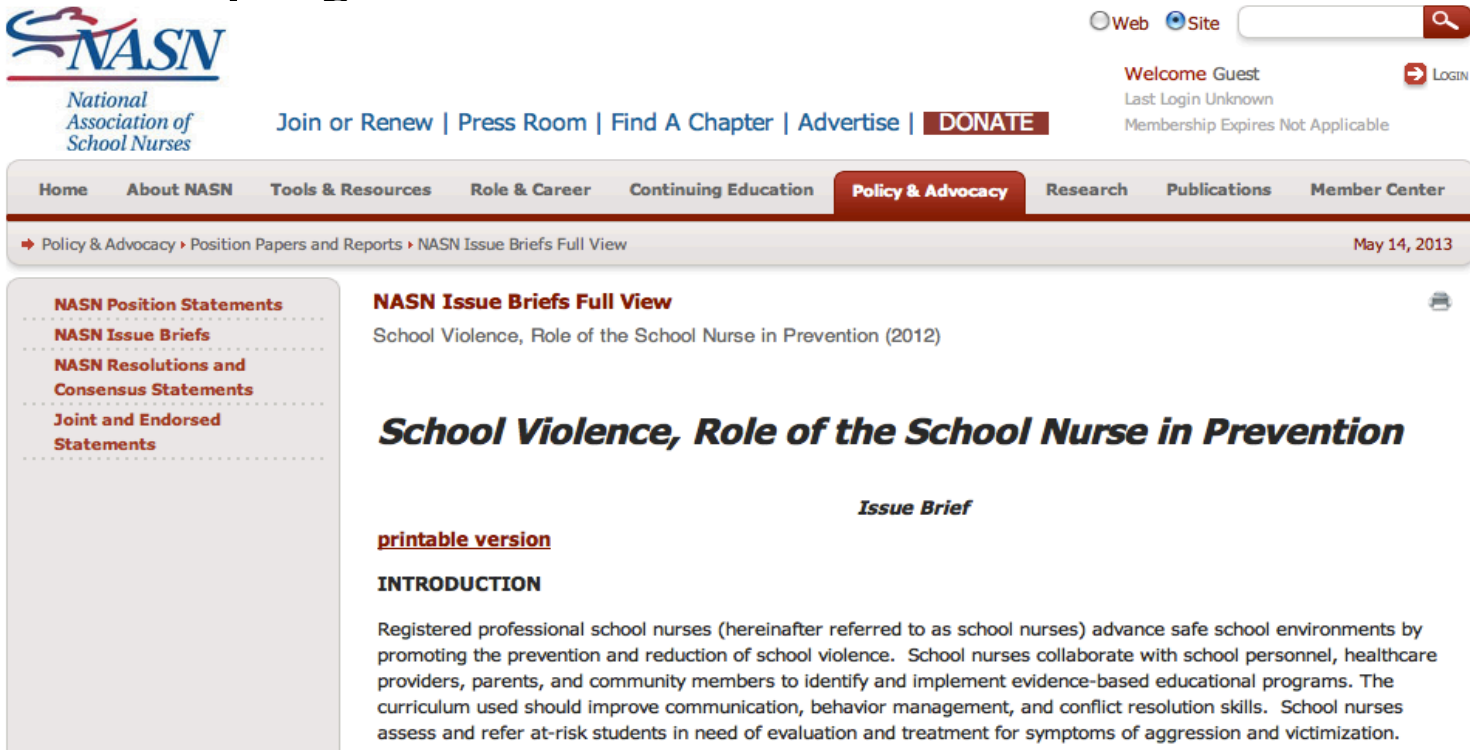
- “Let’s Get Real” video and curriculum guide
- [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)
- Running Time: 35 minutes  
Format: VHS and DVD - Special features include director's interview, clips from other RFAP films, chapter-by-chapter version of the film corresponding to the curriculum guide.

A PROGRAM OF **GROUNDSPARK**



# Resources

- *American Psychologist* (May-June 2015) Special Issue: School Bullying and Victimization).



**NASN**  
National  
Association of  
School Nurses

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**NASN Issue Briefs Full View**

School Violence, Role of the School Nurse in Prevention (2012)

***School Violence, Role of the School Nurse in Prevention***

*Issue Brief*

[printable version](#)

**INTRODUCTION**

Registered professional school nurses (hereinafter referred to as school nurses) advance safe school environments by promoting the prevention and reduction of school violence. School nurses collaborate with school personnel, healthcare providers, parents, and community members to identify and implement evidence-based educational programs. The curriculum used should improve communication, behavior management, and conflict resolution skills. School nurses assess and refer at-risk students in need of evaluation and treatment for symptoms of aggression and victimization.

- [www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)



# Translational Research: H.E.A.R. Presentation

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- Anti-bullying presentation created for the National Guard.
- Rick Weissbourd, Stephanie Jones, & Susan Swearer (2013)
- Published by Career Training Concepts, Inc.
- Can we reduce bullying in high schools by using National Guard recruiters to deliver the H.E.A.R. message?



# If WE don't help stop bullying, who will?

[www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)

**If you don't help stop bullying, who will?**

Parents, teachers, school administrators, health care professionals, law enforcement officers—we all have a responsibility to prevent bullying. To find out how you can help stop it, Log on to [www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov](http://www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov)

**STOP BULLYING NOW**

A program of the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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