

# Bullying



## ***Introduction***

In recent years, bullying has become a topic of greater public concern. Research has shown the damaging long-term effects that bullying behavior can have on its victims. Approximately thirty percent of American school children are directly affected by bullying within a school semester. Bullying is not only a problem in schools, but is also found in before and after school activities, including 4-H. This lesson will provide some background information for you on bullying and provide some tips that you can take to prevent bullying behavior from occurring in your 4-H activities. Thus, we can meet one of the eight Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development: creating a safe environment for our members.

# Objective #1

Define and give  
characteristics of bullying.



# Bullying Definition

Aggressive behavior that

- is intentional
- involves an imbalance of power or strength
- is typically repeated over time



Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. This aggressive behavior is typically repeated over time.

# Bullying Definition

“Any written or verbal expression, or physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof, that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students.”

- Colorado state law definition



Several states define bullying in their state laws. For example, Colorado defines bullying as: “Any written or verbal expression, or physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof, that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students.”

# Types of Bullying

- Physical
  - Hitting, punching, and kicking
- Verbal
  - Most common form of bullying
  - Teasing, name calling, and being the subject of rumors
- Nonverbal or emotional
  - Intimidation using gestures or social exclusion
- Cyberbullying
  - Sending insulting messages by phone or computer e-mail



Bullying is commonly thought of as being physical in nature, and that is one type (including hitting, punching, and/or kicking). However, the most common form of bullying is verbal. Verbal bullying involves teasing, name calling, and being the subject of rumors.

Other forms of bullying include nonverbal or emotional: intimidation using gestures or social exclusion; and cyberbullying: sending insulting messages by phone or computer e-mail.

# Characteristics of Bullying

- Linked to higher levels of crime, suicide, and school shootings.
- Many involved in school shootings endured severe, long-term forms of bullying.
- 30% of students in grades 6-10 are involved in bullying behaviors, as bullies and/or victims. 19% participated in bullying.



Bullying is linked to higher levels of crime, suicide, and school shootings. Many of those involved in school shootings have experienced severe, long-term forms of bullying and harassment.

Thirty percent of students in grades six through ten are involved in bullying behaviors, as bullies and/or victims. Nineteen percent participated in bullying.

## Characteristics of Bullying

- 60% of boys characterized as bullies in grades 6-9 were convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24.
- Children who bully are more likely to
  - get into fights and vandalize property
  - drink alcohol and smoke
  - be truant or drop out of school
  - carry a weapon



Sixty percent of boys characterized as bullies in grades six through nine were convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24.

Children who bully are more likely than their peers to get into fights, vandalize property, drink alcohol, smoke, be truant or drop out of school, and carry a weapon.

## Characteristics of Bullying

- Bullying among girls is typically more subtle and covert than boys.
  - Examples include exclusion, ostracizing, teasing, rumor-spreading, and destroying property.
- Girls' personal insecurities attributed to stereotypes and popularity levels may encourage them to bully other girls who have even greater insecurities.



Bullying among girls is typically more subtle and covert than boys. Examples among girls often involve exclusion, ostracizing, teasing, rumor-spreading, and destroying property. Female bullies may be fueled by their own insecurities (e.g., stereotypes, popularity) to take advantage of other girls' even greater insecurities.

## Objective #2

Identify warning signals of  
bullying behavior.



Now that we know what bullying is, let's take a look at some warning signs and characteristics of bullying behavior.

## Warning Signs That a Child Is Being Bullied

### At school

- Is quiet and shy
- Appears anxious and unhappy
- Has few if any friends
- Is excluded from peer group
- Is among last chosen for team games
- Stays close to teacher during recess
- Has difficulty speaking up in class
- Shows a deterioration of school work



*Warning signs that a child is being bullied include:*

*At school*

*Is quiet and shy*

*Appears anxious and unhappy*

*Has few if any friends*

*Is excluded from peer group*

*Is among last chosen for team games*

*Stays close to teacher during recess*

*Has difficulty speaking up in class*

*Shows a deterioration of school work*

# Warning Signs That a Child Is Being Bullied

## At home

- Comes home with torn clothing
- Has unexplained cuts, bruises, or scratches
- Is afraid to go to school or take part in organized activities
- Takes illogical routes to get to school
- Loses interest in school work
- Appears sad, depressed, or anxious
- Complains of frequent physical ailments
- Has trouble sleeping
- Loses appetite
- Does not bring classmates home to play



## *At home*

*Comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing or other belongings*

*Has unexplained cuts, bruises, or scratches*

*Seems afraid to go to school or take part in organized activities*

*Takes illogical routes to get to school*

*Loses interest in school work*

*Appears sad, depressed, or anxious*

*Complains of frequent physical ailments*

*Has trouble sleeping*

*Loses appetite*

*Does not bring classmates home to play*

## Warning Signs of Bullying Others

- Teases and intimidates other children
- Is hot-tempered
- Has difficulty following rules
- Is defiant and aggressive toward adults
- Has been involved in other antisocial activities such as vandalism



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## Warning Signs of Being a Bully/Victim

A child who experiences bullying by peers and also bullies others (a bully/victim)

- Is anxious or insecure
- Has a negative view of self
- Is lonely or isolated from peers
- May be hot-tempered or hyperactive
- May be immature and actively disliked by peers and adults
- May try to bully younger or weaker children



Warning signs of being a bully/victim

(A child who experiences bullying by peers and also bullies others)

Is anxious or insecure

Has negative view of themselves

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May be hot-tempered or hyperactive

May be immature and actively disliked by peers and adults

May try to bully younger or weaker children

## Objective #3

Recognize myths commonly associated with bullying.



A number of myths are associated with bullying. Now that we know more about bullying characteristics and warning signs, let's debunk some of those myths.

## Myth 1: Bullying is the same thing as conflict.

### Truth:

- Bullying only occurs where there is a power imbalance, where one person has a hard time defending himself or herself.
- Conflict involves antagonism among two or more people.



Several myths or misconceptions are associated with bullying behaviors. It is important for us to help others overcome those myths.

Myth 1: Bullying is the same thing as conflict.

Truth:

Bullying only occurs where there is a power imbalance, where one person has a hard time defending himself or herself.

Conflict involves antagonism among two or more people.

## Myth 2: Most bullying is physical.

### Truth:

- Verbal bullying is most common form of bullying (behaviors such as name-calling, or rumor-spreading).
- Social isolation is another common form of bullying (e.g., ignoring or leaving a child out on purpose).



Myth 2: Most bullying is physical (hitting, shoving, kicking).

Truth:

The most common form of bullying is verbal (behaviors such as name-calling, or rumor-spreading). Another common form of bullying is social isolation (e.g., ignoring or leaving a child out on purpose).

## Myth 3: Bullying isn't serious. It's just "kids being kids."

### Truth:

- Bullying victims are affected mentally, academically, and physically.
- They are characterized by lower self-esteem, depression, and anxiety; avoid attending school; and report higher physical problems.
- Those who bully are characterized by antisocial, violent, and other troubling behaviors.



Myth 3: Bullying isn't serious. It's just "kids being kids".

### Truth:

Bullying victims are affected mentally, academically, and physically. These victims are characterized by lower self-esteem, depression, and anxiety; avoid attending school; and report higher physical problems.

Those who bully are characterized by antisocial, violent, and other troubling behaviors.

## Myth 4: Bullying doesn't happen at my child's school.

### Truth:

- Bullying can happen anywhere young people gather.
- Research shows that 15-25% of students are bullied with some frequency.
- Another 15-20% admit to bullying others.



Myth 4: Bullying doesn't happen at my child's school.

Truth:

Bullying can happen anywhere young people gather. Research shows that 15-25% of students are bullied with some frequency. Another 15-20% admit to bullying others.

## Myth 5: Bullying is mostly a problem in urban schools.

### **Truth:**

- Bullying occurs in rural, suburban, and urban schools.
- Bullying occurs among children of all demographic backgrounds.



Myth 5: Bullying is mostly a problem in urban schools.

Truth:

Bullying occurs in rural, suburban, and urban schools and among children of all demographic backgrounds.

## Myth 6: Bullying is more likely to happen on the bus than at school.

### Truth:

- Bullying does occur on the bus, but is more likely to occur on school grounds.
- Common locations include the playground, classroom, cafeteria, bathroom, and hallway.



Myth 6: Bullying is more likely to happen on the bus than at school.

### Truth:

Bullying does occur on the bus, but is more likely to occur on the school grounds. Common locations include the playground, classroom, cafeteria, bathroom, and hallway.

## Myth 7: Children and youth who are bullied will almost always tell an adult.

### Truth:

- Only 25-50% of those who are bullied talk to an adult about the bullying.
- Victims may fear
  - retaliation by the bullies
  - that adults won't take their concerns seriously
  - that adults will deal inappropriately with the situation



Myth 7: Children and youth who are bullied will almost always tell an adult.

### Truth:

Only 25-50% of those who are bullied talk to an adult about the bullying. Victims may fear retaliation by the bullies; fear that adults won't take their concerns seriously; or that adults will deal inappropriately with the situation.

## Myth 8: Children and youth who bully are mostly loners with few social skills.

### **Truth:**

- Children who bully typically do not lack friends and may have larger friend networks than others.
- Further, they usually exhibit more leadership skills than victims or those not involved in bullying.



Myth 8: Children and youth who bully are mostly loners with few social skills.

### Truth:

Children who bully typically do not lack friends and may have larger friend networks than others. Further, they usually exhibit more leadership skills than victims or those not involved in bullying.

## Myth 9: Bullied kids need to learn how to deal with bullying on their own.

### **Truth:**

- Many children do not have the self-confidence or skills to stop bullying on their own and should not be expected to do so.
- Adults have critical roles to play in helping to stop the bullying.



Myth 9: Bullied kids need to learn how to deal with bullying on their own.

### Truth:

Many children do not have the self-confidence or skills to stop bullying on their own and should not be expected to do so. Adults have critical roles to play in helping to stop the bullying.

Myth 10: Most children and youth who observe bullying don't want to get involved.

**Truth:**

- Most children and youth do not believe that bullying is cool.
- Children and youth want to do something to help bullying victims.



Myth 10: Most children and youth who observe bullying don't want to get involved.

Truth:

Most children and youth do not believe that bullying is cool and want to do something to help bullying victims.

## Objective #4

Describe methods and programs designed to overcome and prevent bullying behavior.



So what can volunteers and youth serving professionals do to help overcome and prevent bullying behaviors?

How can we help ensure that the 4-H programs we offer are free of bullying behavior and thus keep our youth safe?

## Strategies to Help a Child Being Bullied

- Support the child privately with kind words and gestures.
- Spend time with the child. Listen to the facts and feelings the child is willing to share.
- Praise the child for talking about the bullying incidents. Emphasize you will keep the conversation in confidence.



A number of methods and programs are available to adults to help overcome and prevent bullying behavior. The information presented here describes some of these options in more detail.

Strategies to help a child you suspect is being bullied:

Support the child through supportive words and gestures in private.

Spend time with the child. Listen to the facts and feelings that the child is willing to share.

Praise the child for displaying the courage to talk about the bullying incidents. Emphasize that you will keep the conversation in confidence.

## Strategies to Help a Child Being Bullied

- Talk with the child. Be sure the child knows you are concerned and want to help.
  - Ask questions such as...
    - “Are there kids at school who are picking on you or teasing you in a mean way?”
    - “Do you have any special friends at school who you like to hang out with? Who are they?”
  - Ask what the child needs to feel safe.



Talk with the child. Be sure that the child knows you are concerned and want to help.

Ask direct questions such as, “Are there any kids at school who are picking on you or teasing you in a mean way?”

Ask subtle questions such as, “Do you have any special friends at school who you like to hang out with? Who are they?”

Ask what the child needs to feel safe.

## Strategies to Help a Child Being Bullied

- Share steps you plan to take and urge the child to report further incidents.
- Talk with staff at the child's school to see if they have noticed the child being bullied.
- Talk with the child's parents to see if they know about the incident and to provide them with needed support.



Share the next steps you plan to take and urge the child to report any further incidents.

Talk with staff at the child's school.

Ask the child's teacher questions such as, "Have you noticed that the child is bullied by other students?"

Ask other teachers or adults in the school whether they have observed students bullying the child.

Talk with the child's parents to see if they know about the incident and to provide them with needed support.

## Out-of-School Program Challenges

- Bullying thrives when there is not enough supervision.
- Infrequent interaction between adults and youth increases difficulty of identifying bullying behavior.
- Bullying during the school day may carry over into out-of-school activities.



Challenges in out-of-school programs related to bullying

Bullying thrives when there is not enough supervision.

Infrequent interaction between adults and youth increases difficulty of identifying bullying behavior.

Bullying that occurs during the school day may carry over into out-of-school activities.

## Out-of-School Program Opportunities

- Include program activities to build self-control, confidence, and resiliency.
- Utilize older youth to serve as mentors and/or protectors for younger children.
- Encourage bullying victims to pursue their own interests and discover their talents.
- Challenge those who exhibit bullying behavior to use their social skills in constructive and appropriate ways.



Opportunities for out-of-school programs related to bullying

Include activities that build self-control, confidence, and resiliency in programming.

Older youth can act as mentors and/or protectors for younger children.

Those bullied at school can take part in activities that allow them to pursue their own interests and discover their talents which increases their self-esteem.

Those who exhibit bullying behavior can be challenged to use their social skills in constructive and appropriate ways.

## Tips for Adults to Prevent Bullying

- Raise community awareness of bullying.
- Support school and community bullying prevention program.
- Encourage youth to speak out against bullying.
  - Teach youth they have roles to play in bullying prevention.
  - Encourage interested youth to take leadership roles in preventing bullying behavior in their schools and communities.



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Encourage interested youth to take leadership roles in preventing bullying behavior in their schools and communities.

## Tips for Adults to Prevent Bullying

- Create a safe environment, free from hostility and intimidation.
  - Learn characteristics and warning signs related to bullying.
  - Establish clear rules about bullying behavior.
  - Closely supervise activities and stop bullying behavior whenever it occurs.
  - Provide support to parents as they seek to protect their children from bullying.



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Learn characteristics and warning signs related to bullying.

Establish clear rules about bullying behavior.

Closely supervise activities and stop bullying behavior whenever it occurs.

Provide support to parents as they seek to protect their children from bullying.

## Tips for Adults to Prevent Bullying

- Work with those who exhibit bullying behavior
  - Talk with the child in private.
  - State that bullying is not acceptable: "It's not O.K. to treat others this way."
  - Encourage the bully to put him/herself in the victim's shoes and think about how the victim feels after being treated poorly.
  - Help identify alternatives to bullying such as participation in group activities or project work.
  - Outline consequences if the aggression or bullying continues, such as exclusion from an upcoming "fun" event.
  - Reward appropriate behavior.



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- Help identify alternatives to bullying such as participation in group activities or project work.
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- Reward appropriate behavior.

## State Legislature Actions That Address Bullying

- Define bullying in state laws.
- Reflect the seriousness of bullying in legislative findings.
- Develop policies to prohibit bullying.
- Implement bullying prevention programs.
- Require employee training related to bullying.
- Require individuals to report school bullying incidents to authorities.



Actions that State Legislative bodies have taken to address bullying.

Define bullying in state laws.

Reflect the seriousness of bullying in legislative findings.

Develop policies to prohibit bullying.

Implement bullying prevention programs.

Require employee training related to bullying.

Require individuals to report school bullying incidents to authorities.

## Conclusion and Quiz



### **Summary of Bullying**

*We've looked at definitions and characteristics of bullying. We've identified warning signs of bullying behavior and debunked some of the myths associated with bullying. Finally, we reviewed some methods and programs that can help us overcome and prevent bullying behavior. By taking some of these steps, we will be better able to offer our 4-H members a safe environment in which to participate, thus meeting another of the eight Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development.*

*Here's a short quiz to help us recap this lesson.*

*Also provided for your use is a "Bullying" fact sheet which you may use for future reference.*

## Sources

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## Sources

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- Willson-Simmons, R. (2005). Knowing the facts: the female bully. *Health in Action* 3(4).



Information included in this lesson plan was adapted from a series of “Stop Bullying Now!” facts sheets from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. A resource kit related to bullying is available at: [www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov).

## Sources

- Linda Underwood, South Vermillion Middle School Counselor, is available for presentations on the “Bullying” topic to 4-H groups across the State of Indiana.
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Linda Underwood has offered to give presentations to 4-H groups around the State of Indiana. You may e-mail Linda at [lunderwood@scvs.k12.in.us](mailto:lunderwood@scvs.k12.in.us) to schedule a presentation for your group. She has extensive experience and training with the Bullying topic and is excited about the opportunity to share it with other adults who work with youth.