Bullying Prevention: Bullying of Students with Disabilities

Presented by PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center

Bullying Prevention: Bullying of Students with Disabilities

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PACER Center

PACER and Bullying Prevention

PACER CENTER
Founded in 1977, PACER Center was created by parents of children and youth with disabilities to help other parents and families facing similar challenges. Today, PACER Center expands opportunities and enhances the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families. PACER is staffed primarily by parents of children with disabilities.

PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center
Founded in 2006, PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center, actively leads social change, so that bullying is no longer considered an accepted childhood rite of passage. PACER provides innovative resources for students, parents, educators, and others, and recognizes bullying as a serious community issue that impacts education, physical and emotional health, as well as the safety and well-being of students.

On-Line Resources

PACER.org/Bullying PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org

Parents and Professionals Middle and High School Elementary School

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Bullying and Students with Disabilities: The Numbers

- Bullying of children with disabilities is significant, although few studies exist to document it.
- Only 10 studies have been conducted in the United States on bullying and disabilities. All studies found that children with disabilities were two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers.
- Researchers discovered that students with disabilities were more worried about school safety and being injured or harassed by other peers compared to students without a disability.
- When reporting bullying, youth in special education were told not to tattle almost twice as often as youth not in special education.

Recognizing Bullying of Students with Disabilities

There is no “typical profile” of someone who might be subjected to bullying.

There are some common characteristics among children who are targets of this behavior, such as:

- Struggle with the ability to defend themselves
- Provide an emotional reaction to being bullied
- Have few or no close friends
- Avoid being noticed. It is easier to target someone who may seem unassertive and easily dominated.
- Have less-developed social skills
- Have difficulty communicating and reading social cues, especially nonverbal cues
Recognizing Bullying of Students with Disabilities

Three Areas of Concern (Impact of Bullying):

1. **Education** – School avoidance, loss of academic achievement and increase in drop out rates

2. **Health** – Dual diagnoses. Physical and emotional including stomachaches, headaches, sleeping issues, depression, fear or anxiety

3. **Safety** – Harm to self and others, including self-isolation, increased aggression, alienation, and retaliation.

Bullying vs. Disability Harassment

When does bullying reach the threshold of disability harassment and meet the criteria for federal protection?

Bullying may be considered harassment when the conduct is:

- sufficiently serious that it interferes with (or limits) a student’s ability to participate in (or benefit from) the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school
- and is based on a student’s disability.

Promising Practices

- Summits
- Dear Colleague Letters
- Legislation
- Increasing Professional Capacity
- Incorporating Student Involvement
- Promoting Self-Advocacy
- Power of Bystanders
- Positive Peer Interactions/ Opportunities for Social Learning
- Full Access to Education
Promising Practices - Summits

National Bullying Summit - 2011
White House Conference on Bullying Prevention
- Representatives from PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center spoke about disability harassment and bullying
- Launched StopBullying.gov
  - Provides information on what bullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.

Auburn University’s 5th Annual Anti-Bullying Summit

Promising Practices - Dear Colleague Letters

October 26, 2010
- Issued by the Department of Education’s (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
- Explains how student misconduct that falls under an anti-bullying policy also may trigger responsibilities under one or more of the anti-discrimination statutes enforced by OCR.
- Reminds schools that failure to recognize discriminatory harassment when addressing student misconduct may lead to inadequate or inappropriate responses that fail to remedy violations of students’ civil rights.
- Discusses racial and national origin harassment, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, and disability harassment and illustrates how a school should respond in each case.

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.pdf

August 20, 2013
- Issued by the Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education
- States: “bullying of a student with a disability that results in the student not receiving meaningful education benefit constitutes a denial of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under the IDEA that must be remedied.”

Promising Practices - Dear Colleague Letters

October 21, 2014
Issued by the Department of Education’s (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and offers information on:

• Overview of Federal Protections for Students with Disabilities in Schools
• Schools’ Obligations to Address Disability-Based Harassment
• Bullying and the Denial of a Free Appropriate Public Education
• How OCR Analyzes Complaints Involving Bullying of Students with Disabilities
• Hypothetical Examples of Complaint Cases

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-bullying-201410.pdf

Promising Practices - Legislation

Federal laws that apply if the harassment denies a student with a disability an equal opportunity to education:

• Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (often referred to as ‘Section 504’)
• Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II)

Students with 504 plans AND IEP’s qualify for these protections.

State laws - each state addresses bullying in their state education codes differently.

• Eleven states have laws only (AZ, CO, TX, KS, MO, AR, IL, MS, PA, NC, HI)
• The remaining states have laws and model policies (that provide guidance to districts and schools)

To find out more about your state’s anti-bullying laws and policies and which of the key components they contain:
Promising Practices—Increasing Professional Capacity

Learn what bullying is and what it isn’t; teach students

- Introduction to Bullying Prevention Toolkit contains daily learning opportunities and several options of engaging activities to get all students talking about bullying. (http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/intro-to-bullying-prevention.asp)
- Lesson plan is designed to help adults teach elementary school children about bullying prevention. (http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/ele-lesson-plan.asp)
- A complete classroom tool kit for discussing bullying prevention with elementary students. (http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/ele-starting-the-discussion.asp)
- Promote bullying awareness with MS and HS students in your classroom by using the activities and resources in this day-by-day toolkit. (http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/mh-starting-the-discussion.asp)
Promising Practices - Increasing Professional Capacity

Establish a safe school climate
- Project Connect joins students, schools, and communities to make a powerful statement about uniting against bullying.
  http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/project-connect.asp
- Guide to planning a school event provides helpful information to create a meaningful event; including how to form your committee, setting the date and location, planning your activities, promoting your event, and holding the event.
- Unity Day - Wednesday, October 21, 2015
  Make it ORANGE and make it end! What are your true colors when it comes to bullying? If you care about safe and supportive schools and communities make your color ORANGE on Unity Day.

Promising Practices - Increasing Professional Capacity

Engage parents and youth in building a positive school climate
- Celebrate Unity Day - 2015 UNITY DAY - Wednesday, October 21
  - Guide to celebrating Unity Day. Make it a community event.
  - Coordinate a Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying – Oct = National BP month
    - Toolkit with five easy steps, which includes tips, ideas, and resources such as checklists and sample forms.
  - Hold a Petition Signing Event for "The End of Bullying Begins With Me".
    - An event planning toolkit designed for community members who wish to organize a petition signing event in their school or community.

Promising Practices - Increasing Professional Capacity

Respond when bullying happens
Consider how you will handle the child’s questions and emotions and what your own responses will be:
- Listen without judgment
- Believe to encourage trust
- Be supportive – it’s not their fault, they are not alone
- Be patient
- Provide information at their level of understanding
- Explore options for intervention strategies with their involvement as much as possible.

PACER Center handouts:
- Bullying and Harassment of Students with Disabilities - Top 10 facts parents, educators, and students need to know:
- Help Your Child Recognize the Signs of Bullying
Promising Practices - Incorporating Student Involvement

We Will Generation™

WE Will Generation curriculum - build leadership, develop advocacy skills and educate on methods to respond to bullying:

- Five lessons, approximately 30-60 minutes each
- Available online and as downloads
- Content includes student developed videos, discussion questions, handouts and activities
- Capstone activity to be delivered in classrooms
- Student presenters, ideally in groups of 5-8, to present the curriculum to younger students; for example, 8th grade students presenting to 5th grade students.
- One or more adult advisors to lead and mentor the presenters

http://www.pacer.org/bullying/wewillgen/curriculum.asp

Promising Practices - Promoting Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy means the student with a disability is responsible for telling people what they want and need in a straightforward way.

The student who has been bullied should be involved in deciding how to respond to the bullying. This involvement can provide students with:

- A sense of control over their situation
- The realization that someone is willing to listen and take action
- Reassurance that their opinions and ideas are important

The Student Action Plan is a self-advocacy resource. It includes three simple steps to explore specific, tangible actions to address the situation:

1. Define the situation
2. Think about how the situation could be different
3. Write down the steps to take action


Promising Practices - Self-Advocacy Student Action Plan

Step 1: Think about the bullying you have experienced, seen, or even done yourself.
Step 2: Then consider how that situation could be different.
Step 3: Next, think about the steps needed to make those changes happen.
## Promising Practices - Power of Bystanders

**Bystanders can help students who are bullied by:**
- Spending time with the student being bullied
- Trying to get the student away from the situation
- Listening to the student being bullied
- Telling the student that no one deserves to be bullied

### Positive Peer Interactions/ Opportunities for Social Learning

Most students don’t like to see bullying but they may not know what to do when it happens.

**Peer advocacy** — students speaking out on behalf of others — is a unique approach that empowers students to protect those targeted by bullying.

Peer advocacy works for two reasons:
1. students are more likely than adults to see what is happening with their peers and peer influence is powerful
2. a student telling someone to stop bullying has much more impact than an adult giving the same advice
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Promising Practices - Positive Peer Interactions/Opportunities for Social Learning

PEER ADVOCACY VIDEO


Promising Practices - Full Access to Education

The 504 or IEP team can identify evidence-based strategies that may be written into the IEP to help stop the bullying. It may helpful to involve the child, when appropriate, in the decision-making process. Such strategies include:

• Identifying an adult in the school who the child can report to or go to for assistance
• Determining how school staff will document and report incidents
• Allowing the child to leave class early to avoid hallway incidents
• Educating peers about school district policies on bullying behavior

• Ensuring regular reassurance from the school staff to the student that he or she has a “right to be safe” and that the bullying is not his or her fault
• Shadowing of the student who has been bullied. School staff can shadow the student in hallways, classrooms, and playgrounds.
• Holding separate in-services for school staff and classroom peers to help them understand the child’s disability


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Promising Practices - Full Access to Education

Sample letters to report bullying:

IEP:
http://www.pacer.org/bullying/pdf/Student-w-IEP-Notifying-School-About-Bullying.doc

504:
http://www.pacer.org/bullying/pdf/Student-w-504-Plan-Notifying-School-About-Bullying.doc

Want to Help?
Be A Champion Against Bullying

“When we stand together, no one stands alone!”

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