Facts About Bullying in the Schools
Compiled by Allan L. Beane, Ph.D.
www.bullyfree.com

Definition: Bullying is malicious and health-endangering behavior (physical, non-verbal, verbal, written, social/relational, and electronic) that is designed to intentionally hurt (physically or psychologically) an individual. The victim is a repeated target. It often creates an abusive, threatening, and hostile environment (Beane, 2009).

- 3.7 million youth engage in bullying each year (American Medical Association)
- 3.2 million youth are victims of moderate or serious bullying each year (American Medical Association)
- 71% of students report bullying as an on-going problem
- Occurs in every school - 20% to 30% or more of students are victims of bullying - varies from school to school and bus to bus and group to group (Disabled, Muslims, LGBT, etc.)
  - o children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers. One study shows that 60% of students with disabilities report being bullied regularly compared with 25% of all students
  - o 65% of LGBT students report verbal bullying because of their orientation
  - o 9 out of 10 LGBT students have reported being bullied within the past year
  - o more than 64% of LGBT students say they feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation
  - o students hear anti-gay comments 25 times a day
  - o teachers fail to respond to these comments 97% of the time
  - o in 2007, 86% of LGBT students said they experienced harassment at school the previous year (*Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network – GLSEN, 2007*)
  - o according to a civil rights report published by the Council on American Islamic Relations, there was a 31% increase in reported cases of discrimination in schools against students perceived to be Muslim
- 50% of adolescents have been cyber bullied and about the same number have participated in cyber bullying
- 80% of high school students have been bullied online
- More than 1 in 3 students have experienced cyber threats
- Bullying happens every 7 minutes on elementary playgrounds (Pepler, Craig, and Roberts, 1998)
- School personnel underestimate the prevalence of bullying (see less than 10% of bullying because it occurs mostly in secret)
- 160,000 students per day stay home from school because of bullying (National Association of School Psychologists)
- 7% of eighth graders stay home at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 2000)
- Bullying creates a fearful environment that impacts learning - approximately 14% of 8th through 12th graders and 22% of 4th through 8th graders surveyed reported that bullying diminished their ability to learn in school (Hoover and Oliver, 1996)
- The average duration of a bullying event is 37 seconds
- If a student is bullied up to the 5th grade, there is a 30% chance he/she will be bullied for at least 5 more years
- Some students receive an average of 30 put-downs a day
- A study by the National Threat Assessment Center found that in more than two thirds (2/3) of the 37 school shootings since 1974 the attackers felt "persecuted, bullied or threatened." In over half, revenge was the motivation. (Bowman, 2001)
- Over 90% of school shootings involved young boys who were relentlessly tormented and bullied because they were considered unmanly or not aggressive enough. (Michael Kimmel)
- 30% of youth suicides are caused by bullying (Hawker and Boulton, 2000)
- 10% of dropouts do so because of repeated bullying (Weinhold and Weinhold, 1998)
- Bullying creates societal problems:
  - o Bullies identified by age eight are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and five times more likely than non-bullies to end up with serious criminal records by age 30 (Olweus, 1991)
  - o 60% of students characterized as bullies by grade 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24 and 40% had three or more arrests (Olweus, 1991)
  - o Bullies grow up and often abuse their spouse, children and co-workers
- 40% of bullied students in elementary and 60% of bullied students in middle school report that teachers intervene in bullying incidents "once in a while" or "almost never" (Olweus, 1993; Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995)
- 25% of teachers see nothing wrong with bullying or put-downs and consequently intervene in only 4% of bullying incidents (Cohn & Canter, 2003)
- In an initial survey of students in fourteen Massachusetts schools, over 30% believed that adults did little or nothing to help with bullying (Mullin-Rindler, 2002)
- 25% of twenty-three hundred girls surveyed felt they did not know three adults they could go to for support if they were bullied (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2003)

Facts About Workplace Bullying
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- 10 Most Common Workplace Bullying Behaviors *(2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey)*:
  - Falsely accusing someone of "errors" not actually made (71%)
  - Nonverbally intimidating and showing hostility with stares and glares (68%)
  - Discounting the person's thoughts or feelings ("Oh, that's silly.") in meetings (64%)
  - Using the "silent treatment" to socially isolate (64%)
  - Making up her/his own rules on the fly that even she/he does not follow (61%)
  - Exhibiting uncontrollable mood swings in front of the group (61%)
  - Disregarding satisfactory or outstanding quality of completed work despite evidence (58%)
  - Harshly and constantly criticizing someone - holding them to a different standard than others (57%)
  - Starting, or failing to stop, destructive rumors or gossip about a person (56%)
  - Encouraging people to turn against the person being bullied (55%)
- Other examples of workplace bullying behaviors are: screaming at them in front of employees, put-downs, insults, gossiping and spreading lies about someone, excessive criticism, etc.
- Approximately 37% of U.S. workers have reported being bullied on the job
- 49% of employees say they have witnessed a bully in action at work - a staggering 86% of the workforce being affected by bullying
- Over 71.5 million Americans are affected by bullying in the workplace
- 40% of targets never tell their employers
- 43% of targets are bullied by co-workers
- 36% are bullied by supervisors
- 38% of bullies are women
- 62% of bullies are men
- 58% of targets are women
- 42% of targets are men
- A 2010 survey found 33% of employees believe their employer is "very engaged" in preventing bullying – 43% said "unengaged"
- Bullying causes stress and it is costing businesses:
  - Everyday, 1 million workers in the US are absent from work due to stress.
  - Stress is costing American businesses $300 billion a year in terms of diminished productivity, employee turnover and insurance.
  - If 37% of workers are bullied, the potential cost to American businesses would be around $111 billion annually.
- Impact on Businesses:
  - Workplace bullying leads to 18 million lost working days per year (*Hazards Magazine*, Issue 70)
  - Increased turnover (*Keashly & Jagatic, 2003*)
  - Increased cost of recruitment and training
  - Low workforce morale (*Rayner & Hoel, 1997*)
  - Poor customer relations (customers bullied or observe behavior of bully)
  - Decreased productivity and performance (*Field 2001*)
  - Decreased employee commitment (*Hoel et. al., 2003*)
  - Potential litigation (*Earnshaw and Cooper, 1996*)
  - Adverse media attention - negative impact on corporate image
- Top 12 Health Consequences (Symptoms) for Bullied Employees (Namie, G. Namie, R., The Bully at Work. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc. 2000, p. 61):
  - Severe anxiety (94%) and Sleep disruption (84%)
  - Loss of concentration (82%)
  - Feeling edgy (jittery, nervous) (80%)
  - Obsession over bully's motives and tactics (76%)
  - Stress headaches (64%)
  - Avoidance of feelings and/or places (49%)
  - Shame and embarrassment causing a change in routine (49%)
  - Racing heart rate (48%) and Flasbacks (46%)
  - New muscle or joint aches (43%)
  - Diagnosed depression (41%)

Eight Ways Corporations Must Address Bullying

by
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The rash of suicides, criminal cases, lawsuits, workplace violence, and loss of corporate productivity because of bullying have highlighted the seriousness of workplace bullying and the struggles corporations have experienced in addressing the problem. Evident in these cases is the realization that inaction and inappropriate action can have severe consequences. I have served as an expert consultant in four criminal cases and six lawsuits involving bullying and would like to share the following tips for preventing and stopping bullying in your corporation. Of course, it is impossible to tell you everything you need to know in the confines of this paper. You are encouraged to search the web for books and other information about workplace bullying. I recommend the Workplace Bullying Institute website (www.bullyinginstitute.org).

1. Admit that bullying exists in your corporation and develop a corporate anti-bullying policy.

Unfortunately, too many corporations are denying that bullying is a problem in their company. Therefore, they do not have policies that prohibit bullying. The consequences have been disastrous. The truth is a significant percentage of employees are bullied, approximately 37%. Since most of it occurs in secret, it is often underestimated by corporate leaders. Development of a policy should be a collaborative effort involving employee representatives. The policy can be a separate one that supplements existing policies that prohibit a hostile work environment, gender harassment, violation of civil rights, and racial discrimination. However, bullying is different from harassment because it is "status blind." Bullying is not always based on the target's membership in a particular protected class/group (religions, sexual orientation, race, color, etc). Anyone can become a target.

2. Provide training for personnel *in all of the appropriate areas*, not just an awareness training.

Personnel must understand the nature of the problem, the destructiveness of bullying, the impact of bullying on the corporation's effectiveness, and how bullying can lead to workplace violence. Supervisors must be trained to provide quality supervision and to respond appropriately to bullying.

3. Implement a corporate-wide anti-bullying program. An anti-bullying policy and training is not enough. The program must include all of the necessary components.

Bullying in the workplace is a complex problem that requires a comprehensive approach. There should be an assessment of the current status of bullying and an on-going effort to communicate that all forms of bullying will not be tolerated, etc.

4. Empower employees to take a stand against bullying.

The vast majority of employees aren't involved in bullying, but they know it is happening and don't assist victims by taking a safe stand against it. Unfortunately, too many employees reinforce it and encourage it. Just encouraging employees to take a stand is not enough. They need to be taught how to collectively and safely respond to bullying they see and hear. For them to do this, they must feel that the corporation is serious about preventing and stopping bullying and the corporate leaders know how to deal with it in a way that will not make it worse for the victim. That means, the corporation's culture may need to be changed. That takes time.

5. Encourage victims and bystanders to report bullying and provide an anonymous reporting procedure.

Only a small percentage of workplace bullying is reported. Victims of bullying keep quiet because they are embarrassed, they are fearful they will be blamed, they are afraid the bully will retaliate, they feel shame because they can't stand up for themselves, and they feel defective. Also, they may know the individual's behavior has been reported and nothing was done, so why bother to report it.

6. Provide adequate monitoring and supervision of high-risk areas (hallways, lounges, bathrooms, etc.).

Bullying often happens where there is a lack of supervision, not enough supervision, and poor supervision. Identify these areas and develop a supervision plan and teach supervisors how to supervise effectively.

7. Promptly and thoroughly investigate reports of bullying but make sure there is a pre-formal complaint process.

A lack of response from the corporation's leadership has been a major issue in lawsuits. All reports of bullying must be taken seriously and investigated in a timely manner. Don't make light of it or blame the victim. Don't try to be funny and don't make a decision that re-victimizes the victim. Even rumors should be promptly investigated by supervisors or other corporate leaders.

8. Hire people who treat others the way they want to be treated and don't promote bullies.

Thoroughly investigate potential employees. Just because someone "gets the job done" doesn't mean they are good employees. Their hurtful and abusive behavior may hinder the work of others and create a hostile work environment. Seek out information regarding their ability to take direction, to work as a team member, and to support and encourage other employees.