

BULLYING: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

INTRODUCTION

A growing number of people are becoming concerned about the problem of bullying in America's schools. Each day, hundreds of thousands of children face taunts, jeers, and humiliation from fellow students. While often dismissed as a "kids will be kids" problem, bullying has become a pervasive and serious form of harassment in schools.

Unfortunately, parents are not always adept at recognizing when their child is the victim of a bully. While studies have shown that 75 percent of children have been victims of bullying during their school careers, about half of the parents participating in the studies report that they didn't see bullying as a problem for their children.

This workshop provides parents with the facts about bullying, information on how to recognize whether a child is a victim of a bully or bullying others, and strategies for intervening and/or preventing bullying. The workshop kit contains

- The workshop activities
- Facts about bullying to review prior to conducting the workshop. (This fact sheet can be found in the handout section, as the workshop presenter may want to share these facts with participants as well.)
- Workshop handouts

H1: Facts About Bullying

H2: Warning Signs that Your Child May Be the Victim of Bullying

H3: Steps to Take if Your Child Is a Victim of Bullying at School

H4: What You Can Do at Home to Prevent Bullying

H5: When Your Child Is Demonstrating Bullying Behaviors

H6: Resources on Bullying

CONDUCTING THE WORKSHOP

Materials Needed

- A dry-erase board, chalkboard, or large chart paper that can be seen by all attendees.
- Markers
- Handouts (provided on this CD-ROM)

Step One—Get Organized

- **Select a time that is convenient** for the majority of parents to meet.
- **Choose who will conduct the training.** You may want to have the school principal and a parent serve as co-presenters. Another idea is to invite a school counselor, a community-based counselor, or another guest speaker with expertise in this area to lead the workshop.
- **Determine the location.** The school is an obvious choice, but you might also consider locations that would be more convenient during non-school hours, especially if parents have limited access to transportation. New locations can also build bridges to other community groups.

Step Two—Host the Workshop

Have the PTA president welcome attendees to the meeting. The president should thank whoever is hosting the location and introduce the speaker(s).

Workshop energizer: On the dry-erase board, chalkboard, or paper create a T-chart that the whole audience can see. (Draw two lines that intersect to form a capital T, allowing the presenter to label each of the two columns.) Label the columns “Place” and “Activities.”

Then ask participants to share answers to the two questions:

1. Where do children spend time during the week?
2. What happens in each place?

This part of the energizer is not focused on bullying per se, so ask attendees not to limit their answers to situations that might involve a bully.

Have the group brainstorm responses for about 10 minutes as one person fills in the chart. Ask the group to be candid and realistic. Here is an example of a completed chart.

Place	Activities
Classroom	Respond to teacher, take tests, turn in assignments
Playground	Interact in groups, sit/play alone, play games, fight
Boy/Girl Scout meeting	Discuss values, take trips, do projects, help others
Gym or soccer/baseball field	Practice teamwork, compete, exhibit sportsmanship, skills/lack of skills
Band practice	Demonstrate skills/lack of skills, learn group cohesiveness, show responsibility
Home	Learn discipline, eat meals, talk with family, watch television or play on the computer, do homework, sleep
After-school programs	Do homework, play sports, talk with friends, do art projects,
Place of worship	Reflect, bond with friends and family, engage in rituals
Camp	Make friends, exercise, engage in fun, learning activities
Neighborhood	Unsupervised play/fight, exercise, hang out
Parties	Spend time with clique, bond, celebrate, listen to music, play games, talk/gossip

Ask participants the following questions:

- In which of these environments are kids more likely to be supervised or unsupervised by adults?
- In which environments are kids more likely to feel left out or insecure?
- How does the environment relate to the likelihood of bullying situations?
- What effect does bullying have on the child who feels threatened, left out, or insecure?
- What effect does bullying have on the bully?

Core workshop activity

Facilitator says, “Now that we have a context for kids’ social interaction, let’s look at when and how adults can take action against bullying.” Explain that the next activity will require three volunteers to role-play a recess scenario. One volunteer will play the bully, one will play the child who is bullied, and one will play the adult. If you can’t find volunteers, simply present the following situations for group feedback.

- An adult is supervising 30 children on the playground. One group, all girls, is drawing on the pavement with sidewalk chalk. Another group is playing kickball, and a third group is playing on the equipment. *How does the adult feel?*
- One child is sitting outside the three groups, seeming to decide where he wants to go. He chooses to draw on the pavement. The girls say boys aren’t allowed to play. The adult misses the exchange, and the boy moves toward the kickball game. Immediately one of the other kids (we’ll call him the team captain) says that he can’t be on his team. *How does the child feel?*
- The adult intervenes and the other team captain takes him as a new player. *How do the team captains feel now? How does the child feel?*
- The game resumes, and the boy misses the ball when it’s kicked toward him. His teammates tease him. The other team captain high-fives his team members and says how lucky they are

not to have that loser on their team. No one speaks up to defend the boy. The adult remains quiet. *How do all parties feel?*

- In the next round of the game one of two options occurs, 1) the team captain puts him at the back of the line so he won't have a chance to kick the ball (possibly resulting in an out for the team). When the teacher tries to intervene, the captain says that he is a new player and has to start at the end of the line. 2) The child does kick the ball and is running toward first base. The opposing team throws the ball at him, hitting him hard. The boy just leaves the field and sits by himself for the rest of recess. *How do all parties feel?*

The facilitator should now move to the following questions to assist participants in thinking about the exercise.

- What were the consequences of each role? How do you think the child, team captains, adult, and other teammates felt?
- What was the adult's role?
- Did intervention by an adult help or aggravate the bullying?
- What could have been done differently?
- How soon is it necessary for an adult to intervene?
- How might reactions vary among the children based on their different personalities?
- Review the list of places and activities created earlier. Are there opportunities for similar situations to happen in a variety of places?

Discuss the need for parents to enforce and model positive behavior continually. Here are a few other topics to address with the group:

- Is bullying a rite of passage?
- When they see or hear about a child being tormented, what should they do?

- Establish clear consequences and follow through with them when responding to kids who bully physically and verbally —especially if the bully is their child.

Step Three—Conclude the Workshop

- Distribute the handouts.
- Thank everyone for attending.