



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition
Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



ARTICLE 7 – APRIL 28, 2008 – BULLYING PREVENTION

Kimberly Cassidy is the Community Mobilizer for Centre County *Communities That Care*®. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care*® serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*® serving the State College Area School District.

“I can not tell you how terrifying it is...When the bully is smirking in your face, using your weaknesses against you, you’re devastated...Be aware of what is going on around you...Stand up for the victim. I only wish one of my friends would have done that for me.” - Centre County Student

The *Communities That Care*® process creates environments where youth are nurtured and supported, in their homes, schools, and communities. All over the Country, in all types of schools and communities, youth are failing to reach their potential because they are impacted by bullying. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, nationally 15-25% of students are bullied and 15-20% bully others. Bullying occurs when someone hurts or scares another intentionally and the victim has a hard time defending themselves.

Usually, bullying happens repeatedly and in the following forms:

- Punching, pushing, slapping, or other hurtful physical acts
- Rumors, gossip, or sexual comments
- Rejection or exclusion
- Teasing or verbal taunting
- Encouraging others to "gang up" on an individual

With youth becoming ever more technologically savvy, bullying also can happen electronically. Cyber bullying occurs using the Internet, cell phones or technology and includes:

- Sending mean text, e-mail, or instant messages
- Posting nasty pictures or messages in blogs or on Web sites
- Using someone else's user name to spread rumors or lies

Bullying tends to take different forms for males and females. Males are more likely to report physical bullying, while females are more likely to be bullied through indirect forms of aggression, such as gossip, exclusion, or sexual comments.

Many people incorrectly believe that bullies act tough to hide insecurities or self-loathing, but in fact, bullies tend to be confident with high self-esteem. They often are driven by a need to dominate others and lack empathy. They also have aggressive, impulsive tendencies with a low tolerance for frustration. Parental involvement and parenting styles are also related with extremely permissive or excessively harsh discipline approaches increasing the risk of bullying.

Bullying can have long term impacts:

- Bullies are more likely to skip and drop out of school. They are also more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, vandalize, and get into fights.
- Bullying behavior can be maintained into adulthood, negatively influencing the ability to engage in positive relationships.

- In one study, 60% of male bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24.
- Bullying can affect school performance. Nationally, 160,000 students stay home on any given day because they're afraid of being bullied.
- Victims can experience isolation, decreased self-esteem, depression, anxiousness, and insecurity that can follow them into adulthood.

The research-based Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is being implemented in the school districts served by Centre County *Communities That Care*®. The program alters school policies, uses classroom meetings, and intervenes with bullies and victims to reduce the entire school's tolerance of bullying behaviors.

Learn more online at:

- <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>
- <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus/aboutbullying.asp>
- <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp>

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