

BULLYING

Public Health Issue

Bullying is a form of youth violence. Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying includes: attack or intimidation with the intention to cause fear, distress, or harm that is either physical (hitting, punching), verbal (name calling, teasing), or psychological/relational (rumors, social exclusion); a real or perceived imbalance of power between the bully and the victim; and repeated attacks or intimidation between the same children over time. [1]

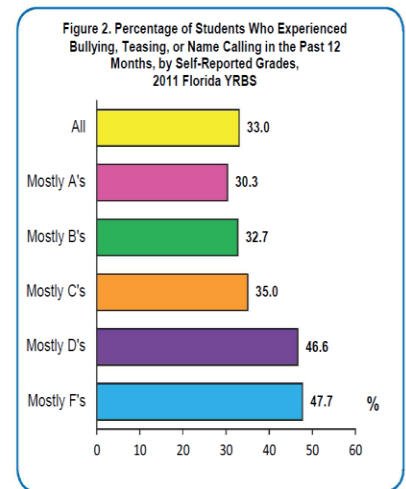
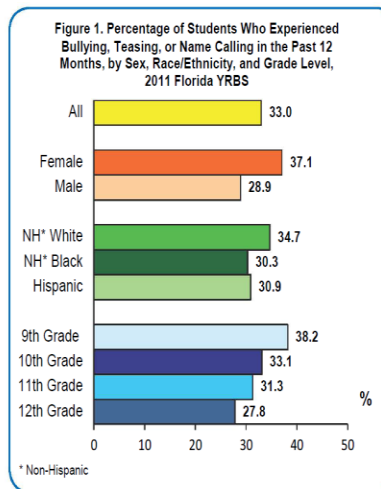
Magnitude and Trend

In 2011, approximately 256,600 Florida public high school students (33.0%) experienced some form of bullying, teasing, or name calling.

This reflects that in the past 12 months, these students had been;

- Bullied on school property,
- Electronically bullied,
- The victim of teasing or name calling because of their weight, size, or physical appearance, and/or
- The victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Females were significantly more likely than males to have experienced some form of bullying, teasing, or name calling in the past 12 months. Non-Hispanic white students were significantly more likely than either Non-Hispanic black or Hispanic students to have experienced some form of bullying. Ninth grade students had a significantly higher prevalence of this behavior than 11th and 12th grade students. Students who described their grades in school during the past 12 months as mostly D's and mostly F's had a significantly higher prevalence of this behavior than students whose grades were mostly A's and B's.[2]



National and State Goals

The Healthy People 2020 Objective IVP-35 is to reduce bullying amongst adolescents to 17.9%.[3] According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 20% of students in grades nine through 12 within the United States reported that they were bullied on school property and 16.2% reported they had been electronically bullied in the previous 12 months in 2011.[4] Although there are no state goals, Florida has numerous objectives and initiatives to reduce bullying including legislation requiring all schools establish a bullying policy.

Current State Programs and Initiatives

Section 1006.147, *Florida Statutes* was signed into law in 2008.[5] This statute requires Florida school districts to adopt a policy, prohibiting bullying and harassment of students and staff on

school grounds or school transportation, at school-sponsored events, and through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through school computer systems or networks. In addition, the Florida Department of Education, Office of Safe Schools has created a model policy against bullying and harassment that can be used by school districts to craft their individual policies.[6]

The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) Adolescent Health Program receives funding each year from the Office of Adolescent Health to implement the Teen Outreach Program (TOP) in 23 counties in Florida with public high school ninth grade students. Youth are provided education regarding healthy living, including; value setting, self-discipline, personal responsibility, managing life pressures, forming positive relationships, self-respect, commitment to others, refusal skills, effective communication, and skill/asset building. In addition, TOP utilizes education peer group meetings, positive adult guidance and support and community service learning to achieve positive outcomes in youth.

The FDOH Sexual Violence Prevention Program (SVPP) provides primary prevention education focusing on preventing sexual violence. Throughout the state, SVPP funds sites to provide presentations on the prevention of sexual violence. Education is based on addressing the underlying attitudes, knowledge, and behavior that result in rape and sexual violence. Topics include bullying and sexual violence, consent and coercion, dating violence, drug facilitated rape, gender roles, healthy relationships, masculinity and sexual violence, media advocacy, oppression, primary prevention of sexual violence, role of bystanders, sexual harassment, and the law as it relates to sexual assault.

Public Health Strategies and Practices

The American Public Health Association published *A Public Health Approach to Bullying Prevention* in 2013.[7] This publication outlines recommendations for a public health approach toward bullying prevention efforts.

Public health professionals regularly assess risks and ask children about possible causes of reported symptoms and concerns. They often are in positions to first detect and identify cases of possible bullying. These professionals bring critical expertise to the task of planning community-wide approaches to bullying prevention and help inform the development of interventions that empower all students with the skills and behaviors to promote positive behaviors and protect themselves if needed to help prevent bullying and increase the possibility of bystander intervention.

DOH Capacity

As outlined above the FDOH implements the TOP and SVPP programs across Florida. In addition, the Family Planning Program provides violence screening to all clients who seek services at local FDOH locations.

References

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