

Supporting Students Involved in Bullying

Climate Connection is a monthly publication of the NYS Center for School Safety.



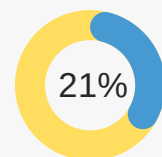
October is Bullying Prevention Month

The NYS Center for School Safety offers [resources and trainings](#) to support implementation of New York State's Dignity for All Students Act, creating safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying. Despite our efforts, bullying and cyberbullying remain a significant problem as reported by students on the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Here we focus on strategies and resources to help schools support students who are the targets of bullying and those who bully. However, it should be noted that these strategies are not only applicable in incidences in which bullying is founded but anytime there is conflict between students. Such situations present an opportunity to acknowledge and repair harm, and support the emotional and social development of all students involved.



1 in 6 NYS students, grades 9 - 12, in the previous year experienced cyberbullying (text or social media)



21 percent of all surveyed students reported being bullied on school property in the previous 12 months.



1 in 3 students identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual reported being bullied on school property.

Visit CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey Explorer [webpage](#) for more information.

Impact of Bullying on Targeted Students

Students who experience bullying or other forms of mistreatment by their peers may exhibit a range of negative feelings, such as anger, fear, anxiety and depression. As illustrated by the image below, their emotional response may be limited to the event or may persist for an extended period of time. Similarly, their response may be limited to the peer(s) who bullied or mistreated them, or it may be generalized to the environment in which the incident occurred, such as school. When helping students process the event, understanding how they feel is important. However, it is also helpful to explore when and where they experience the most uncomfortable emotions. Understanding the extent and intensity of a student's response helps adult caregivers identify strategies to support wellness and a sense of safety, as well as mitigate some of the other potential effects of bullying, such as physical complaints (headache, stomachache, etc.) and drop in academic performance and poor attendance.





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Helping Targeted Students

Express concern: Validate the student's own perspective of the event and their feelings. Praise the student for coming forward and voice concern for their safety.

Connect: Students should have an opportunity to process the event with a trusted adult of their choosing. A student who identifies as LGBTQ+ may feel more comfortable talking to the GSA club advisor instead of the School Social Worker. Create a plan for regular check-ins and help students identify a "buddy" for times in which they feel most vulnerable, such as going to their locker.

Support: Being bullied or mistreated can negatively impact a student's emotional health. Teach strategies to help students manage their emotions, such as mindful breathing, journaling or exercise. Those who bully are often looking for an emotional reaction from their targets so positive coping strategies serve as a prevention strategy, as well.

Helping Students Who Bully

Teach: Students who bully may lack empathy, the ability to manage their emotions and problem solving skills. Interventions that support social emotional learning, in addition to appropriate consequences, will prevent future incidents.

Understand: Students who bully or mistreat others may have aggressive or violent influences in their life. They may be the targets of bullying themselves (often by adults), may have role-models who behave aggressively or have violent interests (i.e movies, video games, music). Exploring these factors will offer insight into the motivation for bullying behaviors, and support behavior change strategies.

To learn more, visit the [Cyberbullying Research Center at cyberbullying.org](https://www.cyberbullying.org) and read [Safe Space: Creating a Positive School Culture to Prevent Bullying](#) from the Mental Health Association in NYS, Inc.

Working With Families

Practice TEA Time

Practice: Listening is an important communication skill that requires intentionality and practice. Apply the acronym below to all parent/caregiver interactions.

T: Thank

E: Empathize

A: Acknowledge/Ask

Time: give your full attention and commit to a timeline for follow-up.

Offer your *thanks* for...

sharing the concern, trusting the school to address the issue, and their willingness to partner on a solution.

Empathize with the family...

and express that you hear their concern. You might say "That must have been hard for you to hear as a parent. It would be hard for me, too."

Acknowledge...

that it may have been difficult for them to contact the school but that you are committed to working with them towards an understanding of the problem.

And, finally, *ask*...

if there is an outcome that they would like for their student so you can begin to work together towards a solution.

To learn more, read Jim Dillon's article in SAANY's [Vanguard](#) magazine.