

# Preventing Bullying

## What is bullying?

Bullying is a form of youth violence. CDC defines bullying as any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.<sup>1</sup>

Bullying can include aggression that is physical (hitting, tripping), verbal (name calling, teasing), or relational/social (spreading rumors, leaving out of group). Bullying can also occur through technology and is called electronic bullying or cyberbullying.<sup>1</sup> A young person can be a perpetrator, a victim, or both (also known as “bully/victim”).

## How big is the problem?

Bullying is widespread in the United States. While the magnitude and types of bullying can vary across communities and demographic groups, bullying negatively impacts all youth involved—those who are bullied, those who bully others, and bystanders.

- **Bullying is common.** 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property in the last year.<sup>2</sup>
- **Bullying is frequent.** Bullying is among the most commonly reported discipline problems in public schools. Nearly 12% of public schools report that bullying happens at least once a week. Reports of bullying are highest for middle schools (22%) compared to high schools (15%), combined schools (11%), and primary schools (8%).<sup>3</sup>
- **Bullying can happen online.** More than 15% of high school students report being cyberbullied in the last year.<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 5** high school students reported being **bullied** at school in the last year.



## Common types of bullying:

### Physical

hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, tripping, pushing



### Emotional

teasing, name calling, inappropriate sexual comments, or verbal or written threats



### Social

excluding someone, spreading rumors, making embarrassing comments



## What are the consequences?

Bullying can result in physical injury, social and emotional distress, self-harm, and even death. It also increases the risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school. Youth who bully others are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and experiencing violence later in adolescence and adulthood.<sup>4</sup> Youth who bully others and are bullied themselves suffer the most serious consequences and are at greater risk for mental health and behavioral problems.

## How can we stop bullying before it starts?

The good news is that bullying is preventable. CDC's *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors* helps communities and states prioritize youth violence prevention strategies based on the best available evidence.<sup>5</sup> The strategies and approaches in the technical package are intended to impact individual behaviors as well as the relationship, family, school, community, and societal factors that influence risk and protective factors for violence. The strategies are meant to work together and be used in combination to prevent violence. These approaches, including establishing universal school-based programs to strengthen youth's skills, and modifying physical and social environments for youth's protection have evidence for reducing violence or key risk factors for violence and bullying.



### Promote family environments that support healthy development

- Early childhood home visitation
- Parenting skill and family relationship programs



### Provide quality education early in life

- Preschool enrichment with family engagement



### Strengthen youth's skills

- Universal school-based programs



### Connect youth to caring adults and activities

- Mentoring programs
- After-school programs



### Create protective community environments

- Modify the physical and social environment
- Reduce exposure to community-level risks
- Street outreach and community norm change

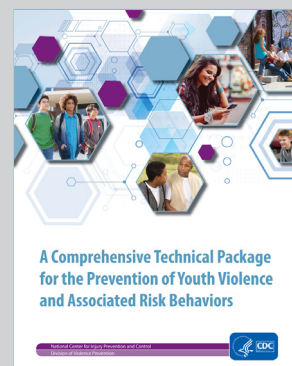


### Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk

- Treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and further involvement in violence
- Hospital-community partnerships

## A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors

A **technical package** is a collection of strategies based on the best available evidence to prevent or reduce public health problems. The **strategy** lays out the direction and actions to prevent youth violence. The **approach** includes the specific ways to advance the strategy through programs, policies and practices. The **evidence** for each of the approaches in preventing youth violence and associated risk factors is also included.



## References

1. Gladden RM, Vivolo-Kantor AM, Hamburger ME, Lumpkin CD. *Bullying surveillance among youths: Uniform definitions for public health and recommended data elements, Version 1.0*. Atlanta, GA; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Education; 2013. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-definitions-final-a.pdf>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2017. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report—Surveillance Summaries* 2018; 67(SS08). Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/2017/ss6708.pdf>.
3. Diliberti M, Jackson M, Kemp J. Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2015–16 (NCES 2017-122). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC, 2017. Available from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2017129>.
4. Farrington D, Baldry A. Individual risk factors for school bullying. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 2010; 2(1):4-16. Available from <https://doi.org/10.5042/jacpr.2010.0001>.
5. David-Ferdon C, Vivolo-Kantor AM, Dahlberg LL, Marshall KJ, Rainford N, Hall JE. *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>.