

Understanding the Effects of Cyberbullying and Prevention Strategies

In 2013, one in four students age 12-18 reported being bullied during the school year (National Center for Educational Statistics). The popularity of social media is rapidly increasing in youth today. The use of social media and messaging apps are providing new avenues for socializing and bullying. October is bullying prevention month, which is a great opportunity to talk to youth about the rising trend - cyberbullying.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, embarrass or harm another person. This may include hurtful text messages, emails or posts on social media. Other examples include posting embarrassing photos or videos on public websites or social media pages. In some instances, students reported a fake profile was created to harass others.

The Internet can provide an outlet for individuals to say or do things they would not tend to do in face-to-face interactions. Social media and other messaging apps allow a message to be sent very easily with a couple of clicks without having to see the other persons' reaction. In addition, messages can be posted anonymously through certain phone apps or fake profiles. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, males have a tendency to bully by sending threatening messages or messages that are sexual in nature. Females have a tendency to spread rumors or make fun of others through messages or social media.



Cyberbully Statistics

The Cyberbullying Research Center collected data on cyberbullying victimization from middle and high schools students across the United States from 2007-2015. The results showed that, on average, 26.3% of students reported being a victim of cyberbullying at some point during their lifetime. In 2015 alone, 34% of the students who participated in the study experienced cyberbullying during their lifetime. In this particular study, females (40.6%) experienced cyberbullying at a greater rate than males (28.2%). The CDC conducted a study on bullying in 2013 that focused on high school students only. According to the CDC, 15% of high school students have experienced cyberbullying within 12 months of completing the survey.

Cyberbullying Effects

Cyberbullying can have harmful effects on youth. Through social media, cyberbullying can happen at any time of day and at any frequency. It can often feel unavoidable even when students are away from school. Victims of bullying tend to experience depression and anxiety. Victims may also lose interest in activities they once enjoyed and experience changes in sleeping or eating habits. Finally, victims of bullying often experience a decline in academic performance.

Cyberbullying does not only have harmful effects on the victim, but also the bully and the bystanders as well. Children who bully are more likely to abuse drugs, engage in sexual activity at a young age, receive criminal convictions, abuse a partner and drop out of school (stopbullying.gov). Bystanders have increased mental health concerns, like anxiety, miss or skip school and are more likely to use drugs.

Cyberbullying Prevention

There are many ways for parents and schools to prevent and intervene in cyberbullying. A 2013 study by McCallion and Feder found that school-based bullying prevention programs can decrease bullying by up to 25%. Check with your administrator or school attorney to see if cyberbullying is included in your policies on harassment and bullying. Cyberbullying can occur at any time of day when students have access to technology, including during the school day. Become familiar with your school's policies and enforce them.

Prevention for Parents

- Establish and enforce rules related to cyberbullying
- Know the sites youth are visiting and phone apps they are using. Try the apps on your own device, so you understand how they work.
- Educate youth on appropriate technology use and how to make apps and profiles private
- Ask to “follow” or “friend” your child on social media sites
- Set up parental controls on devices
- Keep computer in a busy area of your home
- Encourage open communication, encourage youth to let you know when someone is being bullied.

Additional Handouts for Parents:

What To Do When Child is Cyberbullied Handout (PDF) <http://cyberbullying.org/tips-for-parents-when-your-child-is-cyberbullied.pdf>

Cellphone Safety Tips (PDF) <http://cyberbullying.org/Top-Ten-Teen-Tips-Cell-Phones.pdf>

Cyberbullying: What Parents Can Do (PDF) <http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-23.pdf>

Sources:

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/index.html>

<http://cyberbullying.org/facts>

<http://www.ncpc.org/topics/cyberbullying/what-is-cyberbullying>

<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/stats.asp>

McCallion and Feder study - <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43254.pdf>

LGBTQ Youth- Creating an Environment of Support

We live in an increasingly culturally diverse world that requires communities, schools and families alike to consider both the strengths and challenges of multiple populations. Specifically, research highlights the importance of understanding some of the issues that surround various cultures of youth that put them at greater risk for adverse experiences. One population in particular who is at an increased risk for mental, emotional and behavioral health risks, are students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ). While many LGBTQ youth are happy and thriving during their adolescence, some youth who lack safe and supporting environments (at home and at school), are at an increased risk of experiencing difficulties in their lives compared to their heterosexual peers.

What the Data Highlights

In August 2016 the CDC released the first nationally representative study on the health risks of U.S. lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) high school students (please note that this new data was not representative of youth who identify as Transgender or Questioning). This data explores the health risk of approximately 1.3 million LGB high school students and more importantly exposes the need for communities to take initiatives to protect the health and well-being of LGB youth as they navigate throughout adolescence and into adulthood.



According to the report, compared to their heterosexual peers, LGB students are significantly more likely to report:

- Experiencing sexual dating violence (23% LGB vs. 9% heterosexual)
- Experiencing physical dating violence (18% LGB vs. 8% heterosexual)
- Being bullied at school or online (at school: 34% LGB vs. 19% heterosexual; online: 28% LGB vs. 14% heterosexual).

In addition to the increased risk for violence, a complex combination of other factors likewise increases the risk of suicide, depression, substance abuse and academic consequences. Research demonstrates that LGB students may be at a greater risk for the following outcomes:

- More than 40% of LGB students have seriously considered suicide and 29% reported having attempted suicide during the past 12 months.
- 60% of LGB students reported having been so sad or hopeless they stopped doing some of their usual activities.
- LGB students are up to five times more likely than other students to report using illegal drugs.
- More than 1 in 10 LGB students reported missing school during the past 30 days due to safety concerns.

This data supports the importance of increasing environmental supports for LGBTQ students as a means to mitigate factors that put them at risk emotionally, mentally and behaviorally.

What Schools Can Do

Despite cultural differences, all youth need to feel socially, emotionally and physically safe in their school environment to be successful. To help promote the wellbeing and success among LGBTQ youth, schools can engage in the following practices:

- Encourage respect for all students and enforce a clear policy against bullying and violence against all students.
- Identify “safe spaces”, such as counselors’ offices or designated classrooms where LGBTQ youth can receive support from administrators, teachers or other school staff.
- Facilitate access to community-based providers who have experience in providing social and psychological services to LGBTQ youth.
- Encourage school district and school staff to develop and publicize trainings on how to create safe and supportive school environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and encourage staff to attend these trainings.
- Encourage student-led and student-organized school clubs that promote a safe, welcoming and accepting school environment (i.e. gay-straight alliances, which are school clubs open to youth of all sexual orientations.)

What Parents Can Do

Adolescence can pose challenges for youth regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, however, LGBTQ youth are often faced with greater stressors and challenges due to negative attitudes, feelings of isolation and lack of support from family, peers and communities. The way in which parents respond to their LGBTQ teen can greatly impact the mental, physical and emotional health of their youth. LGBTQ youth are at greater risk of homelessness compared to heterosexual youth. This is in part due to the number of LGBTQ youth who run away as a result of increased conflict and stress at home. Supportive reactions can help youth cope with the challenges of being an LGBTQ teen. Parents can offer support by:

- Serving as advocates for their youth by working with school personnel and communities to promote a culture of acceptance.
- Engaging in proactive efforts to support their youth by accessing resources both on-line and via community organizations, to learn more about how they can support their LGBTQ youth.
- Listening and talking to youth in a way that invites open discussions about sexual orientation and identity to set a foundation of support and acceptance.
- Showing their teen they care by staying involved and making an effort to know their teen’s friends and interests.

References: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; <http://www.apa.org> (The American Psychological Association)



In 1985, Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) officer, died in the line of duty. His kidnapping and death at the hands of the drug cartel sparked an outcry of support for the fallen officer and his family.

Family, friends, and community members in the following months of his death began to display red ribbons and they also signed a drug-free pledge in honor of him and the work he had done in drug enforcement.

This honorary ritual ignited across our nation and in 1988 **Red Ribbon Week** was recognized nationally by President Ronald and First Lady Nancy Reagan.

Today, **Red Ribbon Week** has evolved and it brings millions of people together to raise awareness regarding the need for alcohol, tobacco and other drug and violence prevention, early intervention, and treatment services. It is the largest, most visible prevention awareness campaign observed annually in the United States.

Red Ribbon Week encourages and allows communities and individuals to collectively take a stand in protecting the hopes and dreams of our children through a commitment to drug prevention and education and a personal commitment to live drug free lives.

Each year, the National Family Partnership (NFP) chooses a National Theme for **Red Ribbon Week**. The National theme for **Red Ribbon Week** (October 23-31, 2016) is "YOLO"...You Only Live Once...Choose to be Drug Free.

It should be noted that many schools and communities across the country develop their own themes for **Red Ribbon Week that helps connect school lesson plans and school/community activities together.**

Thousands of students take a drug-free pledge during **Red Ribbon Week**. Parents can help promote and support their kids and other kids by taking a pledge aimed at helping kids remain drug-free.

Parent Drug-Free Pledge:

1. As parents and citizens, we talk to our children and the children in our lives about the dangers of drug abuse.
2. We will set clear rules for our children about not using drugs.
3. We will set good examples for our children by not using illegal drugs or medicine without a prescription.

4. We will monitor our children's behavior and enforce appropriate consequences so that our rules are respected.
5. We will encourage family and friends to follow the same guidelines to keep children safe from substance abuse.

Parent Name

Date

You can go to redribbon.org/pledge for additional information, resources and ideas for **Red Ribbon Week**.

You can also visit and like [The Red Ribbon Campaign Facebook](#) page.

And remember “YOLO” choose to be drug-free!

www.promosontime.com › Themes › Red Ribbon Week

www.pinterest.com/pin

www.redribbon.org/pledge

www.informedfamilies.org

www.dea.gov/redribbon/RedRibbon_history.shtml