

Bullying Prevention for Public Health Practitioners

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hello, this is Dr. Greta Massetti. I'm a behavioral scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

Bullying is a widespread public health problem. During the 2007-2008 school year, 25 percent of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students on a daily or weekly basis. Bullying is more severe during the middle school years; a higher percentage of middle schools reported daily or weekly occurrences of bullying compared to primary and high schools.

In addition, bullying is no longer limited to the schoolyard. Technology, including the Internet, email, and instant and text messaging, provides new arenas for bullying to occur. In 2007, about four percent of 12- to 18-year-olds reported being cyberbullied during the school year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strives to provide researchers, prevention specialists, and health educators with tools to implement and evaluate bullying prevention strategies. CDC shares data to help describe the magnitude of the problem and identifies risk and protective factors to guide the development of prevention programs.

A document for public health practitioners that addresses the emerging issue of cyberbullying is called *Electronic Media and Youth Violence: A CDC Research Brief for Researchers*. The brief describes the current research on electronic aggression, highlights the gaps, and suggests future directions. This is an emerging area of study which needs to be further examined by researchers. However, experts do know the rates of electronic aggression are going up. From 2000 to 2005, rates of electronic aggression increased by 50 percent.

Those who experience or are victimized by bullying may have psychological problems as a result. For example, they are more likely to skip school, get detention, or have behavior problems. They can also experience distress and anxiety at school as a result of their victimization.

Due to the problems bullying causes in schools, school-based bullying prevention programs are widely implemented. Unfortunately, they are infrequently evaluated. Based on a review of the research on school-based bullying prevention, there are program elements that are promising. They include increasing adult supervision; using school rules and behavior management techniques to detect and provide consequences for bullying; having a school-wide anti-bullying policy that is enforced consistently; and promoting cooperation among school staff, parents, and professionals.

CDC recently published *Measuring Bullying Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences: A Compendium of Assessment Tools*. This document may help public health practitioners assess bullying in schools and evaluate bully prevention interventions. It represents a starting point from which researchers can consider a set of psychometrically-sound measures for assessing self-reported incidence and prevalence of a variety of bullying experiences.

Through these assessments, practitioners can measure a range of bullying experiences to inform prevention and intervention activities. Public health practitioners are essential in the effort to prevent bullying.

The resources mentioned in this podcast can be found at www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.