



PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

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BULLYING—WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Bullying is an important problem for schools and law enforcement. While it may seem to be a common annoyance, some recent studies show that it has a negative effect on those who bully, the victims of bullying and on the community at large.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2009, “20% of high school students were bullied on school property at least once in the previous 12 months.” Also, during the 2008-2009 school year, 28% of students between 12-18 years old were bullied at school.

Beyond the statistics, bullying has other serious consequences:

Mental Health– Children who are victims of bullying experience lower self-esteem, greater loneliness, greater anxiety, and more depression.

Risk of Suicide– Children who are bullied are more likely than non-bullied peers to show depressive symptoms, harm themselves, have high levels of suicidal thoughts, and attempt suicide.

Health Consequences– Children who are involved in bullying, both as victims and as a victim who bullies, are more likely to have headaches, backaches, stomach pain, sleep problems, poor appetite and bed-wetting.

Academic Consequences– Children who are bullied are more likely to avoid school and have lower academic achievement.

Likelihood of Anti-social Behavior– Children who bully are more likely to exhibit delinquent behavior, dislike school and

drop out of school, drink alcohol and smoke, hold beliefs that support violence, bring weapons to school, and think of suicide and attempt suicide.

As a result of these potential problems, several local agencies, including the Sheriff’s Office, the Snohomish County Health and Safety Network,

Snohomish County Human Services, and Snohomish County Children’s Commission, are working to reduce bullying in Snohomish County.

“... during the 2008-2009 school year 28% of students between 12-18 years old were bullied at school.”



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BULLYING– FINDING MORE INFORMATION

While we hope this newsletter improves your understanding of bullying, preventing bullying is a complicated matter that should involve multiple organizations and people. Parents are important to providing an environment where their kids can resist bullying, whether as the target or as the perpetrator. Schools are important for the same reasons. And eventually, the community at large needs to discourage bullying.

If you are interested in more information about bullying go to the following web sites:

www.Stopbullying.gov

<http://wevaluekids.org/index.php/bullying>

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/af/bully.htm>

BULLYING– DEFINITION

Stopbullying.gov (a web site supported by federal government agencies including the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice) defines bullying as:

“... unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.”

The definition includes three elements:

1. The behavior must be aggressive.
2. There must be an imbalance of power. The power can be expressed as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity. Bullies use their power to control or harm others.
3. The bullying behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated.

Most bullying occurs at school, before or after school hours. It can occur on a playground, on the bus, travelling to or from school, in the victim’s neighborhood or on the internet (cyber bullying).

The web site lists three types of bullying:

1. Verbal Bullying– saying or writing mean things by teasing, name calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting or threatening to cause harm.
2. Social Bullying– hurting someone’s reputation or relationships by leaving them out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with

the victim, spreading rumors, or embarrassing the victim in public.

3. Physical Bullying– hurting a person’s body or possessions by hitting, kicking or pinching, spitting, tripping or pushing, taking or breaking the victim’s possessions, or making mean or rude hand gestures.

Children at Risk of Being Bullied- In general, children who are bullied:

- Are perceived as different such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to school, or being unable to afford what is considered “cool.”
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves.
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self esteem.
- Are less popular than others and have few friends.
- Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention.

Children More Likely to Bully Others-

Kids who bully are categorized into two groups:

1. Some are well-connected, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
2. Others are more isolated and may

BULLYING- DEFINITION CONT.

be depressed or anxious, have low self esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or not identify with the emotions or feeling of others.

In general, children who bully:

- Are aggressive or easily frustrated.
- Have less parental involvement or are having issues at home.
- Think badly of others.
- Have difficulty following rules.
- View violence in a positive way.
- Have friends who bully others.

Bullies do not have to be bigger than their victims. They can use their popularity, strength, or cognitive ability as sources of power.

WARNING SIGNS.

Children tend not to confide to their parents that they are being bullied. Statistics show that only about one third of children tell their parents that they were bullied.

Kids may not tell their parents for several reasons:

- They feel helpless or want to handle the situation themselves.
- They may fear a backlash from the bully.
- They are humiliated by the bullying and don't want to tell their parents what is being said about them, or feel that they would be judged for being weak.

- They may feel that no one cares, understands or can help.
- They may fear being rejected by their friends by being bullied.

Signs That a Child is Being Bullied-

- Unexplainable injuries.
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry.
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, feeling sick, faking illness.
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating.

Signs That a Child is Bullying Others-

- Get into physical or verbal fights.
- Have friends who bully others.
- Are increasingly aggressive.
- Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently.
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings.
- Blame others for their problems.
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions.
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity.

CYBER-BULLYING- WHAT IT IS

Cyber-bullying is simply bullying that takes place using electronic technology such as cell phones, computers, or tablet computers through social media, text messaging, chat, and websites.

Someone who uses cyber-bullying can do so 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Cyber-bullying messages can be distributed anonymously and quickly to a wide audience.

It is extremely difficult to take back inappropriate messages after they have been sent.

Victims of cyber-bullying are more likely to:

- *Use alcohol and drugs*
- *Skip school*
- *Experience in-person bullying*
- *Receive poor grades*
- *Have lower self-esteem*
- *Have more health problems*

BULLYING- PREVENTION

Preventing bullying ideally involves parents, the friends of those being bullied, teachers and school staff, and the community at large. We will concentrate on how parents can prevent bullying. But, for more information on prevention go to www.stopbullying.gov (<http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html> and <http://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/index.html>) and www.stopbullyingnow.com (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.com/parents.htm>).

Some ways that you can help your child to be resilient in case they are bullied include:

- Spend family time together.
- Encourage **positive** relationships with adults outside the family.
- Encourage participation in hobbies and interests that your child enjoys.
- Encourage service to others.
- Teach your child that sometimes people say or do mean things to others, and that they are not the cause of meanness by others.
- Help your child to develop problem-solving skills.
- Help your child to build friendships outside of school through activities and groups.

If your child bullies others-

- Investigate possible reasons:
 - Are they imitating characters on TV or in the movies?
 - Are they trying to be funny?
 - Are they expressing anger?
 - Are they lacking skills in empathy, thinking before they act, or sharing?
 - Are they retaliating?
 - Are they trying to get approval from their peers?
- If your child repeatedly bullies, take it seriously. Understanding the why should help you to guide your child to take responsibility for their actions and to learn better choices in the future.
- If you cannot successfully get your child to stop the bullying or their behavior is severe, seek help from a mental health professional who has experience with aggression. A professional can determine if your child is in serious distress or if they have a significant mental health problem.

CRIME PREVENTION COORDINATOR

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SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff_Services/Crime_Prevention.htm

NEWSLETTER INFO

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org

"PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION NEWSLETTER" ARCHIVES:

http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff_Services/CrimePrevention/CommunityPolicingNewsletter.htm

TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

<http://www.snoco.org/app/ssh/anonymoustips/>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477