

School Bullying Checklist, NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness, rev. 3/20

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Climate Assessment Process

- Multiple stakeholders (students, parents, visitors, advocacy groups, etc.) provide data/assess by multiple means (surveys, focus groups, interviews, data reporting, etc.), analyzed by school team and leaders, data shared with all stakeholder groups.

Children Engaged

- Every child identifies at least one school adult the child knows has a special interest in them
- There are positive relations between staff and students
- When isolated or 'disengaged' children are noticed, a staff member is assigned to actively work to increase the child's involvement with the school,
- Responsive Classroom methods ('meetings and greetings') are used
- Every child, especially those isolated or new, is engaged in school activities, including activities which serve others

Social-Emotional Learning / Character Development

- SECD learning and activities are offered for all students
- Collaborative learning is a predominant mode, teamwork is emphasized
- Mental health issues (including trauma, substance use, family conflict) and social factors (determinants, barriers) are assessed and addressed.

Staff Relations

- There are positive relations between staff, observed by students.
- Principal, Superintendent and supervisors model supportive, positive relations with staff.

Supportive Peers

- Every child has peers who are supportive, friends
- Peers express disapproval when children are bullied, support the bullied child ('upstanders')
- Peers are encouraged and assisted by staff to actively engage isolated children;
- If friendships are not 'naturally' present, staff engages peers to create peer support
- A child's isolation is always observed and addressed (e.g., sitting alone at lunch, tensions between the child and peers, having few friends, not engaged in school social activities, sitting alone in classes with small group activity such as art)
- Peer mentorship programs exist for children with special needs, younger children, new kids.

Support for Vulnerable Students

- School activities are arranged to support the bullied child's interest and strengths
- Teachers and administrators increase support and protection for targeted children
- All underrepresented groups in a school or groups societally stigmatized or inadequately supported have staff mentorship, support, advocacy
- Staff support increases when staff composition does not reflect the community
- There are diverse clubs and activities; positive and proactive diverse education for all
- School administrators and staff are actively involved in community organizations/activities, and advocacy organizations representing underrepresented/inadequately supported groups

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- There are parent/family support programs for vulnerable populations
- Gaps in school-community relations are actively identified and addressed
- Appropriate professionals/agencies/organizations are consulted if targeted children have special needs, or if a bias-pattern is observed
- Children with neuro-atypical conditions (mild autism ('Aspergers'), ADHD, Tourette Syndrome or other easily misunderstood conditions) are not referred to law enforcement for 'provocative' statements or behavior; consult the IEP when behavioral problems occur
- Reports to parents take into consideration the child's preference when parents may be inadvertently informed by the school about a child's gender identify or sexual orientation
- When patterns of bias-based bullying are identified, parents are informed of legal and supportive options (eg, NJ Division on Civil Rights, GSE, SPAN, DRNJ, CAIR, ELC, LSNJ, etc.).

Parent Engagement and Support

- Every parent or guardian has at least one staff member who especially knows them and whom the parent knows has a positive interest in them
- Most parents attend PTC and similar meetings; if not, staff considers the issue urgent and makes escalating efforts to address, including increasing and varying meeting dates and times, providing alternate means for participation (eg, digital media), reaching out for marketing assistance (eg, to MBA programs with marketing-focused students)
- Parent support groups (especially for vulnerable students, especially for those with special needs) exist, are robust, or growth efforts are actively underway.

Parent Communication

- Confidentiality isn't used as an excuse to limit communication with parents
- Parents do not first hear of problems from their child or others (e.g., friends, other parents)
- There are frequent school-initiated contacts with the parents after incidents, not only form letters after incidents, and contacts are not primarily initiated by the parents or the child.

Staff Responds to Mean Behavior

- Staff always responds to mean behavior (creative, small-scale responses, or observation)
- When bullying occurs, there is an urgent adult response
- Staff proactively searches for incidents and problems, assumes patterns after incidents
- Staff anticipates problems, systematically identifies vulnerabilities and culture/climate gaps
- If a vulnerable child is hurt, staff assumes a culture/climate gap (e.g., inadequate support).

School Climate (Safety) Team

- A school team focuses on bullying and other violence issues
- The team meets frequently (even quarterly – though twice as much as the ABR requires – is not enough to reflect an urgent focus)
- The team is expected/empowered to make significant changes, impact
- ABS is responsible for strengthening school culture/climate beyond investigating incidents, and for following up with the bullied child and family re their experience.

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When There Are Programs Introduced

- Principal ensures adequate training and ‘buy-in’ by staff
- Staff follows guidelines, distributes and uses all materials, carries out all steps
- The anti-bullying program is integrated with other approaches (“unjumbled schoolhouse”)
- The program is adjusted to reflect the setting (e.g., what types of bullying are prevalent)
- Sustainability is ensured because short-term programs have limited impact
- Data about program effects is systematically collected
- Having a program is not an indicator that problems have been addressed - the only true test of efficacy is whether bullying is reduced.

Teacher Behavior

- Teachers notice most bullying
- Negative teacher behavior is identified as a problem, with remedial approaches in place
- Teachers, other school staff and adults in the school (such as school nurses, coaches, aides, volunteers) understand and address bullying.

Engage the School Nurse (and other allied professionals)

- Assume that children who visit the school nurse multiple times, especially for diffuse complaints (headache, stomach ache) often associated with stress, or for reported incidents involving being hit, even accidentally, by other children, may be targeted
- Inform school nurses of children’s social/emotional status, including history of harm.

Disciplinary Practices for Students Who Bully

- Suspension and expulsion are rarely used
- Mental health programs are available to address behavioral issues
- Consequences are invariably, fairly applied – reasonable and appropriate to the situation and the child’s development/capacity; consequences escalate for repeated incidents
- Consequences are always accompanied by facilitated reflection and restorative behavior
- Rubrics describe to the school community (children as well as parents) the school's response when incidents occur and when patterns of bullying behavior are identified
- The school's response - form and intensity – is not primarily driven by child/parent preferences and demands
- "Zero-tolerance" approaches are not used (because teachers and administrators fail to administer consequences to students who are popular or in ‘majority’ groups (e.g., racially), while 'over-prescribing' such consequences to underrepresented or inadequately supported children (especially children of color)
- Children who both bully and are bullied get additional individual attention

Children Who Are Bullied

- Children are not asked to ignore, minimize or befriend peers who hurt them (most bullying does not end because the target attempts to ignore or minimize its occurrence, or befriend)

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- Targeted children are not brought together (bringing targeted children together is stigmatizing)
- Targeted children and children who bully are not brought together to discuss the aggression (this inevitably implies that both children bear equal responsibility - a well-facilitated restorative justice program may be an exception)
- Students are not asked to work out their differences by themselves (with an imbalance of power, 'working out' only happens on terms dictated by the child with more power)
- Targeted children are not expected to discuss their experience in front of the aggressor, or publicly (in front of an authority figure). (This re-traumatizes the victim and empowers the aggressor - again, a well-facilitated restorative justice program may be an exception)
- Children are not told they are "sensitive" or "over-reacting". (Such remarks misattribute the violence to the victim)

Increased Supervision

- There is active observation of high-risk areas, including rest rooms, locker rooms
- Once incidents occur, staff observation/monitoring is proactive, ongoing

Reporting

- Reports of children hurt must be investigated and understood in a timely fashion (school discretion to ignore or 'downlabel' incidents must be limited)
- Children of LGBTQ identity should not be 'outed' to parents by school report.
- Children (or parents) are not asked to write a report about an incident. (This is experienced negatively by hurt children. It conveys a legal – as opposed to educational – environment. Children may feel they – rather than the school – are 'making the case' or bringing accusations, their word questioned, or viewed as potential perpetrators or liars).

Correct Understanding of Bullying

- It's understood that bullying primarily arises in institutional settings with inadequate cultures/climates, not primarily from 'bad' families, communities, children
- It's understood that bullying is a major conduit for gang recruitment and retention and a major trigger for weapon-carrying at school

School Seeks History and Context

- Other children hurt by the same child/children are identified
- Prior records are sought from other schools
- It's understood that past victimization is a strong indicator of risk in the current setting

Overreliance on Counseling

- Counseling is not viewed as a sufficient response to incidents
- When counseling is offered to the bullied child, it is clear that counseling is supportive for what's been experienced, not because the school feels the child needs to change
- Children bullied are aware counseling is also provided to children who bully, to help them behave differently

Change of School Setting

- Bullied children are transferred as a "last resort" to protect them from further harm. -SG