Bullying Prevention

Bullying hurts.

PART 2

The Jeffrey Johnston Act

In 2005, at age 15, honors student Jeffrey Johnston died by suicide after he decided he could no longer endure a life of relentless torment by the cyberbully who had targeted him for more than three years.

In Jeffrey's honor, his family made sure that other Florida children now have one of the toughest anti-bullying measures in the nation to help protect them.

Florida Statute **1006.147**, also known as *The Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up For All Students Act*, passed in 2008. It required all Florida school districts to institute anti-bullying policies that specifically ban harassment and intimidation, including when it is done online. Districts are now mandated to create diligent reporting procedures, to conduct prompt investigation of allegations, and to outline consequences for students and school employees who violate the policy.

Parents, school staff, and other adults in the community can help children prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and responding to bullying behavior quickly and consistently to send the message that it is not acceptable.
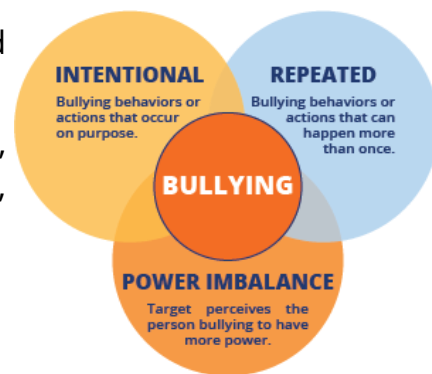
PREVENTION SERVICES

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What is Bullying?

Bullying is intentional, aggressive behavior that is repeated and involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the person bullying and the target. Bullying that occurs through e-mail, websites, blogs, text messaging, digital video, and online chat rooms is called cyberbullying. Other considerations include:

- The power derived by the person who bullies can be from physical size, strength, verbal skill, popularity, or gender.

- A target of bullying often feels tormented, helpless, and defenseless.

- Bullying can include hitting, name-calling, threatening, intimidating, kicking, spreading rumors, teasing, pushing, tripping, exclusion, or destroying someone's belongings.

Bullying must include all three criteria:

Intentional - Behaviors or actions that occur on purpose.

Repeated - Behaviors or actions that happen more than once.

Power Imbalance - Students who bully use their power – such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity – to control or harm others.

CONFLICT	RUDE	MEAN	BULLYING
Occasional	Occasional	Once or Twice	Is REPEATED
Not planned/in the heat of the moment	Spontaneous/often unintentional behavior	Intentional behavior	Is often planned and done on purpose
All parties are upset	Can upset and cause hurt feelings	Can hurt others deeply	Can cause serious, life-long emotional damage
All parties want to work it out	Often based in thoughtlessness or poor manners	Often based in anger; impulsive cruelty	The bully is trying to gain power or control over the target
All parties will accept responsibility	Rude person should accept responsibility	Behavior is often regretted	The bully often blames the target
An effort is made by all parties to solve the problem	Apology	Apology is often sufficient	The target wants the bully's behavior to stop
Can usually be resolved through mediation	Social skill building could be of benefit	Needs to be addressed/should not be ignored	Cannot be resolved through mediation, should be reported

More than one in five students report being bullied.

Source: Adapted from Jennifer Astles, DASA Newsletter, January 2014, TST BOCES and modified by the School District of Lee County, Student Services

Typical peer conflict, rude, or mean behavior is NOT the same as bullying.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices and can occur through text messages and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming. It involves sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else, and can include personal or private information causing embarrassment. This form of bullying can be very difficult to detect. Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

Persistent - Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief. The information can be easily and quickly shared, which makes it difficult to contain or stop negative messages.

Permanent - Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if it is not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.

Hard to Notice - Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.

Anonymous - According to the Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, almost half of those victimized do not know the identity of the perpetrator, which makes it easy for one child to hurt another and not be held accountable.

> **30.4% of Florida middle and high school students reported being cyberbullied**
>
> **12.9% reported cyberbullying others**
>
> **2021 Florida Youth Survey**

> To view Prevention Service's "Cyberbullying" video or our short student video, "Bullying Hurts", please visit our **Bullying Prevention webpage**

Bystanders and Upstanders

Bullying situations usually involve bystanders - those who watch bullying happen or hear about it. Unfortunately, the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that any one of them will help.

Upstanders are those that stand up for the target; they have the power to play a key role in preventing or stopping bullying. They may directly intervene (if they feel safe to do so) by discouraging the person bullying, defending the target, or by redirecting the situation. An upstander may provide an escape for the target. Or, they may get help by reporting the bullying to an adult.

57% of bullying situations STOP In 10 seconds when 1 peer intervenes
80% of bullying situations STOP In 10 seconds when 2 peers intervene
90% of bullying situations STOP In 10 seconds when 3 peers intervene

Is Your Child Being Bullied?

If your child exhibits one or more of these warning signs, they may be experiencing bullying.

- Withdraws socially, has few or no friends
- Loses interest in favorite activities
- Frequently complains of illness
- Doesn't want to go to school
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Has unexplainable injuries
- Brings home damaged possessions or reports them as lost
- Cries easily; displays mood swings

PACER's **Bullying Prevention 101** are quick guides with helpful tips for both students and parents.

8.8% of Florida middle and high school students reported skipping school because of bullying.

2021 Florida Youth Survey

SDLC Bullying and Harassment Policy

The School District of Lee County will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment between students and/or adults on our school campuses. Our goal is protection of our students, and provision of a safe and nurturing educational environment for all of our students and staff.

Schools are required to investigate all bullying complaints. Once the investigations are completed, parents will receive letters notifying them of the outcome. However, due to confidentiality laws, parents will not be given information about consequences given to students other than their own children.

The School Board of Lee County's **Policy 4.14**, created to comply with *The Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act*, describes what type of behavior is considered bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying. This policy also explains employee requirements for reporting and investigating complaints.

How Do I File a Bullying Report?

To report a suspected bullying incident parents may:

- Contact your child's school by phone or email and make a report to school personnel
- Make a report at the school in person
- Complete the Bullying Complaint Form found online and turn it in to the school's Administrative Office or to the Lee County Public Education Center - Student Services Department.

Bullying Complaint Form