

This resource guide provides school counselors, educators, administrators and parents with: Cyber bullying terminology; Policies and procedures information; Assessment tools; Psychological, educational, social therapeutic interventions; "Hands on", reproducible forms; and Easy to access text material and resource information

Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools: A Resource Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents

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Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools:

A Resource Guide for Counselors, Educators and Parents

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CHAPTER 3: PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

To date, most responses to cyber bullying are aimed at the student(s) who are the perpetrators, and the focus has been disciplinary in nature. As stated previously, schools have tended to turn the problem back to the parents or use 'tried and true' disciplinary measures of detention, suspension and expulsion. Alternatives to traditional programs must be established. 'Thinking outside of the box' must also occur both in terms of the target level and focus of responses, as well as consideration of the nuances or key factors associated with on-line communications.

Overview

In this chapter we will review traditional programs that are currently instituted, the benefits, the concerns, and provide an opportunity to begin to explore program development.

This chapter will cover:

- Traditional Programs
- Levels
- Focus
- Nuances
- Inferences

- Program Development Forms
- Cyber Bullying Program Worksheet
- Cyber Bullying Program Timeline Worksheet
- Counselor/School Resource Chart
- Parent Resource Chart
- Study Questions

Traditional Programs

Looking at the traditional programs, their effectiveness or lack of leaves clues to creating new programs to keep pace with our changing technologies. It is clear that many of the programs commonly instituted in schools today such as 'Zero Tolerance', '3 Strikes and You're Out', 'Anger Management', 'Skill building', 'Self-Esteem Building', and 'Mediation' aren't effective (Fleming, Towey, Limber, Gross, Rubin, Wright & Anderson, 2002; Fuentes, 2003; Skiba & Peterson's 1999, 2003;

http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/youthviolence/surgeongeneral/SG_Site/chapter5/sec3.asp). Some of the problems cited with these existing programs include:

- ❖ An unwillingness to report
- ❖ A wide net of those involved in (cyber) bullying incidents
- ❖ Power differentials existing between 'perpetrator' and 'victim'
- ❖ Need for pros-social models

- ❖ Acquisition of additional negative behaviors in group modalities of perpetrators
- ❖ Evidence of adequate self-esteem in some cases

Programs Levels

Program levels refer to the different resources you are targeting or enlisting in the development of your program. As stated above, most responses have been aimed at the students involved and changing their behavior. More recent work suggests the need to broaden the response to address the school and community environment as well. Children do not operate in a vacuum at school. Systems need to be supportive of required changes of the children and of themselves. Support for such changes must come from the ‘top down’. Interventions must occur at the parent/community, school, classroom and individual levels (<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/details/BPPdetails.html>). A recent article entitled “It takes a village: Bringing school into the community and community into the school” (Cushman, 2005) emphasizes a critical issue in cyber bullying, that students cannot be addressed in isolation of the wider spectrum of players, namely, the school environment, parents, and the community at large.

Fundamental to core school programs in the schools such as Character Education (<http://www.goodcharacter.com>), Safe and Responsive Schools (<http://www.unl.edu/srs>), and Search Institute’s Developmental Assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.htm>), creates a notion of a caring, supportive school and community

environment. Increasing attention is being directed towards the fact that it is the school environment which needs to experience change as opposed to targeting programs at addressing the 'child's' problems (http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/bullying_fs.html).

Responses to Cyber Bullying must come from:

- ❖ **Students**
- ❖ **School Counselors**
- ❖ **School Educators**
- ❖ **Parents**
- ❖ **Community**

Programs Focus

The focus needs to move beyond isolated disciplinary responses, which are often determined, prior to or without a comprehensive assessment process completed. Fundamental principles of behavior change indicate that punishment only dissolves a behavior, but does not teach the recipient how to respond. Similarly, disciplinary measures utilized in isolation, without concern for assessment or therapeutic response, are not effective. The message that the behavior will not be tolerated is certainly enforced. Yet the perpetrators, who were often first victims, are left without assistance in identifying the motivation for and a chance to correct the behavior. In addition, not all those involved may be equally confronted. To date, the primary focus has been on disciplinary measures rather than therapeutic ones in addressing the cyber bully.

Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools

Clearly, there is a need to step back and look at issues of therapeutic responses, both in terms of intervention and prevention measures. Much can be obtained from the literature on *Character Education, Developmental Assets, and Resiliency* in these domains.

- ❖ **Assessment**
- ❖ **Psychological Interventions**
- ❖ **Education**
- ❖ **Social Skills Building**
- ❖ **Proactive & Positive Responses**

A summary of the focal points in this literature as well as key issues obtained from general bullying research is presented in the chart below. In general, the focus of responses to cyber bullying should include the following areas:

RESOURCE INFORMATION AND CONTENT CHART

RESOURCE	INFORMATION
<p><i>Bullying: Facts for Schools and Parents</i></p> <p>By (Andrea Cohn & Andrea Canter, Ph.D., NCSP National Association of School Psychologists)</p> <p>(http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/bullying_fs.html)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Early intervention. Researchers advocate intervening in elementary or middle school, or as early as preschool. Group and building-wide social skills training is highly recommended, as well as counseling and systematic aggression interventions for students exhibiting bullying and victim behaviors. School psychologists and other mental health personnel are particularly well-trained to provide such training as well as assistance in selecting and evaluating prevention programs. ❖ Parent training. Parents must learn to reinforce their children’s positive behavior patterns and model appropriate interpersonal interactions. School psychologists, social workers and counselors can help parents support children who tend to become victims as well as recognize bullying behaviors that require intervention. ❖ Teacher training. Training can help teachers identify and respond to potentially damaging victimization as well as to implement positive feedback and modeling to address appropriate social interactions. Support services personnel working with administrators can help design effective teacher training modules. ❖ Attitude change. Researchers maintain that society must cease defending bullying behavior as part of growing up or with the attitude of “kids will be kids.” Bullying can be stopped! School personnel should never ignore bullying behaviors. ❖ Positive school environment. Schools with easily understood rules of conduct, smaller class sizes and fair discipline practices report less violence. A positive school climate will reduce bullying and victimization.
<p><i>Character Education</i></p> <p>(http://charactered.com)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trustworthiness ❖ Respect ❖ Responsibility ❖ Fairness ❖ Caring ❖ Citizenship ❖ Honesty ❖ Courage ❖ Diligence

Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools

RESOURCE	INFORMATION
<p>Character Education (http://goodcharacter.com)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trustworthiness ❖ Respect ❖ Responsibility ❖ Fairness/Justice ❖ Caring ❖ Citizenship ❖ Honesty ❖ Courage ❖ Diligence ❖ Integrity
<p>Developmental Assets (http://www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.htm)</p>	<p>External Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Support ❖ Empowerment ❖ Boundaries & Expectations ❖ Constructive Use of Time <p>Internal Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Commitment to Learning ❖ Positive Values ❖ Social Competencies ❖ Positive Identity
<p>General Bullying (Hoover & Oliver, 1996)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reverse Role Playing ❖ Behavioral Contracting ❖ Incentive Systems ❖ Self-Monitoring ❖ Rehearsal & Imagery
<p>Resiliency (Garmezy, 1983)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Positive Peer and Adult Responses ❖ Low Degrees of Defensiveness and Aggressiveness ❖ High Degrees of Participation, Cooperation & Emotional Stability ❖ A Positive Sense of Self ❖ A Sense of Personal Power rather than Powerlessness ❖ An Internal Locus of Control

RESOURCE	INFORMATION
<p>Strong Kids: The Oregon Resiliency Project</p> <p>(http://orpuoregon.edu)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Emotional Strength Training ❖ Understanding Your Feelings ❖ Dealing with Anger ❖ Understanding Other People's Feelings ❖ Clear Thinking & Power of Positive Thinking ❖ Solving People Problems ❖ Letting Go of Stress ❖ Behavior Change
<p>Surgeon General</p> <p>(http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/youthviolence/sugeongeneral/SG_Site/chapter5/sec3.asp)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Skills Training, e.g. Life Skills Training ❖ Behavior Monitoring, Reinforcement and Techniques ❖ Building Capacity ❖ Cooperative Learning ❖ Positive Youth Development Programs ❖ Parent Training Moral Reasoning ❖ Social Problem Solving & Thinking Skills ❖ Social Perspective Taking, Role Taking ❖ Wraparound Services <p>Examples of programs which are ineffective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Peer Counseling & Peer Mediation ❖ Boot Camps & Residential Programs ❖ Individual Counseling

Programs Nuances

The dangers of putting things in writing have long been recognized, especially when writers are in an emotional state. A physical document of the response exists, messages may be misinterpreted, and feelings may change once the initial reaction to an event has changed with time. Compounding these issues are the developmental characteristics of children. Youth tend to be impulsive, writing without thinking and simply mimicking what is being written to them in a 'one upmanship' way. Children also tend to feel invincible, thinking they'll never get caught or nothing bad will happen to them. It is especially important to consider several key factors associated with on-line communication, especially in terms of dealing with children, as outlined by Willard (2006):

- ❖ Not all cyber bullying behavior will reach a threatening level; threats can come from both the cyber bully and the target
- ❖ Negative interactions observed among students are probably being played out on-line as well
- ❖ Impersonation must be considered when evidence of cyber bullying is found; conversely those accused may falsely cite it as defense
- ❖ Electronic communications may make the messages seem more serious than they are as on-line language tends to be coarser
- ❖ Teens may use the Internet to play-act, experiment with different personalities; never present in person or is likely to be threatening

- ❖ Technology facilitates open disclosure; a forum to gain insight into youth's emotional states/the most concerning threat might not come from the student who has posted material but the target
- ❖ Differentiation between 'put down speech' (continuation of in person bullying) vs. 'get back speech' (retaliation for face to face bullying)
- ❖ The need to ensure safety of all concerned should not result in further victimization of an already victimized student (p. 75-76).

Programs Inferences

When reviewing literature concerning cyber bullying, it presents information to further support key points to consider when developing your cyber bullying program. Inferences from this review of the literature include:

- ❖ Assessment of the cyber bully and situation is essential
- ❖ Nuances associated with on-line communications must be evaluated fully
- ❖ Cyber bullying may involve a community of students interfacing with one another, not just isolated one-to-one situations
- ❖ Focus needs to move beyond the individual student to the school environment and larger community
- ❖ Efforts must be made to engage all students and larger community
- ❖ Disciplinary responses alone are not sufficient

Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools

- ❖ Attention needs to move beyond the 'pathology' to skill building, e.g. social skills, problem solving skills, and interventions based on cognitive-behavioral and empathy models
- ❖ Programs which involve students in constructive projects outside of school are important
- ❖ Helping the cyber bully has a domino effect in preventing further victimization.
- ❖ Children are not disposable but must be engaged
- ❖ Assessment and therapeutic responses are a team effort, not the sole responsibility of one school staff member
- ❖ Efforts must be proactive not just reactive

Program Development Forms

In order for responses to be proactive and pertinent, it is important to step back and identify what programs, if any, exist in the school district to specifically address cyber bullying. Below are some key components which should be considered in either the evaluation of existing programs or with respect to the development of new programs. Use these worksheets to identify your areas of strength and those requiring further attention. A goal setting outline is available for you to prioritize the actions needed to custom tailor a cyber bullying program that will best fit your situation.

These worksheets include:

- ❖ **Cyber Bullying Program Worksheet**
- ❖ **Cyber Bullying Program Timeline Worksheet**
- ❖ **Parent Resource Chart**
- ❖ **Counselor/School Resource Chart**

Insight into such a worksheet may also be obtained from reviewing the literature on general bullying (Brewster & Railsback, 2001), and school counselor program improvement (NYSSCA, 2005).

Cyber Bullying Program Worksheet

#	ASK YOURSELF	Response	Goal
1	How have cyber bullying incidents been defined & addressed?		
2	How have cyber bullying incidents been reported?		
3	How have cyber bullying incidents been assessed? (See intake assessment form)		
4	Do you have response measures that are being used due to familiarity, comfort level, fear, and or time constraints?		
5	How are needs analysis conducted (Method, personnel, and target participants)?		
6	How are administrators involved and who are they?		
7	Which school staff members will become involved in the program? Do they require training?		
8	What professionals in the community are available to assist or support the potential needs?		

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#	ASK YOURSELF	Response	Goal
9	Is a plan in place to involve parents?		
10	What are your documentation and/or measurements?		
11	What interventions or strategies do you have?		
12	What are the formative and summative evaluation measures, who will conduct them?		
13	How and to whom will feedback from the evaluation be disseminated?		
14	Do you have a plan to implement changes based on evaluations completed?		
15	What are the strengths and shortcomings of the programs? (Potential barriers)		
16	What do you have in place to overcome these barriers?		
17	Are financial resources available?		

Cyber Bullying Program Timeline Worksheet

#	GOAL	Action to Take	Target Date	End Date
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

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#	GOAL	Action to Take	Target Date	End Date
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools

#	GOAL	Action to Take	Target Date	End Date
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				

Resource Chart

In addition, it is recommended that you compose a resource list that administrators, teachers, and parents can use to refer to for additional support and guidance. Remember, this is not a task that should be taken on by one person. Enlist the resources around you to strengthen the effectiveness of cyber bully prevention and intervention. Below is a blank resource chart for you to complete. Once you have reviewed the materials in this manual and the suggested web pages, select those resources that fit your individual needs.

If you are a counselor or administrator, your focus should be to complete the School Resource Chart. Make this information available to all those requiring information or additional support.

If you are a parent, complete the parent version of this chart. It will allow you to have a reference list ready and available when you need a quick source of information.

Counselor/School Resource Chart

Name	Contact Information	Resource Value
School Counselor:		
Professional Support:		
Books:		
Books:		
Web Sites:		
Web Sites:		
Web Sites:		
Web Sites:		
Additional Resource:		
Additional Resource:		

Additional Notes:

Parent Resource Chart

Name	Contact Information	Resource Value
School Counselor:		
Teacher:		
Teacher:		
Administrators:		
Professional Support:		
Professional Support:		
Books:		
Books:		
Web sites:		
Web sites:		
Web sites:		
Web sites:		
Web sites:		
Internet Safety Agreement:		

Study Questions

- ✓ In your school, what programs exist to address cyber bullying?

- ✓ How are such programs communicated within each school?

- ✓ How and when are the programs evaluated?

- ✓ What documentation is required?

- ✓ What staff is involved in the implementation of the program?

- ✓ What are the positives and deficits of such programs?

- ✓ What are the major roadblocks regarding such programs?

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