Rationale for Draft Policy Statement on Bullying

This policy and its accompanying rationale were drafted with extensive input from the Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet), a network of 58 Canadian researchers and 48 national organizations committed to promoting healthy relationships in the lives of children through collaboration in research.

1. Since Olweus’s agenda setting early work on bullying, bullying has been defined as a problem in relationships in which power is used to cause distress to another person (Olweus, 1993; Pepler, Craig, Connolly, Yuile, McMaster & Jiang, 2006). Power and aggression can be asserted in different ways: physically, verbally, nonverbally, through exclusion, malicious gossiping, and racial, homophobic or gender-based harassment (Olweus, 1993; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman & Kaukiainen, 1996; Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann & Jugert, 2006; Peterson & Ray, 2006; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

2. Bullying is harmful to all involved: A child who bullies is learning to use power and aggression to control others. ((Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, Ruan, & the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group, 2004; Pepler et al., 2006). A child who is bullied becomes trapped in an abusive relationship and needs help to stop the bullying. Being bullied can cause serious negative effects on mental and physical health. Peers who witness bullying can also be negatively affected. (Arseneault, Walsh, Trzesniewski, Newcombe, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2006; Beran & Li, 2005; Campbell & Morrison, 2007; Dao et al., 2006; Delfabbro et al., 2006; Due, Hansen, Merlo, Andersen & Holstein, 2007; Due et al.,2005; Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006; Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2004; Friedman, Koeske, Silvestre, Korr, & Sites, 2006; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara & Kernic, 2005; Gruber & Fineran, 2007; Kim, Koh & Leventhal, 2005; Kshirsagar, Agarwal & Bavdekar, 2007; Mitchell, Ybarra & Finkelhor, 2007; Nansel et al., 2004; Newman, Holden & Delville, 2005; Nordhagen, Nielson, Stigum & Köhler, 2005; Park, Schepp, Jang, & Koo, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Peskin, Tortolero, Markham, Addy, & Baumler, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Rivers, 2004); Sourander et al., 2007; Stein, Dukes & Warren, 2007; Ybarra, 2004; Ybarra, Diener-West & Leaf, 2007; Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007; Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006.)

3. Bullying occurs in all places where children and youth live, learn, and play. As the primary institution in children’s lives, schools have a key role to play in addressing bullying, but all community organizations and all adults share the responsibility for creating safe and welcoming environments, free of bullying, for children. Adults are essential for children and youth’s healthy relationships. All adults are responsible for creating positive environments, promoting healthy relationships, and ending violence in the lives of children and youth. They are
role models and must lead by example and refrain from using their power aggressively. Adults must look for, listen, and respond to bullying. Adults can organize social activities in ways that protect and support children’s relationships and stop bullying. (Black & Jackson, 2007; Craig, Pepler & Atlas, 2000; Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005)

4. Being safe in relationships is a fundamental human right. All children and youth have the right to be safe and free from harm in their relationships. (Kandersteg Declaration, 2007; United Nations, 1989).

5. As a relationship problem, bullying requires relationship solutions. Children and youth need help to understand that bullying is wrong, develop respect and empathy for others, and learn how to get along with and support others. Interventions should begin early and be tailored to children’s age, gender, and diverse needs and capacities. They should include all children and youth involved: Those who bully, those who are victimized, and those who witness it must all be involved in solutions to bullying. All of these individuals need to learn alternative strategies to resolve a bullying situation. Responses to bullying should promote healthy relationships. Responding to bullying is an opportunity to provide support and promote healthy relationships, as well as discipline. Discipline should take the form of formative rather than punitive consequences. Formative consequences are activities that not only provide a clear message that bullying is unacceptable, but also promote the development of respect and empathy for others. In describing and dealing with bullying, it is the bullying behaviour that is the problem, not the person. It is important to avoid labeling children and youth as “bullies” and “victims” because these labels limit how they think about themselves and how others think of them. All children and youth have strengths and the capacity for healthy relationships. (Chisholm, 2006; Craig, Pepler & Blais, 2007; Pepler, 2006; Pepler, Craig, Connolly & Henderson, 2002; Pepler, Smith & Rigby, 2004; Olweus, 2004; Olweus & Endresen, 1998; Rigby, 2002; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen & Voeten, 2005; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004; Whitted & Dupper, 2005)
References


