OLWEUS®
BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM

It is a fundamental human right for all children to be educated in a safe and humane school community.

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is typically repeated over time.[1] Bullying is recognized as an urgent public health issue and remains prevalent in schools around the world.

Meta-analyses have revealed that bullying prevention programs are effective in reducing bullying and that those programs "inspired by the work of Dan Olweus worked best." [2]

Why the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Works:

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) incorporates what researchers and practitioners have identified as best practices in bullying prevention and intervention.[3]

1. Focus on the whole school environment

The OBPP is a comprehensive, school-wide program that involves the entire school community in the form of schoolwide interventions, classroom activities, and individual interventions. To reduce bullying, it is important to change the climate of the school and the social norms with regard to bullying. It must become normative for staff and students to notice and respond when a child is bullied or left out. Since bullying is not the sole responsibility of any single individual at a school, it requires buy-in and efforts of everyone in the school environment - teachers, administrators, counselors, non-teaching staff (such as bus drivers, nurses, school resource officers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and school librarians) parents, and students.

2. Assess bullying at school

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ) is an anonymous, research-based survey administered to students in grades 3-12 that assesses the nature, extent, and location of bullying problems in a school. Adults are not always accurate in estimating the prevalence of bullying at their school and are frequently surprised by the amount of bullying that students experience, the types of bullying that are most common, or the hot spots where bullying happens. Surveying annually is recommended to determine program effectiveness and areas for continued attention.

3. Form a group to support bullying prevention activities

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee (BPCC) is a representative group from the school that includes an administrator, a teacher from each grade, a member of non-teaching staff, a school counselor or other school-based mental health professional, a parent, and a community representative to serve as the leadership team for program implementation at the school. The BPCC undergoes a comprehensive, highly organized 12-hour training by a specially trained Olweus Coach or Certified Olweus Trainer-Consultant. This team then meets at least monthly to plan bullying prevention activities, train and motivate staff, students, and families, and ensure that efforts continue over time.

4. Train all staff in bullying prevention

The BPCC ensures that administrators, faculty, and all other staff are adequately trained to understand the nature of bullying and its effects, how to respond if they observe bullying, and how to work with others at the school to help prevent bullying from occurring. Every adult should receive clear guidance about how to identify bullying and opportunities to role play intervening in bullying situations. Initially, staff participate in six hours of training. Ongoing professional development is provided through small group learning opportunities.

5. Establish and enforce school rules and policies related to bullying

The OBPP recommends that schools adopt four straightforward rules about bullying.

- We will not bully others
- We will try to help students who are bullied
- We will try to include students who are left out
- If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Rules are taught to students and are posted throughout the school. Appropriate methods of positive reinforcement and corrective consequences are developed to ensure that students are aware of adult expectations that they refrain from bullying and help students who are bullied.

6. Involve children in regular discussions about bullying

Allow for student voice in bullying prevention to engage children and youth as active partners in creating and maintaining a safe and humane school climate. Regular class meetings, or student circle discussions, are a core component of the OBPP classroom activities. Teachers (with the support of administrators) should set aside class time each week (K-8) or every other week (9-12) to discuss bullying, peer relations, and other social and emotional issues with students. These meetings help teachers keep their fingers on the pulse of students' concerns, foster mutually respectful relationships between adults and children and between peers, and provide tools for students to address bullying and other social problems. A student advisory group can also be formed to focus on bullying prevention and provide valuable feedback to adults.

7. Increase adult supervision in locations where bullying occurs

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire provides information to help schools identify hot spots where bullying occurs, allowing the BPCC to review and refine the school's supervision plan so bullying is less likely to occur. Bullying tends to thrive in locations where adults are not present or are not vigilant. Once bullying hot spots have been identified, the BPCC reviews and coordinates ways to increase adult presence in these locations.

8. Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations

The OBPP encourages staff to intervene when bullying is witnessed, suspected, or reported, and provides training so all staff are well prepared to intervene when necessary. The five step on-the-spot intervention guides all staff in what to do if they witness bullying first-hand. Follow-up interventions provide opportunities for students, staff and caregivers to engage in deeper conversations about the bullying incident to develop solutions for student safety and positive growth.

9. Garner family support for bullying prevention

The comprehensive components of the OBPP include resources that encourage family involvement from the planning stages through implementation. Families need to hear that the school is concerned, aware, and actively working to stop the bullying. They are an integral part of schoolwide efforts, classroom activities, and in individual bullying situations involving their child. Family meetings and ongoing communication strengthen homeschool connection while building support for program implementation.

10. Provide ongoing support

OBPP implementation is a highly supported process created by a multi-layered system of consultative support. School-based leadership teams receive ongoing assistance from their Olweus Coach or a Certified Trainer-Consultant. This OBPP representative, in turn, receives mentoring support from the program's United States home-base at the Center for Safe Schools through consultation with an Olweus Mentor. This tiered support structure along with materials developed by the OBPP provide schools with everything needed to implement the program with fidelity.

11. Continue efforts over time

Successful bullying prevention requires a long-term commitment. The OBPP is a framework for creating systemic change to build a school climate that doesn't allow bullying to happen. Attitudes and norms in a school setting don't change overnight, but they can and will shift over time. There should be no end date for bullying prevention. It requires continuous attention and should be woven into the entire school environment to become a daily part of school life. The OBPP can be successfully integrated with other universal prevention efforts to create safe and humane school communities.

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1. Gladden, R. M., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Hamburger, M. E., & Lumpkin, C. D. (2014). *Bullying surveillance among youths: Uniform definitions for public health and recommended data elements, version 1.0.* Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Education. Olweus, D., Limber, S. P., Flerx, V.C., Mullin, N., Riese, J., & Snyder, M. (2007). *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Schoolwide Guide*. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

2. Ttofi, M. M., Farrington, D. P., & Baldry, A. C. (2008). *Effectiveness of programmes to reduce bullying*. Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. See also: Ttofi , M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2009). What works in preventing bullying: Effective elements of anti-bullying programmes. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 1, 13–24. For additional information on the effectiveness of the OBPP, see: Olweus, D. & Limber, S. P. (2010). Bullying in school: Evaluation and dissemination of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 80*, 124-134.

3. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2016. *Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy, and Practice*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/23482.