



## UNDERSTANDING BULLYING: AN OVERVIEW

### Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a form of youth violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines bullying as any **unwanted aggressive behavior** that involves an observed or **perceived power imbalance** and is **repeated** multiple times or is **highly likely to be repeated**. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth, including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.

### Types of Bullying

There are four main types of bullying: verbal, social, physical, and cyberbullying.

- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
  - Teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, or threatening to cause harm
- **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as **relational bullying**, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
  - Leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, or embarrassing someone in public
- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
  - Hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone's things, or making mean or rude hand gestures
- **Cyberbullying** utilizes electronic devices (computers, cell phones, social media, gaming devices, etc.). Cyberbullying may include:
  - Posting/sending hurtful texts/emails/posts/images/videos, making online threats, imitating others online or using their log-in, deliberately excluding others online, spreading gossip or rumors

### Peer Conflict vs. Bullying

Recognizing the difference between what is normal conflict among peers versus what is bullying is an important concept. Many times, what is called bullying is just misrecognized normal peer conflict and vice versa.

NORMAL PEER CONFLICT	BULLYING
Equal power or friends	Imbalance of power – not friends
Happens occasionally	Repeated negative actions
Accidental	Purposeful
Not serious	Serious with threat of physical or emotional harm
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction from target; little or no emotional reaction from person bullying
Not seeking power or attention	Seeking power, control, or material things
Not trying to get something	Attempt to gain material things or power
Remorse – will take responsibility	No remorse – blames target
Effort to solve the problem	No effort to solve problem

## Implications of Language: The Importance of Not Labeling Kids

When referring to a bullying situation, it is easy to call the kids who bully others "bullies" and those who are targeted "victims," but this may have unintended consequences. When children are labeled as "bullies" or "victims" it may:

- Send the message that the child's behavior cannot change
- Fail to recognize the multiple roles children might play in different bullying situations
- Disregard other factors contributing to the behavior, such as peer influence or school climate

**Instead of labeling the children involved, focus on the behavior.**

Instead of	Use this
"bully"	"the child who bullied"
"victim"	"the child who was bullied"
"bully/victim"	"the child who was both bullied and bullied others"

## Frequency of Bullying

Bullying is a prevalent occurrence for our students in New Mexico. According to the state-wide [New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey \(YRRS\)](#), the rates of bullying in New Mexico are parallel to that of the U.S. Among New Mexico high school students in the 2017 YRRS,

- 18% were bullied on school property within the last year
  - Students who identify as transgender were bullied almost twice as much (32.4%)
  - Students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or unsure of their sexual orientation were bullied 1.5x as much as their straight peers (26.8%)
- 13.7% of all students were electronically bullied
- 10.1% of all students skipped school because of safety concerns

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON BULLYING EDUCATION

- [StopBullying.Gov](#) (including [Cyberbullying](#))
- [CDC Bullying Prevention](#)
- [National Education Association](#)
- [Teaching Tolerance](#)
- [Olweus Bullying Prevention Program](#)
- [GLSEN](#)
- [Committees for Children](#)