

Bullying FAQ:

Why is cyberbullying a controversial issue in our community?

Cyberbullying IS a problem in our community. Let's look at why: it is so easy to do, sometimes the target does not know who started it, it is very hard to tell how many people saw the bullying, and it causes harm to ones psychological, social, and emotional well being. Cyberbullies pretend they are other people online to trick others; spread lies and rumors about targets, post pictures without people's consent. Cyberbullying is directly related to student's poor attendance; drop in grades, and suicide. Cyberbullying in Hawaii has been directly linked to depression, anxiety, and suicidiality. Victims of cyber bullying are: 2.5 times more likely to binge drink or abuse marijuana; 2 times more likely to report depression; and 3.2 times more likely to attempt suicide (YRBS, 2009).

One local story:

There is a local girl who was running for class president. She was cyber bullied by students in her class. They were sending emails, texts, and posting on facebook "do not vote for ..." She was really offended by this because she was not sure who was doing it, but it hurt her feelings a lot. She went to the principal and the principal saw this was a problem and held assemblies about cyber bullying.

What should one do when being cyberbullied?

When people think they are being cyberbullied they should let someone (an adult) know. Do not forward the message/picture because this would make you as guilty as the person who sent it to you. Tell a parent, teacher, school counselor, or other trusted adult.

How to prevent cyberbullying?

Stopping cyber bullying can be difficult. One solution that has come up has been to hold the cyber bully accountable for their actions. This means that criminal charges can be pressed against the bully. Raising awareness in schools has been a great prevention effort. This just means that students will learn what cyber bullying is and what will happen to people if they do it. If someone was to be cyber bullied, they should save the email/text/post, show a parent, and then tell the police. If it happened in a school setting, there are procedures that the school officials must follow. This may mean that they will suspend/expel the bully and provide counseling for the target.

What is Hawaii's law against bullying?

The state of Hawaii defines cyberbullying and bullying as:

-written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication including but not limited to a communication shown to be motivated by a student's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry or ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability, gender, gender identity and expression, or other distinguishing personal characteristic, when the written, verbal, or physical act or electronic communication is intended to:

- Physically harm a student or damage the student's property;
- Substantially interfere with a student's educational opportunities;
- Be so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- Substantially disrupt the orderly operation of the school.

-“Electronic communication” means any communication through an electronic device including but not limited to a telephone, cellular phone, computer, or pager, which communication includes but is not limited to electronic mail (email), instant messaging, text messages, blogs, mobile phones, pagers, online games, and websites.”

SECTION 1. (a) The board of education shall monitor the department of education for compliance with any department of education administrative rules or statutes governing bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment.

(b) The board of education shall establish reporting requirements for the department of education to report to the board of education on the department of education's compliance with any department of education administrative rules or statutes governing bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment.

(c) As used in this Act, "bullying", "cyberbullying", and "harassment" shall have the same meanings as defined in any department of education administrative rules or statutes governing bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment.

SECTION 2. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2011.

How can I help my friend?

Tell a trusted adult. For example, tell a teacher, school administrator, parent, or any other trusted adult.

Listen to your friend's feelings about their situation and make sure that they know that it is not their fault.

If your friend is in danger of being physically assaulted in the school, find a teacher right away and try to stop the situation if you feel comfortable.

What are some resources to find more information?

Here is the Department of Education harassment/ bullying complaint form:

<http://doe.k12.hi.us/civilrights/forms/form4211StudentComplaintAgainstEmployee%20.pdf>

Local Resources:

Mental Health America of Hawaii

www.mentalhealth-hi.org

Education and advocacy about mental health and mental wellness.

The ACCESS Line

808-832-3100 Oahu, 800-753-6879 Neighbor Islands

24/7 hotline for crisis and/or to access mental health services in HI.

National Resources:

The Trevor Project

www.thetrevorproject.org

866-488-7386

Crisis and suicide prevention efforts for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.

Stop Bullying Now!

www.stopbullying.gov

resources and information about bullying and bullying prevention efforts.

Teaching Tolerance

www.tolerance.org

provides FREE educational resources to teachers and educators dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving relationships, and promoting social justice.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255

What if my child is the bully?

Finding out your child is a bully can be very upsetting. I would like to emphasize that bullying is a behavior, not a person. Here are some ways to approach this situation:

- Attempt to find out what is going on from your child's point of view.
- Having an understanding of what your child can expect if this behavior continues is important. For example, discipline may be necessary (grounding, taking away phone, removal from sports, etc.)
- Enforce positive reinforcement. Educate your child about how to walk away, or how to diffuse a situation and praise them when they practice good behavior.
- Have open discussion on why bullying is not good.
- Educate child on being sensitive to others feelings.

What can teachers do?

Teachers have a huge responsibility for the education, development, socialization, and safety of our youth. Some positive behaviors that can help troubled youth are:

- Be consistent with addressing the bullying issue. Do not intervene just once, intervene all the time

25% of teachers see nothing wrong with behavior

Does bullying lead to suicide?

Bullying does not directly lead to suicide; however, it may be one of the many contributing factors for a suicide.

Let's look at some risk factors for suicide:

- Substance abuse
- Depression
- Victim of bullying/ abuse/ assault/ rape/ violence
- Exposure to suicide ex: family member, friend
- Relationship problems
- Financial problems
- Undiagnosed mental illness/ mental illness

When does bullying start?

Bullying starts when an individual uses an imbalance of power, has intent to do harm, and displays the behavior over and over (name calling, taking money, etc.) or just once (fight, assault, rape, etc.). Sadly, there have been reports of bullying as early as elementary school. Bullying is a behavior, not a person, so the earlier someone learns the behavior, the earlier they will start bullying.

Some local stories:

During elementary school, a girl was teased about her weight and figure. She was called "Gail Whale" many times. She would buy the people teasing her gifts hoping they would stop. This did not work. The effect of this was that this child became so isolated that she ate lunch in the bathroom. Eventually she lost 85 lbs and then the same people started to call her anorexic. Not one teacher intervened and she still has an eating disorder to this day.

An eleven year old used to get called "gay" daily in his classroom. He had suicidal thoughts surface and spoke with teachers, his counselor, and the vice principal. Students isolated him in school and teachers said that they "could see both sides." The other students avoided playing with him in gym and would never sit where he sat. The teachers viewed this as accommodating behavior, sad but nevertheless amusing.