

**Office of Safe & Drug-Free Schools  
2009 National Conference**

**Creating Bully-Resistant Schools:  
Assuming Local Guardianship of the Bullying Problem**

**Presented  
by  
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*Building Communities of Safety and Effectiveness*

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## Why Establish Local Guardianship Over Your School's Bullying Problem?

Establishing local guardianship over a problem presents stakeholders with the opportunity to assume responsibility for solving a problem of common concern.

Local guardianship brings with it:

- A shared sense of responsibility
- An opportunity to collaborate
- The benefit of shared motivation
- The opportunity to apply team problem solving skills
- A broader recognition of a problem
- Cultural understanding of a problem
- A diversity of perspectives
- An expanded pool of talent
- Expanded access to resources
- Cultural responsiveness
- A shared sense of ongoing stewardship
- The opportunity to craft a response that reflects the wants and needs of the community.

**Stop Bullying Now**, the national bullying prevention and intervention initiative of HRSA, the Human Resources and Services Administration, division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supports the strategy of local guardianship over the bullying problem, through the establishment of a bullying workgroup. The initiative cites the practice as a *best practice* in bullying prevention and intervention.

### ***Stop Bullying Now: Best Practices in Bullying Prevention and Intervention #4***

***“Form a group to coordinate the school’s bullying prevention activities.***

*Bullying prevention efforts seem to work best if they are coordinated by a representative group from the school. This coordinating team (which might include an administrator, a teacher from every grade, a member of the non-teaching staff, a school counselor or other school-based mental health professional, a school nurse, and a parent) should meet regularly to digest bullying data, plan bullying prevention rules, policies, and activities, motivate staff, students, and parents; and ensure that the efforts continue over time. A student advisory group also can be formed to focus on bullying prevention and provide valuable suggestions and feedback to adults.”*

## **Establishing Guardianship With an Anti-Bullying Workgroup**

Establishing guardianship over bullying problems begins by identifying a group of stakeholders who are willing to assume responsibility for bullying prevention and intervention activities at your school. Together, these stakeholders become known as the anti-bullying workgroup

Equally important, as the workgroup's immediate tasks, is the role they will play in promoting a long-term commitment from the school community to creating and maintaining a school environment in which bullying is not tolerated and is consistently met with an immediate and effective response.

### **What authority is the basis for the anti-bullying workgroup to convene and act?.**

Schools free of fear, intimidation, threat or actual harm, are the common goals of many school safety plans, school policies, school and classroom rules, and education and penal codes. A peaceful and effective school is part of the vision behind many school mission statements. The efforts to effectively counter bullying and other harassment behaviors at school are also part and parcel of protecting the dignity and civil rights of students. The responsibility to act, under the various colors of authority, defines a relationship within which schools must assume the paramount duty to educate, protect and serve their students..

### **What role does the school principal play?**

Enlisting the principal's interest, commitment and involvement is critical to effectively countering bullying at any school. Current research indicates that schools with the principal's investment in preventing and responding to bullying problems have lower rates of bullying than those without the principal's support and resources.

### **Who should be included in the bullying workgroup?**

The membership list of the workgroup should draw from across the entire school community and include school community partners. The diversity of the workgroup can help to promote cultural responsiveness and effectiveness.

### **What does the bullying workgroup do?**

Over the course of time the activities of the workgroup will include a number of tasks. Some may remain the same year-to-year while others will evolve based on the school needs and emerging trends and issues regarding bullying and related behaviors. The goals of the workgroup may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Promoting high standards of conduct along side standards of academic excellence.
- Placing the topic of bullying on the school's safety agenda.
- Engaging the support of the larger community.
- Assisting the school leadership in promoting a safe and effective school.

The activities of the workgroup may include:

- ✓ Basic problem solving actions
  - Gathering data about the bullying problem.
  - Assessing and analyzing core causes and issues of bullying problems
  - Crafting responses to the bullying problem
  - Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of response strategies

- ✓ Conducting staff and parent education
- ✓ Conducting student education (program/curriculum selection and implementation)
- ✓ Reviewing and developing anti-bullying policy and rules
- ✓ Reviewing current bullying research
- ✓ Establishing a safe contacts network within the school community
- ✓ Reviewing the supervision plan
- ✓ Reviewing the effectiveness of the discipline program
- ✓ Building systems of support for bullies and targets of bullying.
- ✓ Identifying quality and cost-effective bullying prevention resources
- ✓ Building partnerships with law enforcement, mental health and other youth serving agencies
- ✓ Marketing the school's bullying prevention plan and program

### **What is the life-span of the bullying workgroup?**

The bullying workgroup should become an integral part of the school's design. The need for maintaining a school climate that promotes the safety, security, well-being and academic success of every student is not a passing trend.

### **How does the bullying workgroup differ from a social climate committee?**

A bullying workgroup is established based on the interest, focus, dedication, and motivation of members to effectively counter bullying at their school. The group will focus its efforts on studying and learning how to apply research-based ideas to the problem of bullying and related behaviors.

### **What other benefits are there to having an anti-bullying workgroup?**

Bullying is an act of social violence, and is related to other behaviors based on the abuse of personal and social power. Preventing and intervening on bullying behaviors will diffuse benefits to related problems such as, hazing, sexual harassment, bias-based incidents and hate crimes, harmful teasing, name-calling and foul language. Any effort that promotes the school safety mission also promotes the academic mission of a school.

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## Selecting Your Anti-Bullying Workgroup

**Directions:** Use the following guidelines and rationale to help with the selection of your school's anti-bullying workgroup. In addition, thinking outside the box can help recruit members with unique experiences or knowledge that will be of benefit to the workgroup. Aside from expertise some prospective members may add credibility with certain stakeholder groups within the school community,

For specific types of bullying problems, it may be helpful to invite the participation of community youth workers, juvenile justice workers, or members of the business and civic community

Remember that the membership of the original workgroup may be expanded at times to respond to new tasks or challenges. Even as members find it necessary to leave the group and new members take their place, it will be important to maintain the spirit, vision, commitment and historical perspective of the inaugural group

Stakeholder Role	Rationale	Possible Members
<p>A key member of the administrative team, preferably the principal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The efforts of the workgroup need the direct support and approval of school leadership to be effective.</li> <li>□ Dynamic communication between the workgroup and school leadership is critical to successful efforts.</li> </ul>	
<p>A school counselor, school psychologist or other community mental health professional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The training, insights and resources of these stakeholders are important when:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understanding issues related to aggression and violence</li> <li>▪ Designing systems of support for those involved in bullying</li> <li>▪ Assessing serious cases of bullying</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

<p>Classroom teachers from each grade level or department</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Teachers are the ones who are typically closest to school bullying problems. They are frontline responders to acts and reports of bullying.</li> <li>□ Teachers have the opportunity to teach students and parents about bullying and its consequences.</li> <li>□ Grade level teachers have insight into the developmental needs of students.</li> </ul>	
<p>Non-teaching staff members, volunteers, tutors, walk-on coaches, out-reach workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ These individuals can offer unique perspectives on the daily activities of students and the school day as well as less visible activities.</li> </ul>	
<p>School Resource Officer or other Law enforcement partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The training, insights and resources of these stakeholders are important to responding to cases of bullying that break the law</li> <li>□ Law enforcement officers are often trained in the art of community problem solving. The US Department of Justice offers bullying resources.</li> </ul> <p>* The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Policing offers bullying resources for SROs, as well as, Stop Bullying Prevent Crime, another law enforcement initiative.</p>	

<p>Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Students know how, when, where and to whom bullying happens. They know what it is called at your school.</li> <li>□ Students can teach their peers and siblings about bullying. They have the power to shape peer norms.</li> <li>□ Today's students are tomorrow's parents.</li> </ul>	
<p>Parent Representatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Informed parents can educate their children about bullying.</li> <li>□ Resolutions for bullying problems involve parents.</li> <li>□ Today's parents expect a response to school bullying problems.</li> <li>□ Parents must know how to work with the school to appropriately respond to concerns regarding bullying problems.</li> </ul>	
<p>Other Stakeholders to consider</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Your school community may offer unique opportunities beyond the ones mentioned for engaging other members as part of your workgroup</li> </ul>	

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