Prevention and Management of Bullying in Schools

MICHIGAN SCHOOL NURSE GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

Original Date of Issue: 2016
Foreword

These guidelines contain recommendations for current best practices for the health service topic addressed. They have been reviewed by the School Nurse Practice Subcommittee of the Michigan Statewide School Nurse Task Force as a means to provide consistent and safe care to the students. Specific laws and regulations that direct school nursing practice or other health services are identified in the guidelines. There is no guarantee that the use of guidance in this document will lead to any particular result or outcome. The information in this document was researched in February, 2016.

Purpose

This document will provide guidelines and resources for the prevention and management of bullying in schools.

Overview

Bullying is defined as an unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2016).

Children who are bullied are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, feelings of sadness, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, health complaints and decreased academic achievement. Children who bully others are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs in adolescence, drop out of school, get into fights, be abusive toward others and have criminal convictions (USDHHS, 2016). Platt (2014) indicated that the bullied child can experience an extreme level of stress, which can make the genetically vulnerable student develop mental illnesses such as depression, PTSD, anxiety or psychosis. Kim & Leventhal (2008) found bullying victims were up to nine times more likely to have suicidal thoughts than other children and were also at an increased risk for suicidal behaviors.

Cyberbullying is defined as bullying that takes place using electronic technology (USDHHS, 2016). Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles. Cyberbullying is often correlated with psychological, emotional and behavioral problems and in general, the victims of cyberbullying appear to be more affected by the aggressive behavior than the victims of traditional bullying (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015). Cyberbullying has also been shown to affect the academic performance of students (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012). Hertz et al., (2015) found that being a victim of both in-person bullying and electronic bullying was associated with other risk behaviors, such as asthma, inadequate sleep, substance use, sexual risk behaviors, unhealthy weight control practices, physical inactivity, dating violence, suicide and sexual violence. Schneider et al., (2012) found cyberbullying victimization and school bullying were more prevalent among non-heterosexual identified youth and that girls were more likely to report cyberbullying, especially in combination with school bullying.
Michigan and National Data

The 2013 Michigan Youth Behavior Risk Survey (YRBS) reported that 25.3% of students indicated they had been bullied on school property in the past 12 months and 18.8% of students had been bullied electronically. Nationwide, 20% of students in grades 9-12 experienced bullying (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2016).

LGBTQ Students

Data from the 2015 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Michigan Department of Education, Unpublished Data, 2015) show that the 8.4% of high school students identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). Students who are LGB are 2.3 times more likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon on school property than their non-LGB peers and they are 2.3 times more likely to skip school because they feel unsafe. Forty-one percent of LGB students report being bullied on school property, and they are 4.5 times more likely to attempt suicide.

Legal Framework for Managing Bullying in Schools

Federal and State laws protect children from bullying.

Federal Law

All federally funded schools have an obligation to resolve harassment. There are no federal laws that directly address bullying but bullying can overlap with discriminatory harassment when it is based on race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability or religion (USDHHS, 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972</th>
<th>Harassment based on sex and sexual orientation are not mutually exclusive. When students are harassed based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation, they may also be subjected to forms of sex discrimination recognized under Title IX.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="Http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm">Http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</td>
<td>Protects the rights of children with special health-care needs (CSHCN) by providing related services, including health services, to those not eligible for special education.</td>
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<td><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act</td>
<td>The U.S. Department of Justice revised the ADA Title II and Title III regulations. These regulations amend the DOJ's Title II requirements for State and Local Governments and Title III requirements for Places of Public Accommodation. Guarantees access to education and related services to assistant children with disabilities benefit from special education.</td>
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<td>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</td>
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<th><strong>Michigan Law</strong></th>
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<td><strong>PA 241 of 2011</strong></td>
<td>The board of a school district or intermediate school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall adopt and implement a policy prohibiting bullying at school, as defined in this section.</td>
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<td><strong>PA 478 of 2014</strong></td>
<td>Bullying policy must comply with 2014 amendments but not limited to the inclusion of cyberbullying as form of bullying.</td>
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<th><strong><a href="http://idea.ed.gov/">http://idea.ed.gov/</a></strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family Educational and Privacy Rights and Privacy Act</strong></td>
<td>FERPA does not allow school personnel to discuss discipline, consequences, or services given to other children.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong><a href="http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html</a></strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment</strong></td>
<td>Surveys may be subject to the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment.</td>
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<td><strong><a href="http://familypolicy.ed.gov/ppra">http://familypolicy.ed.gov/ppra</a></strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964</strong></td>
<td>Title IV does not prohibit discrimination based solely on sexual orientation, but they protect all students, including students who are LGBT or perceived to be LGBT, from sex-based harassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong><a href="Http://www.justice.gov/crt/title-vi-civil-rights-act-1964-42-usc-2000d-et-seq">Http://www.justice.gov/crt/title-vi-civil-rights-act-1964-42-usc-2000d-et-seq</a></strong></td>
<td>When bullying based on religion is severe, pervasive, or persistent, the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division may be able to intervene under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong><a href="http://www.justice.gov/crt/types-educational-opportunities-discrimination">http://www.justice.gov/crt/types-educational-opportunities-discrimination</a></strong></td>
<td>Often religious harassment is not based on the religion itself but on shared ethnic characteristics. When harassment is based on shared ethnic characteristics, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights may be able to intervene under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.</td>
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School Nurse’s Role

The position of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) (2014) is that the school nurse is a crucial member of the team participating in the prevention of bullying in the schools through demonstrating a leadership role in the implementation of bullying prevention policies and strategies. The school nurse also has a role in the identification of students who are bullied, bully others or both. School nurses are often the first adults both victims and bullies go to for help (Cooper, Clements & Holt, 2012).

Recommendations for Practice

School Prevention and Intervention

The USDHHS (2016) manages the Stopbullying.gov website that has comprehensive information about bullying. Five areas are identified for prevention and intervention at school.

1. Assessing Bullying in Your School

Assessments or surveys can help determine the frequency and location of bullying in the school setting (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015).

- School administrators need to be consulted and involved in all decisions regarding screening tools and the need for parental consent (Platt, 2014).
- It is essential to protect student privacy. Many surveys are subject to the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Assure students that their responses will be kept confidential and that their answers can’t be tracked back to them (USDHHS, 2016).

The Stopbullying.gov site (http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/assess-bullying/index.html) offers specific information about the importance of assessments and provides strategies for implementing surveys at school. The MDE (2015) offers several surveys (https://mde.state.mi.us/schoolhealthsurveys/Home/Login.aspx) to assess school climate:

- Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth (MiPHY): Grades 7, 9, and 11 and open in the even years. For example, 2015 -2016.
- Michigan School Climate Assessment Instrument (MiSCAI): Any grades 7 – 12 and open every year.
- Bully-Free Schools: Any grades 5-12 and open every year.

2. Building a Safe Environment

Provide a safe and supportive school climate to prevent bullying using whole school interventions (USDHHS, 2016; Hertz et al., 2015; Perkins, et al., 2014).

General – School-wide

- The USDOE Office of Special Education can provide technical assistance to help with the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) framework (http://www.pbis.org/) that builds support and respect within a school (USDHHS, 2016).
- The MDE supports the OK2SAY (http://www.michigan.gov/ok2say) student safety program which allows students to confidentially report tips on potential harm or criminal activities directed at school students, school employees, and schools. It uses a comprehensive communication system to facilitate tip sharing among students, parents, school personnel, community mental health service programs, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and law enforcement officials about harmful behaviors that threaten to disrupt the learning environment.
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL NURSES PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

• The MDE provides additional resources on the Safe Schools site (http://www.michigan.gov/safeschools/0,4665,7-181-49444---,00.html).
• Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education (SAPE) provides information about Bully Free Schools (http://www.sape.us/).
• Michigan School Health Coordinators (MiSHCA) can also provide resources and information about bullying prevention and intervention (https://mishca.org/who/).
• Welcoming Schools provides professional development tools for educators and additional resources for elementary schools on embracing family diversity, creating LGBTQ inclusive schools, preventing bias-based bullying, and supporting transgender and gender expansive students (http://www.welcomingschools.org/).
• The Department of Justice has a community relations service is a “peacemaker” for community tensions and conflict (http://www.justice.gov/crs).
• Stop Bullying Now provides information and resources for bullying prevention and intervention (http://stopbullyingnow.com/).
• Pay attention to LGBT youth and other particularly vulnerable groups (Schneider et al., 2012).

Individual Student Interventions

• A school nurse-led support group model can help students with disabilities be better able to handle teasing and bullying situations (Vessey & O’Neill, 2011).
• Prepare a checklist for victims that advises them on how to cope with the situation and prevent further victimization e.g. using strict privacy settings on social network sites, blocking the perpetrator on Skype or other online platforms; and never bully in retaliation (Van Outysel et al., 2015).
• Identify mental health treatment resources in the community (Platt, 2014; Van Outysel et al., 2015).
• Refer students to support staff within the school (e.g. school counselors, social workers, psychologists) and to outside agencies as needed.
• Record keeping and documentation according to school nurse standards.
• Model positive feeling, tone and behavior at school as described in the video by Stan Davis (2008). This video can be retrieved at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cMtVzqcdP0.
• Utilize skilled interview techniques with students. Platt, (2014) recommends:
  • Asking the child if something upsetting is going on at home or school.
  • Asking the child what he or she does for comfort when feeling upset.
  • Encouraging positive measures such as, talking to supportive adults or friends, engaging in calming activities (listening to music, reading or crafts), or physical exercise or sports.
  • Referring students when negative comfort measures such as substance use, bullying, social withdrawal, or suicidal or violent fantasies need further exploration.

3. Engaging Parents and Youth

Engaging parents and youth is essential to creating a safe school climate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2015) provides the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model that expands beyond the Coordinated School Health Components and emphasizes a unified and collaborative approach to learning and health. In addition to parents contributing to a positive school climate through volunteering and parent teacher associations, schools could consider developing a WSCC team that would include parents, students, staff and community members to
address school safety issues as well as other health issues for students. Parents and students need to be part of the school community that develops rules and policies.

Gregory & Vessey (2004) offered the strategy of bibliotherapy that uses children’s books to serve as a unique conduit of exchange between parents, teachers, and children to help solve problems. Determining which book to use with a student is critical in ensuring the child can identify with the main character and events in the story. There is a resource list of books based upon the child’s age.

4. Creating Policies and Rules

The MDE (2010) provides a model policy that addresses bullying in school. The model policy addresses staff training, bystanders, strategies for environmental change and reporting requirements. The policy can be retrieved at: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SBE_Model_AntiBullying_Policy_Revised_9.8_172355_7.pdf.

5. Educating Students and Staff

Train staff to prevent and address bullying in the school that includes information about what bullying is, the school’s policies and rules, and enforcing the rules (USDHHS, 2016).

• Raise awareness about the most popular Internet websites among students and somewhat familiar with the lingo of cyberspace (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015).
• Secure evidence of cyberbullying by saving all hurtful text or voicemail messages and by making screenshots and prints of the computer message in question if that is within school policy (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015).

Provide the Michigan Model for Health (MDHHS, 2016) lessons at each grade level, specifically, the peer aggression lessons (http://www.michigan.gov/mmh).

Red Flags for Managing Bullying in the School Setting

1. Both children who are bullied and children who are bullying need intervention (Platt, 2014).
2. The perpetration of cyberbullying is correlated with frequent and unsafe Internet use. Students involved in cyberbullying are less likely to report that their parents monitor online activities. (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015).
3. Victims of cyberbullying should never be advised to delete cyberbullying messages (Van Ouytsel et al., 2015). Severe threats of cyberbullying should be reported to the Internet Service provider and if necessary, local law enforcement officers (Van Ouytsel, 2015). Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers. Report cyberbullying to the social media site so they can take action against users abusing the terms of service (USDHHS, 2016).
4. When cyberbullying involves the activities below it is considered a crime and should be reported to law enforcement (USDHHS, 2016):
   • Threats of violence.
• Child pornography or send sexually explicit photos or messages.
• Taking a photo or video of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy.
• Stalking or hate crimes.

5. Witnesses should be encouraged to report bullying and thanked for their help, and a member of the school staff follow-up on their report (Van Outysel, 2015).

6. The experience of bullying in childhood is strongly correlated with suicidal behavior in adolescence and possibly an independent cause of it (Cooper et al., 2012).

7. All types of bullying can occur in structured and unstructured space within the school context. Although classrooms and lunchrooms have constant monitoring procedures frequent bullying and victimization can occur even when authoritative oversight is in place (Perkins et al., 2014). There can be a discrepancy in perceived bullying between students and teachers (Chen, 2015).

8. In elementary students verbal bullying is the most common type and cyberbullying is the least common type (Chen, 2015).

References


