



National Hook-Up of Black Women, Inc.

Advocates for Women and Their Families

Girl Bullies the Effects and Prevention: [A call to Action by The National Hook-up of Black Women](#)

National President- Deborah Summers

Bullying is a significant problem in U.S. schools. The United States Department of Education defines bullying as the act of intimidating a seemingly weaker person with negative actions to control them and make them do something they don't want to do. One of the fastest growing populations reported as being victims of bullying are preteen/teen girls, and in some cases victims are as young as 5 years old.

Thirty percent of U.S. students in grades six through ten are involved in moderate or frequent bullying — as bullies, as victims, or as both — according to the results of the first national school bullying statistics.

- In a recent school bullying statistics study, 77% of the students said they had been bullied. And 14% of those who were bullied said they experienced severe (bad) reactions to the abuse.
- Each day 160,000 students miss school for fear of being bullied.
- A girl is bullied every seven minutes.
- Almost one-third of girls are directly involved in bullying (as the bully or the bullied)
- 15% of girls who are bullied tell someone.
- 43% of girls fear harassment in school bathrooms.
- When girl bullying occurs: 85% of the time no intervention, 11% peer intervention and 4% teacher intervention.

Types of Bullying

Bullying can take several forms such as:

Physical abuse - hitting, punching, hair pulling.

Verbal abuse - name-calling, threats, teasing, spreading rumors.

Emotional abuse - ostracizing, exclusion, humiliating, maliciously gossiping. rating/ranking personal characteristics such as race or sexual orientation).

Hazing - imposing hurtful or embarrassing rituals against new students or team members or social group.

Rational Blackmail - Using people to get something by force/threats.

Bullying often doesn't end in schoolyard or on the school bus. Abusive behavior can follow its victims all the way home by way of Cyber bullying. Cyber-bullying is repeatedly hurting someone else through the use of technology (the internet and cell phones). Instead of verbally spreading a rumor to friends, the bully might e-mail, instant message, or text that rumor or post information, fabrications, or pictures on a Social Network (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, blogging, chat rooms) for everyone to see. Cyber-bullying has now become one of the most common forms of bullying and an increasingly serious problem.

The Effects

When children are bullied in school, they may feel alone or pressured into silence by their abuser who threatens them not to tell and even sometimes by school officials who blame victims for being too sensitive. If bullying persists and or goes ignored, as a result some victims may have academic problems or become despondent. Some may suffer severe long term effects such as depression, low self-esteem, acting out in violence by hurting others or themselves (self mutilation). Many victims of bullying enter into abusive relationships and continue to be victims of abuse from family members, employers, co-workers, etc. Others suffer physical ailments such as weigh fluctuations, head aches, stomach, ulcers, sleep problems and suicide.

Examples of severe effects of bullying would be Megan Meier and Phoebe Prince. In 2008, many of us watched the news in shock and horror when we heard about the suicide death of 13 year Megan who, just 3 weeks shy of her 14th birthday, hung herself after suffering cyber bullying from a former friend and her MOTHER.

In January, 2010, Phoebe Prince a 15 year old High School student in South Hadley, MA, also committed suicide by hanging after suffering months of bullying by school classmates. Months after hearing about the suicide of Phoebe Prince, fifth grader Ziainey Stokes, who too had been a victim of bullying, decided to write a letter to President Obama about her issues with bullies.

In the letter, The President thanked Ziainey for bringing attention to the issue of bullying:

"Your letter demonstrates a desire to change the culture of your classroom as well as your community," he wrote. The letter also ended with a promise: "You deserve a safe, engaging, and enjoyable classroom, and together we will strive to make this a reality."

Why Girls Bully

Though the issue of bullying may appear to be growing worse, this epidemic is nothing new especially with girls.

According to WebMD magazine -

“Dozens of lay books and scholarly journals have explored the ways "relational aggression -- tactics such as exclusion, rumor mongering, and Internet harassment -- can damage girls' self-esteem.”

Most girls bully because:

They want to be popular or socially accepted by any mean necessary

They feel the need to be in control/powerful

They suffer from personal issues at home or even in school

They are insecure so they use bullying to cover up they're lack of confidence

They have been bullied themselves or witnessed a family member being bullied

They have poor impulse control

They are bored and use bullying for excitement

It is important that the issues at the root of bullying are also addressed and services can be provided to change the behavior and the need to abuse victims.

Awareness and Prevention

What Parents can do?

Prevention of bullying begins at home. It is important for parents to check up on their children everyday. Reach out to other parents of your daughter's friends and share information. Monitor what they are doing on the internet. Some children who are suffering from bullying will not talk about it due to fear so it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms, such as a Child returning home seemingly disheveled, paper/books/belongings ripped or a Child experiencing lack of sleep, suddenly becoming mysteriously sick on school days, unusual anxiety or fear.

If a child seems to be depressed talk and listen to them ask them about bullying from time to time, listen to what is said and never take bullying lightly or downplay the hurt it can cause. If they don't seem comfortable confiding in a parent, we recommend trying counseling, or even a mentoring program. Parents should teach children not to take part in teasing/bullying and to speak up about bullying. Let them know that telling on a bully is not tattling.

If a parent(s) or a guardian suspects that their child is being bullied they should talk to their child's school officials and make them aware of the situation. It may be necessary to request, through the school, a meeting with the parent(s) of the child who is doing the chastising. If you have contacted the school and had a meeting with the parents of your child's bullying and the abuse continues or worsens call the police.

What schools can do?

School Psychologists can help educate school staff and faculty about the extent and consequences of bullying and what can be done to prevent it and propose counseling for victims and bullies as well helps end the cycle of bullying.

The National Hook-up of Black Women Inc. recognizes the consequences of bullying and encourages schools to utilize one or more of the numerous ways to prevent bullying in our schools, including:

- Improving supervision of children in hallways, playgrounds, cafeteria, rest-rooms, and other areas where bullying is likely
- Providing regular trainings to raise consciousness concerning bullying
- Instituting a “zero tolerance” policy against bullying behavior*
- Providing clear rules and regulations about bullying and be sure to display them where they can be seen*
- Enforcing school rules consistently
- Encouraging parent participation
- Providing a means for students to report bullying behavior confidentially
- Rewarding/reinforcing students for positive behaviors*
- Encouraging pro-social classroom activities such as self-esteem building
- Allowing opportunities for students to discuss bullying and to participate in Classroom activities which elicit their feedback
- Allowing students to collaborate with teachers in the development of classroom rules and guidelines against bullying behavior
- Establishing a clear plan of action should bullying take place to ensure that students know how to respond
- Encouraging collaboration among students by assigning tasks and activities that necessitate teamwork*
- Should bullying behavior be observed, taking immediate action to halt it
- Confronting and speaking to bullies about bullying in private, rather than in a public situation which may further exacerbate his/her hostility*
- Should bullying behavior occur, contacting the parents immediately*
- If appropriate, considering referring both the victim and the bully for counseling*
- Providing protection for the victim(s) when needed, which may include establishing a “buddy system” where students are connected with other students*
- Encouraging students to seek help and to report bullying to an adult/faculty/staff/parent, etc...
- Encouraging students and other bystanders of bullying behavior to support the victim
- Helping students to support one another in matters of bullying
- Encouraging bystanders to condemn bullying by not partaking in spreading rumors, teasing, etc....

Note: Asterisks indicate strategies adapted from the U.S. Department of Education

What the National Hook-up of Black Women can do:

Our local chapters can work with their school districts to offer mentoring programs and activities to promote Bullying awareness and prevention. Start Junior Chapters or Network with other mentoring programs to Design mentoring and prevention programs. On a National level the National Hook-up of Black Women Inc. needs to support and encourage legislation that helps prevent bullying behavior in the schools and work with legislators, teachers, parents, and school administrators to devise strategies and policies to help create a bully free environment.

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