

Frequently Asked Questions

Background Information on Bullying

What Is Bullying?

In order to address the issue of bullying, it is important to clearly understand how bullying is defined. A commonly used definition is

A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.¹

Expressed in more everyday language one might say: Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.

What Are the Different Forms or Kinds of Bullying?

There are several different forms of bullying. The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire asks specific questions about the following forms of bullying:

- verbal bullying
- social exclusion or isolation
- physical bullying
- bullying through lies and false rumors
- having money or other things taken or damaged
- threats or being forced to do things
- racial bullying
- sexual bullying
- cyber-bullying (via cell phone or the Internet)

It is possible to divide the different types of bullying into direct and indirect forms. In direct forms, bullying involves relatively open attacks, usually in a face-to-face confrontation. Typical examples of direct bullying include verbal bullying with derogatory comments and nasty names, and physical bullying with hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting.

In indirect bullying, the aggressive acts are more concealed and subtle, and it may be more difficult for the bullied student to know who is responsible for the bullying. Typical examples include social isolation—that is, intentionally excluding someone from a group or activity—and spreading lies and nasty rumors.

Several forms of cyber-bullying may also be considered indirect in the sense that nasty messages are delivered from a distance and not in a face-to-face way. And in some cases, it may be difficult or almost impossible to find out who originally sent the message.

How Does Bullying Differ from Other Types of Aggression between Students?

Bullying can be distinguished from other kinds of aggression between students in a number of ways, but most obviously by the following:

- (1) the negative behaviors are intentionally targeted at a specific individual (it isn't an accident that this incident happened);
- (2) the repetitive nature of bullying (it isn't usually a onetime event); and
- (3) the power imbalance between the students.

Why Shouldn't We Use a Conflict Resolution or Peer Mediation Program to Address Bullying Issues?

One of the main characteristics of bullying is an imbalance of power; therefore, it cannot be considered "normal" relational conflict between two students. Bullying is a form of peer abuse, and the student who is being bullied needs to be protected from such victimization.

Conflict resolution or peer mediation strategies should not be used to address bullying problems because:

- Peer mediation/conflict resolution programs assume there is a bit of both right and wrong on both sides. Such programs may place some blame on the student who is being bullied and free the student or students who are bullying from some responsibility. These programs work toward a compromise that, in the case of bullying, could mean further victimization of the student who has been bullied.
- Another common assumption in such programs is that both parties have about the same negotiating power. This is usually not the case in bullying situations where there is an imbalance in power in favor of the student or students who bully. Chances are the bullied student will be the loser in such negotiations.
- In peer mediation/conflict resolution programs, the mediator is told not to take a moral stand on the issue at hand. In the case of bullying, it is very important that the adults take a moral stand and clearly communicate that bullying is not acceptable.
- Conflict resolution/peer mediation programs leave most of the responsibility for solving bullying problems to the students. However, bullying problems are often complex and difficult to handle, even for trained school staff. To defer these problems to the students is giving them too much responsibility. By using peer mediators, staff may also think that bullying is not their problem to solve.

What Causes Bullying?

There is no single or simple "cause" of bullying behavior. Research clearly suggests that personality characteristics and a student's tendency toward aggressive behaviors, combined with physical strength or weakness (in the case of boys) are important risk factors bullying in individual students.

In addition, environmental factors such as the attitudes, routines, and behaviors of important adults (in particular teachers and administrators) play a major role in determining whether bullying will appear in a classroom or a school. The attitudes and behavior of peers also play critical roles.

Why Do Some Students Bully?

Research suggests at least three partly interrelated motives for bullying:

- Students who bully have strong needs for power and (negative) dominance; they seem to enjoy being “in control” and subduing others.
- Students who bully find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students. This may be at least partly due to the environment at home, which may have caused hostility within the student.
- Students who bully are often rewarded in some way for their behavior. This could be material or psychological rewards, such as forcing the student who is bullied to give them money or enjoying the attention, status, and prestige they are granted from other students because of their behavior.
- Students who bully others may have some common family characteristics, such as parents who are not very involved in their children’s lives, who lack warmth and positive involvement. In addition, these parents may not have set clear limits on their children’s aggressive behavior and may have allowed them to act out aggressively toward their siblings and other children.

Parents of children who bully are also more likely to use physical punishments and other “power-assertive” methods of child rearing. In summary, too little love and care and too much “freedom” in childhood are conditions that contribute to bullying behavior.²

- In addition, students who bully others are more likely to have seen or been involved in domestic violence.³ In all probability, they have also been exposed or exposed themselves to violence in the media and maybe through participation in “power sports” like boxing, kickboxing, and wrestling.⁴

It is important to emphasize once more that we are talking about main trends. Not all students who come from families with these characteristics will bully others, and not all students who bully come from these family environments. The peer group may also play an important role in motivating and encouraging bullying behavior in certain children and youth.

How Common Is Bullying?

The first large-scale, nationally representative study of bullying conducted in Norway was done in 1983 with more than 40,000 students aged eight to sixteen. This study found that 15 percent of children and youth reported that they had been regularly involved in bullying problems.⁵ This represents one out of seven students. Nine percent had been bullied, 7 percent had bullied other students, and less than 1.5 percent had been both bullied and bullied others.

A later (2001) large-scale Norwegian survey of 11,000 students from fifty-four elementary and junior high schools gave much the same picture but with two disturbing trends: (1) The percentage of bullied students had increased by approximately 50 percent from 1983 to 2001, and (2) the percentage of students who were involved in the most frequent (and serious) form of bullying had increased by some 65 percent.⁶

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program researchers and others have also conducted studies to determine how prevalent bullying is in the United States. In a study of 6,500 students in grades

4–6 in rural South Carolina, they found that 23 percent had been bullied “several times” or more often within a school term, and 20 percent had bullied others.⁷

In the first nationally representative U.S. study of bullying, which included more than 15,000 students in grades 6–10, researchers found that 17 percent of students reported having been bullied “sometimes” or more often during the school term and 8 percent had been bullied at least once a week. Nineteen percent had bullied others “sometimes” or more often during the term, and 9 percent had bullied other students at least once a week.⁸

It should be emphasized that the data from these studies are average estimates that do not highlight the great variation between different schools. Even within the same community/school district, one school may experience bullying problems at a level two or three times higher than that of another school.

Is Bullying All That Harmful?

Yes. Students who are bullied may develop physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach pains, or sleeping problems. They may be afraid to go to school, go to the bathroom, or ride the school bus. They may also lose interest in school, have trouble concentrating, and do poorly academically.

Bullied students often lose confidence in themselves and start to think of themselves as stupid, a failure, or unattractive. They may even develop feelings of guilt for being bullied (“there must be something wrong with me since I am the one being bullied”). Although relatively rare, some students who have been bullied repeatedly attempt and actually commit suicide.

Bullying can also affect students who are bystanders. Students who observe bullying may feel anxious (perhaps they will be targeted next?) or guilty (for not intervening to stop bullying). Over time, students who observe frequent bullying may feel less and less empathy for the student who is being bullied.

Students who bully others are more likely to become involved in other problem behaviors, such as criminality and drug abuse. One study found that by the age of twenty-four, boys who were identified as bullies in junior high school were four times more likely to have been convicted of three or more criminal acts than boys who did not bully others.

It is important for schools to understand that when they initiate a bullying prevention program, they are doing so for the benefit of all students in the school—not just to protect the students who are being bullied.

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

What is the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*?

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP) is the most researched and best-known bullying prevention program available today. Backed by more than thirty-five years of research and successful implementation in many different countries, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is a whole-school program that has been proven to prevent or reduce bullying throughout a school setting.

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is used at the school, classroom, and individual levels and includes methods to reach out to parents and the community for involvement and support. School administrators, teachers, and other staff are primarily responsible for introducing and implementing the program with the goals of improving peer relations and making the school a safer and more positive place for students to learn and develop.

What Are the Goals of the Program?

The goals of the program are to:

- reduce existing bullying problems among students
- prevent the development of new bullying problems
- achieve better peer relations at school

What Are the Components of the Program?

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is not a classroom curriculum. It is a whole-school, systems-change program at four different levels: schoolwide, classroom, individual, and community. [Learn more about the program components for each of these levels.](#)

What Are the Effects of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*?

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* has been more thoroughly evaluated than any other bullying prevention/reduction program so far. Six large-scale evaluations involving more than 40,000 students produced the following documented results.⁹

- Average reductions of 20 to 70 percent in student reports of being bullied and bullying others. Peer and teacher ratings of bullying problems have yielded roughly similar results.
- Marked reductions in student reports of general antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy.
- Clear improvements in the classroom social climate, as reflected in students' reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and more positive attitudes toward schoolwork and school.

For students in grades 4–7, most of these positive results can be seen after only eight months of intervention work, given reasonably good implementation of the program. For students in grades 8–10, it may take somewhat more time, maybe two years, to achieve equally good results.

Within the United States, a large-scale study of the program's effects on middle school children resulted in positive though somewhat weaker outcomes. Since then, hundreds of schools in most every state in the United States have used the program. Additional studies of these efforts are being conducted. For the most current information about specific research findings, see the Olweus Web site at www.clemson.edu/olweus.

For Whom Is the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* Designed?

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is designed for students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools (students ages five to fifteen years old). All students participate in most aspects of the program, while students identified as bullying others, or as targets of bullying, receive additional individualized interventions.

With some adaptation, the program can also be used in high schools, although research has not measured the program's effectiveness beyond tenth grade. In addition, classroom support materials are not currently available for high school students. If your school is interested in using the program for high school audiences, please contact Marlene Snyder, Ph.D., at 1-864-710-4562, to identify specific challenges in implementing the program at the high school level.

Because the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is not a curriculum, its core principles, rules, and supportive materials could be adapted for use by any program that children and youth attend on a regular basis, such as after-school programs, camps, or community youth programs. The core principles and rules could be integrated into these existing program's policies and routines. Although research has not measured the program's effectiveness in these settings, with appropriate staff training these nonschool programs may help prevent bullying and help students understand that bullying is not just a school issue, but one that spills over into all areas of their lives and into their communities as well.

Program Materials and Cost

What Are the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* Materials?

A list of recommended resources as well as links for making purchases online is available in [Program Materials](#).

How Much Will Materials Cost for Our School?

The greatest costs are incurred during initial start-up, but you will need to budget for ongoing training and other activities that will keep your staff's commitment to the program running high. As you consider these costs, keep in mind that implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* will most likely:

- cut down on lost teaching time and staff burnout
- protect your school from potential legal actions related to bullying
- reduce the costs to society caused by the effects of bullying on both the student who is bullied and the students who bully others.

Depending upon the size of your school, purchasing the program materials (the [Schoolwide Guide](#) and [Teacher Guide](#)) can range from \$1,500 to \$3,200. The *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire* will be a separate cost that ranges from \$250 for a single school using the [manual entry CD-ROM format](#) and somewhat higher for schools using the scannable questionnaire.

[Visit Program Materials](#) for more information about recommend purchase quantities and potential large purchase discounts.

How Much Do the Materials Cost per Student?

Because this program is a systems-change program as opposed to a curriculum, we are not able to give a cost per student. Costs for this program depend entirely upon the size of the school, the number of adults in the school system, and the number of Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee members.

Do We Have to Purchase New Materials Each Year?

Because this program is a systems-change program as opposed to a curriculum, there are no workbooks or materials that have to be purchased each year. Materials are a one-time cost. Some schools have found that they have to make a small order for materials that were lost or for teachers new to the system. The only exception is the scannable version of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, which must be purchased for every administration of the survey.

What Other Related Costs Are There in Implementing This Program?

Other costs to consider include the following:

- A two-day training of the BPCC members by a certified Olweus trainer.
- Substitute teachers so teachers can attend an all-staff, full-day training. (You may need to work with teacher unions to determine the rate of pay.)
- Supplies for your school kick-off event.
- Optional program promotional materials such as posters. (Reproducible templates are available on the Schoolwide Guide CD-ROM.)
- Supplies such as paper to reproduce handouts, transparencies, and so on.
- Ongoing program evaluation costs (processing and reporting questionnaire results on an annual basis).
- A “booster” training for staff.
- Supplemental materials for students (including bullying-related literature or videos).
- If your school implements the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* as part of a large-scale districtwide or statewide effort, you may wish to have a member of the BPCC become a certified Olweus trainer who can then head up all training of existing and new staff. Learn more about the [Training of Trainers program](#).
- Large schools or school districts may also choose to hire a designated coordinator who also would become a certified Olweus trainer. [Learn more about training options](#).

Because *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is a Blueprints Model Program, SAMHSA Model Program, and effective program for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, federal funding is available to support schools in purchasing and implementing the program. Financial resources may also be available through school or local violence prevention programs and grants. Local law enforcement and county health departments have also financed some schools’ programs. Learn more about [Olweus Bullying Prevention Program funding options](#).

Training

Is Training Recommended for the Program?

Yes. Training and ongoing consultation are available to schools. Training is important to help ensure that the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee at each school has the necessary information and strategies to successfully launch and sustain the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* with fidelity. The purpose of consultation by a certified Olweus trainer is to provide ongoing assistance in the implementation of program elements, with particular attention to troubleshooting problem areas that may arise and helping to maintain the program over time.

Below is an overview of the learning objectives for the training of the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee. Participants will understand, based on current research:

- what bullying is and how it differs from other acts of aggression among children and youth

- the reasons why educators should be concerned about bullying
- facts and myths about the nature and prevalence of bullying
- characteristics of students involved in bullying problems
- risk factors for bullying

They will also do the following:

- become familiar with
 - the research and philosophy behind *OBPP*
 - the goals of *OBPP*
 - components of the program at the schoolwide, classroom, individual, and community levels
 - ways to maintain fidelity to the program
- learn skills and strategies to
 - hold classroom meetings with students
 - effectively intervene on the spot to address bullying
 - follow up with students who are involved in bullying problems
 - work with parents of students who are involved in bullying problems
 - train members of the entire school staff in *OBPP*
 - understand current bullying problems at their school, using results from the administration of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire
 - begin to develop a detailed plan to implement *OBPP* in their school

Who Should Attend the Training?

This training is offered to members of a school's Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee, which is typically composed of

- a school administrator (principal or assistant principal)
- a teacher from each grade level
- a school counselor, school psychologist, or other school-based mental health professional
- a representative of the nonteaching staff (for example, playground monitors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, or custodians)
- one or two parents
- a representative from the community (if possible), such as after-school or youth program staff or representatives from the business or faith community who might have a stake in the results of the program
- other school personnel (for example, a nurse or school resource officer) who may bring particular expertise to the committee

Where Should This Training Take Place?

The location of the two-day training should be given special consideration. If at all possible, it is recommended that this training not take place at the school during a school day when students are in the building. Administrators and teachers in such a situation may be tempted to leave the training for short periods of time to take care of arising issues. This is highly disruptive to an individual's understanding of all the program's elements and how the elements are dependent upon each other in implementation. All members of the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee should be invited to a comfortable training site, and their schedules should be cleared so that they are present for the entire two-day period. This training is critical to the success of the program.

What Is Involved in the Ongoing Consultation by a Certified Olweus Trainer?

A certified Olweus trainer will provide at least eighteen months of consultation to an on-site program coordinator at each school. (An on-site program coordinator is a “point person” at a school and may or may not be the chairperson of the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.) This consultation is conducted by telephone or (whenever possible) in person and occurs once a month for approximately one hour.

Can We Opt Out of the Consultation and Just Participate in the Training?

No. Training is not offered without a commitment to engage in ongoing consultation with a certified Olweus trainer. We have found the consultation to be important to the success and sustainability of the program.

What Are the Training/Consultation Costs?

Costs of training and consultation may vary by trainer, region of the country, and the number of sites being trained. Below are fee guidelines.

A single certified Olweus trainer may charge no more than

- \$3,000 for a two-day training involving one or two schools’ Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committees.
- travel costs for the certified Olweus trainer, including airfare (if appropriate), lodging, meals, and local transportation.
- \$1,500 (\$125/hour for twelve months) for telephone consultation for each school site for one year. This price includes the cost of the phone call. (Check out consultation fees with each certified Olweus trainer; amounts charged for consultation may vary.)

How Many School Committees Can Be Trained at One Time?

As the training involves much interaction between participants and the certified Olweus trainer, and building-level planning, no more than two schools’ Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committees may be trained at one time by a certified Olweus trainer. If two trainers are present, they may train up to three committees at one time. If two trainers are present (required when three school committees are being trained), fees may increase accordingly, up to a maximum of \$4,500 for the two-day training.

Contracts for the training and consultation are made between the trainer and the schools. Aside from “capping” the training fees, neither the Olweus Program at Clemson University or Hazelden Publishing is involved in setting the fees for independent trainers.

Some states have developed statewide networks of trainers that may be available at no charge or reduced fees to schools.

Whom Can I Talk to about Our School’s Specific Training Needs?

Please talk with Dr. Marlene Snyder at Clemson University (1-864-710-4562) for information about training and with your Hazelden sales representative (1-800-328-9000).

What If Our School District Wants to Have a Certified Olweus Trainer Who Can Train Committees rather than Bringing In an Outside Trainer?

School districts with four or more buildings may find that it is economically reasonable to have a certified Olweus trainer for their school system. Currently we have more than 350 individuals certified in the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* in the United States.

Periodically, Clemson University offers a Training of Trainers (TOT) for highly qualified individuals who are interested in becoming a certified Olweus trainer in the program. These trainers are certified to train school Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committees only—this training does not allow training of other trainers.

How Often Are the Training of Trainers (TOTs) Sessions Held?

Historically, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* has held several state-level TOTs and one national TOT each year. Dates for trainings are located at the Olweus Web site at www.clemson.edu/olweus. If a date has not yet been posted on the Web site and you are interested in notification of the next TOT, please send an email to Dr. Marlene Snyder at nobully@clemson.edu. Include all your contact information (name, school name, address, phone number, and email address). State clearly that you are interested in becoming a certified Olweus trainer and would like to have information about the next TOT when those dates become available.

How Can We Apply for a Training Seat at the Next Training of Trainers?

Because of the large demand for this training, an application process is required. A packet of application materials can be found on the Olweus Web site at www.clemson.edu/olweus/training_trainers.html.

There are three required pieces for an application: (1) the completed application form, (2) a signed Requirements for Certification Form, and (3) the applicant's resume. Applications should be submitted only when an upcoming TOT is available.

How Much Does It Cost to Become a Certified Olweus Trainer for the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*?

Presently, the Olweus Training of Trainers tuition is \$3,900. This price does not include the cost of travel, ground transportation, hotels, meals, and other related costs. The \$3,900 tuition cost does provide the following:

- three full days of training that prepare trainers to be able to deliver training and consultation to school Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committees for program implementation.
- one copy of each of the materials required to implement the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*. This includes a Teacher Guide, a Schoolwide Guide, a sample of the scannable questionnaire and CD-ROM reporting software, and a Training of Trainer's notebook.
- two days of "booster" training—held nine months to one year after the initial three-day training. The booster offers an opportunity for trainers to share their experiences, learn advanced skills, and learn consultations skills.
- up to eighteen hours of telephone consultation with a Training Director or Lead Trainer to provide support to the trainer to ensure implementation success.

Can We Host a Training of Trainers in Our Own State?

Several states have sponsored state-level TOTs. A dedicated TOT in your state can be conducted if you have a minimum of fifteen qualified individuals ready to take the training. Please contact Dr. Marlene Snyder at nobully@clemson.edu for information about potential state trainings.

How Many Schools Have Used the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*?

At this time, hundreds of schools throughout the United States have been trained to use the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*.

Can We Talk to Personnel in Schools That Have Used the Program?

School personnel that have used the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* are usually very happy to talk with others who are considering the program and are pleased to share their experiences. Because we want to protect the privacy (and the time) of school personnel, we do not share contact information for personnel from Olweus schools without their prior approval. If you are interested in talking with personnel who have implemented the program, please contact Dr. Marlene Snyder at nobully@clemson.edu. She will be happy to seek permission from a site similar to yours and put you in touch with them.

Funding for the Program

Where Can We Find Funding for the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*?

Schools that implement the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* have sought funding from many different sources, including

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools
- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- school district funds
- county health department funding

In some circumstances, Title I, Title IV, and Title V funds can be used for the program. City Block Grants are another possible funding source. Some schools have found eager sponsors from local businesses. Concerned parents have often given financial support and manpower support for bullying prevention efforts in their schools through their local PTA organization.

[Learn more about funding resources](#) or contact your Hazelden sales representative at 1-800-328-9000 for more information.

¹Dan Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 1993).

²Dan Olweus, "Familial and Temperamental Determinants of Aggressive Behavior in Adolescent Boys: A Causal Analysis," *Developmental Psychology* 16 (1980):644-60; Dan Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 1993).

³A.C. Baldry, "Bullying in Schools and Exposure to Domestic Violence," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 27 (2003):713-32.

⁴I. Endresen and Dan Olweus, "Participation in Power Sports and Antisocial Involvement in Preadolescent and Adolescent Boys," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 46 (2005):468–78.

⁵Dan Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 1993).

⁶M. Solberg, D. Olweus, and I. Endresen, "Bullies and Victims at School: Are They the Same Pupils?" *British Journal of Educational Research* (in press).

⁷G. B. Melton, S. P. Limber, P. Cunningham, D. W. Osgood, J. Chambers, V. Flerx, and others, *Violence among Rural Youth: Final Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1988).

⁸T. Nansel and others, "Bullying Behaviors among U.S. Youth," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 285, no. 16 (2001):2094–2100.

⁹Dan Olweus, "Bully/Victim Problems among Schoolchildren: Basic Facts and Effects of a School-Based Intervention Program," in *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression*, ed. D. Pepler and K. Rubin (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991), 411–48; Dan Olweus, "A Useful Evaluation Design, and Effects of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*," *Psychology, Crime & Law* 11 (2005):389–402; Dan Olweus and S. Limber, *Blueprints for Violence Prevention: Bullying Prevention Program* (Boulder: Program Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, 1999); Jan Helge Kallestad and Dan Olweus, "Predicting Teachers' and Schools' Implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*: A Multilevel Study," *Prevention and Treatment* 6 (2003):3–21.