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TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Department of Human Services



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Director

A Community Resource Guide for Parents and Children

Where to Turn for Support and Intervention

Bullying is a significant, pervasive, and growing problem that affects the overall well-being of countless young people every day. Studies show that 15-25% of U.S. students are bullied with some frequency and that while school violence has declined during the past several years, incidences of bullying have increased. Research indicates that the damaging effects of bullying can last into adulthood.

The purpose of this brochure is:

- To raise awareness of the problem of bullying in Newington,
- To identify bullying in its various forms and possible locations,
- To list people with resources and training that will intervene to help you end bullying and other aggressive, damaging behaviors.

Bullying should not be accepted as a normal part of growing up, not when we can take action to stop it. This brochure will tell you where to get help to intervene in a bullying situation.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is a control/domination behavior of a person or group (the bully) towards another person or group (the target) which seeks to increase the power, importance, and self-image of the bully. Its purpose is to decrease the power, importance, and self-image of the target. It is destructive to both the bully and the target, reinforcing negative, antisocial behavior in the bully and inflicting pain, loss of self-esteem, and possibly physical and emotional damage to the target.

This intentional, aggressive behavior, involving an imbalance of power or strength, can be verbal or physical, mentally or socially tormenting, fear-instilling, and socially alienating. Bullying exists in all levels of society and in every country and culture. Bullying can involve all ages, ethnic/social groups and both sexes.

In some instances, the bully is an adult targeting a young person. Bullying is repeated over time and can take many forms, such as:

- Name calling, taunting, threatening words or acts
- Using racial or ethnic slurs or gender-based put downs
- Humiliation
- Spreading rumors
- Intimidation through gestures or social exclusion
- Writing anonymous notes, making intimidating phone calls, sending insulting messages over the internet by email or instant messaging ("Cyberbullying")
- Cornering, blocking, standing too close or other forms of physical intimidation
- Taking possessions, extorting
- Inflicting bodily harm (which constitutes assault and should be reported immediately)

Phone: (860) 665-8590 Fax: (860) 665-8599
humanservices@newingtonct.gov
www.newingtonct.gov

You will find bullying in Newington in shared public areas like parks, in schools, in social organizations, in organized sports, on the internet, and even in houses of worship. It is a part of social interaction and can be found anywhere and in any situation where people meet.

One thing is for certain: Adults must take responsibility for setting and enforcing norms that do not tolerate bullying behavior.

Is It Bullying or Another Aggressive Behavior?

Under state law "bullying" is very narrowly defined as any overt or covert act(s) with the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate, where the act(s) are repeated against the same person over time. The law requires schools to intervene on behalf of students who are bullied. Contact school administrators, teachers, counselors and other school staff to report bullying incidents.

There are many other types of aggressive behaviors that do not fall under the legal definition of bullying, but nonetheless require action and intervention. Sexual harassment, fighting, and assault are examples of aggressive behaviors that are treated differently under the law. And there are many less severe types of aggressive behaviors that are not bullying, but cause distress, are unacceptable, and for which you should seek intervention. Bullying and other aggressive behaviors occur not only in the schools, but at other places in our community.

Common Symptoms of Someone Who Is Being Bullied

Often a child will not tell an adult about bullying because they are embarrassed, feel ashamed, overwhelmed, and intimidated or are afraid that telling someone will make the matter worse. Adults should be on the lookout for any of the following common symptoms that may indicate that a child is being bullied:

- Interference with learning (a drop in grades or desire to participate)
- Depression, loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem, more frequent illnesses
- Fearful of participating in activities
- Hesitant to go to school, ride the school bus, or use the bathroom at school
- Withdrawn behavior
- Unexplained cuts, bruises, or scratches
- Comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings.

Everyone has the responsibility to learn the signs of bullying. Everyone has the obligation to (1) intervene and stop bullying when they see it, (2) seek resolution, and (3) help prevent any future reoccurrence.

What To Do

You may feel confused or uncertain of what to do or how to handle bullying.

What a young person should do:

- Don't be embarrassed.
- Don't think it's your fault.
- Sometimes it's difficult to take action, but know there are adults who are ready and willing to help you.
- Do not keep the bullying a secret because you fear that telling an adult will make the bullying worse. Most adults will work with you to find a way to protect you through this process.
- It takes courage, but if you don't take action to stop it, the bullying will continue.

If you don't get a satisfactory response, don't give up. Go to the next level of authority school or police or call Newington Department of Human Services, 665-8590, for help.

If you are a young person that is being bullied, you need to tell a responsible adult. This could be a parent, a teacher, a school counselor or any adult you feel comfortable approaching. If there is no adult you feel you can go to, call Newington Human Services 665-8590. They will respect your feelings and privacy and will help you figure out what steps to take next.

What a parent/guardian/adult should do:

Try to stay calm as you encourage the child to share information. Children should be encouraged and praised for coming to you with situations that are uncomfortable or hurtful. For young children, parents need to help them identify their feelings and ask questions to better define the situation. Talk with the child about exactly what took place, who was involved and anyone who might have witnessed the bullying behavior.

- Don't blame the child for being targeted.
- Be aware that children often feel that telling adults and subsequent intervention will only bring more harassment from bullies.
- Keep a written record of incidents (time, dates, names and circumstances).
- Sometimes telling your child to "just ignore them and they'll go away" isn't enough. Sometimes telling your child to "fight back" will get them into even more trouble. Try to teach assertiveness, not aggression. Children need to learn to stand up for themselves verbally and parents can help them practice these skills.
- Do not require children to talk together to "work things out." Unlike conflicts, bullying involves a power imbalance which means this strategy will not work.
- Inform the appropriate adult in charge at the place where the bullying has occurred. An open and honest dialogue will begin to correct the situation. Together with the people in charge, you can develop a course of action to be taken to resolve the problem. The problem must be reported in order for the necessary action to be taken to resolve it!

If you don't get a satisfactory response, don't give up. Go to the next level of authority parent, school, police or other adult or call Newington Human Services, 665-8590, for help.

Resources and Contact Information

If you are unsure of who to call, contact Newington Human Services, 665-8590, for guidance. Newington Human Services is an agency established in 1955, charged with the development and delivery of a range services for Newington residents. Human Services exists to foster the healthy development of the children and families of Newington through progressive programs and services that offer prevention, community coordination and treatment.

When To Call The Police

If the bullying involves any of the following, you should contact the Newington Police Department:

- Threats of violence or death to a person or property
- Excessive intimidation or extortion
- Bullying that involves any form of bias based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- Evidence of sexual exploitation

In addition, if you ever have any question on what constitutes bullying or whether any law has been violated, contact the Newington Police Department, 666-8445.

Phone: (860) 665-8590 Fax: (860) 665-8599
humanservices@newingtonct.gov
www.newingtonct.gov

Anonymous Complaint Option

If you would like to report anonymously on an incident that has occurred to you, your child, or someone you know, contact Newington Human Services as follows:

Ken Freidenberg, Director of Human Services

131 Cedar St.

Newington, CT 06111

665-8660

kfreidenberg@newingtonct.gov.”

(Keep this brochure for future reference. Bullying can occur when you least expect it.)

*Sources used: “A Guide to Preventing Bullying,” prepared by Bullying Task Force, The Governor’s Prevention Partnership, 30 Arbor St., Hartford, CT 06106. “Stop Bullying Now! School Safety: Improving the School Climate,”