

Bullying - The Newest Epidemic

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Anyone that doesn't think we are in a bullying epidemic must be living under a rock. Bullying is one of the single largest growing problems in the United States and it doesn't appear to be slowing down. No one is exempt from being bullied or being a bully. It crosses all socio-economic classes, races, ages and abilities.

Bullying is intentional, aggressive and mean. It can be social, verbal, or physical. It is NOT a rite of passage, as many claim. Chances are you know someone that has been bullied and might even know someone that has been the bully.

Did you know:

- 1 in 3 students have reported being bullied.
- Students with disabilities are bullied 3 - 4 times more frequently than their non disabled peers.
- Over 70% of teens have witnessed bullying in their school.
- About 30% of young adolescents admit to being a bully.
- It takes approximately 10 seconds to stop bullying when someone intervenes - 58% of the time.
- 160,000 teens miss school daily due to bullying.
- 1 in 10 teens drop out of school after repeated bullying.
- 30% of middle school students report being bullied in a classroom with a teacher present.

Bullying and FAPE

Students with disabilities are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education. Bullying of a student with a disability that results in the student not receiving meaningful educational benefit constitutes a denial of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under the IDEA that must be remedied, according to Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation "Dear Colleague" letter dated August 20, 2013.

What to do if your child is being bullied?

Parents need to advocate on behalf of their child to resolve the problem. If your child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, include information in the parental concern section about bullying prevention and what you expect the adults in the school to do to ensure a safe environment. Ultimately, you are not at school all day, every day, so you must depend on the adults on campus to take action. I've heard teachers say that "it never happens in front of me." I would challenge that and say, "Where on this campus can a student go without adult supervision?" The answer is always nowhere. Teachers are in classrooms, hallways between classes, lunch room and yard during lunch, and even restrooms. Teachers have power and authority because when they observe bullying, they can take action to stop the behavior on the spot. If teachers observe bullying and do not take action to protect the victim, they have given the bully implicit permission to continue.

If your child is being bullied at school and the school is not taking action, call FHF for support.