



Preventing bullying in schools

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IPRC INJURY PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER

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CONTACT: UIIPRC@UIOWA.EDU

Issue Addressed:

Bullying is the most common form of youth violence across the world.

Activities:

Bullying is defined as peer-on-peer aggression that occurs repeatedly and results in a power imbalance, and is the most common form of youth violence. In the U.S., about 30% of all school children have either been a victim or perpetrator of bullying. Bullying is associated with a number of adverse outcomes including poor school performance, depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviors and aggression towards others.

The Injury Prevention Research Center (IPRC) has led research to develop and identify the most effective strategies to reduce bullying.

1. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the IPRC evaluated Iowa's anti-bullying law. The Iowa law requires schools to develop anti-bullying policies and implement reporting and response activities. The IPRC team conducted face-to-face interviews with 47 school and district administrators and surveyed an additional 200 middle school principals to identify successes and challenges in implementing the Iowa law. The IPRC also analyzed a youth survey, and its findings on teacher and

student behaviors after the passage of the Iowa law suggests the law is having a positive effect on reducing bullying.

2. A project funded by the National Institute of Justice was designed to understand the contents and social contexts of cyberbullying, the newest form of bullying. The IPRC is collaborating with sociologists and computer scientists to monitor electronic communications of middle school youth (text messages and social network posts) for cyberbullying content.

3. The IPRC partnered with Hancher Performing Arts and the Working Group Theater (WGT) to develop an intervention based in the arts that includes WGT's play on cyberbullying, *Out of Bounds*, and a web toolkit called *HEAR: Helping Educators Use Art to Reduce Bullying*. This toolkit was promoted during the second of two national tours of *Out of Bounds*. Thousands of students and teachers across the state and country have received anti-bullying information through the play and toolkit. The UI College of Public Health also led a service learning course in which these interventions were implemented and evaluated in Cedar Rapids middle schools and after school programs.

Impact:

The IPRC has been collaborating with the Department of Education, the Iowa School Nurse Organization, and schools throughout Iowa to understand the problem of bullying and providing scientific evidence for the most effective strategies to prevent bullying.

Population:

Students, staff and parents from schools across Iowa and the U.S.

“For middle school students, bullying is our largest safety concern,” a school administrator shared with the IPRC research team during an interview.

“Bullying prevention programs are widely available, but studies have shown mixed effectiveness. Much more scientific evidence is needed to guide schools on best practices for prevention,” said study lead Dr. Marizen Ramirez.

