Joint AACAP and APA Position Statement on Prevention of Bullying-Related Morbidity and Mortality

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The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) recognize the evolving scientific evidence highlighting the serious psychiatric, medical, and public health risks associated with bullying. Bullying is a serious form of mistreatment manifested by the repeated exposure of one person to physical and/or relational aggression where the victim is hurt with teasing, name calling, mockery, threats, harassment, taunting, social exclusion or rumors.

Bullying is prevalent on a global scale, across the lifespan, and it can be simultaneously present in different social settings both in and beyond the school milieu. It occurs in schools, "after school" programs, in the neighborhood, over the internet and cellular phones, at home between siblings, in dating relationships, at summer camps, and in organized athletic activities.

The developmental link between school bullying and its occurrence in adulthood has challenged health practitioners to extend the range of responsibility for bullying prevention programs through college and into the workplace.

All individuals involved in bullying, as victims, perpetrators and/or bystanders, are at significantly increased risk for multiple problems when compared to their uninjured peers. Children involved in bullying suffer from a wide spectrum of physical and emotional symptoms, including depression, irritability, anxiety, sleeping difficulties, headaches and/or stomachaches. Furthermore, the consequences of bullying increasingly include such serious problems as eating disorders, school absenteeism, running away, alcohol and drug abuse and, above all, self-inflicted, accidental injuries and suicidal behavior.

AACAP and APA support concerted and coordinated efforts by health-care providers, policymakers, educators, public and community agencies, and families to develop strategies for the prevention of bullying and its related morbidity and mortality. AACAP and APA advocate for public policy and legislation that addresses:

1. Promotion of public awareness about the nature, impact, and prevention of bullying;
2. Development of safe schools through evidence-based prevention and intervention bullying programs that enhance mutual respect, sensitivity and support of others, tolerance to diversity, and disapproval of bullying;
3. Fostering the necessity to report incidents of bullying to school authorities, with safeguards against any threat of retaliation or liability for those who report;
4. Monitoring and detecting ongoing bullying incidents;
5. Providing school intervention through school counselors or nurses to protect and support students who are being bullied, as well as counseling for perpetrators about the harm inflicted, respect, empathy, tolerance and sensitivity to others; and

References


Ybarra ML. Linkages between depressive symptomatology and Internet harassment among young regular Internet users. Cyberpsychol Behav 2004;7(2):247-57


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