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Be a Piece of the Puzzle



Mandatory Reporting: A No Brainer Reporting Bully/Cyber Bullying in Oregon

By DeAnna Pearl

According to ORS 419B.010, "Any public or private official having reasonable cause to believe that any child with whom the official comes in contact has suffered abuse, or that any person with whom the official comes in contact has abused a child shall immediately report or cause a report to be made . . ."

On March 1st, the Oregon House of Representatives passed stronger legislation on mandatory reporting on bullying and cyber bullying. The Senate Bill 1555 put a finer point on the topic: "allows remedial actions for failure to report and the school district to list the remedial action that may be imposed on a school employee for failure to make a report..." This bill will take effect on July 1, 2012.

ALL school employees, temporary and/or contractors, are mandatory reporters. Why? Because bullying is brought to the attention of a teacher and or support staff often by the victim or bystander to a staff member they trust. If reporting the abuse is mandatory why do we need additional language to enforce it? Unfortunately, in the last year a gross number of youth have killed themselves because of long-term harassment. Over 50% of those cases were reported to the teacher or the administration of the various school districts.

The key is to understand how to report, big or small, and the importance of documentation of all incidences. Research increasingly recognizes the importance of student bystander and adult educator shared responsibility for successful bully prevention. The role of teacher observations versus student reports of bullying, as well as staff preparedness, as predictors of teacher involvement was investigated by Rona Milch Novick and Jenny Issacs in a case study published in the Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology (vo. 30, issue 3, 2010)

Being told by students about bullying incidents was the strongest predictor of teacher involvement. However, the relation between being told about bullying, or observing it, and coaching students on how to manage bullying was most evident when teachers felt highly prepared to handle bullying situations. But the responsibility does not rely solely on the school staff; it is the responsibility of us all to report to the school if a child discloses bullying in any form that involves another student or staff.

According to the Oregon Department of Human Services, "A report is not an already established fact, but rather the request for assessment into the safety and condition of a child. It is the beginning of a helping process for children and families. All Oregon citizens are encouraged to report suspected cases to DHS or law enforcement. Over 25 percent of the substantiated cases of child abuse are reported by concerned citizens who are not required to report. Failure to report is a violation and carries a maximum penalty of \$1,000.00. Mandatory reporters have also been successfully sued for damages in civil court for failing to report."



It is often not the case of wanting to report but the case of what constitutes a report. The VSD 47J does have a current policy that address this issue. The "Hazing/Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying/Menacing" or GBNA/JFCF policy was updated and readopted on

Jan. 14, 2010 after the original bill had been submitted to the Oregon House of Legislation in 2009. You can find this and all policies on the VSD website. A revision and readopting will be needed to include the new amendments to the ORS 339.335 Harassment, Intimidation

themselves in an effort to deal with the effects of bullying.

So to be clear, bullying is a widespread and serious problem that can happen anywhere. It is not a phase children have to go through, it is not



and Bullying. As it stands, the VSD administration is taking proactive strides in reducing, addressing and prevention of hazing, harassment, intimidation, bullying and menacing. This policy is very strongly written and forward in thinking.

ALL VSD staff and administration participated in a Bully Awareness training at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. This was an effort to help them understand the culture of bullying, the subtleties of bullying and the long term effects if not properly handled. For students, the Ovarions Company came in November for three days to work with all students in grades 4-12th to help bring awareness and develop skills to

handle day to day issues with fellow students around bullying, positive social norming and interrelation development. (See Vernonia's Voice "What's All the Fuss About Bullying," 1/24/12.) These programs were in partnership with the Vernonia Prevention Coalition to help prevention students from self harming

"just messing around", and it is not something to grow out of. Bullying can cause serious and lasting harm. Bullying can take many forms. Examples include:

- Verbal: name-calling, teasing
 - Social: spreading rumors, leaving people out on purpose, breaking up friendships
 - Physical: hitting, punching, shoving
- For even greater clarification, Cyber-bullying, instead of happening face-to-face, happens through the use of technology such as computers, cell phones and other electronic devices. Cyber-bullying peaks around the end of middle school and the beginning of high school. Examples of cyber-bullying include:
- Sending hurtful, rude, or mean text messages to others
 - Spreading rumors or lies about others by e-mail or on social networks
 - Creating websites, videos & photographs or social media profiles that embarrass, humiliate, or make fun of others

Bullying online is very different from face-to-face bullying because messages and images can be:

- Sent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
- Shared to a very wide audience
- Sent anonymously

For more information on bullying in your school, call your principal. For information on bullying and what you can do about it go to the websites listed. If you or someone you know is being abused, call the hotline. No matter what you do, you can help create a safe and healthy community by participating in local programming and outreach. Contact DeAnna Pearl if you would like to do more in your community at (503) 369-7370.

ODS Child Abuse Hotline - 877-302-0077 toll free
Bullying Info - www.stopbullying.gov
VSD Policy - <http://policy.osba.org/vernonia/>

Coming Soon!

Summer Meals Program

June 18th—August 17th

USDA and the State of Oregon are equal opportunity Providers and employers

Any questions please contact
DeAnna Pearl
(503) 369 7370

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Are you feeling desperate, alone or hopeless? Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Your call will be routed to the nearest crisis center to you.

Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1