

# Module Three

## Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying and Teen Relationship Abuse in Schools and on School Buses

### *Objectives*

1. Define harassment, intimidation bullying, and teen relationship abuse.
2. Identify signs of risk factors for perpetration in their schools, on the school buses and in their community.
3. Describe the three step process to respond to Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, and Teen Relationship Abuse when you witness it.
4. Provide messages to assist educators as they respond to student disclosure.

### *Materials Needed*

1. Computer
2. LCD Projector
3. A Safety and Violence Prevention Curriculum
4. PowerPoint presentation

## **Introduction**

Healthy relationships among community members are the foundation for a safe community. Schools are just one part of a larger community. Healthy relationship skills, therefore, must be taught and practiced at home, school and on the school bus. From school activities to online interactions, there are many venues where students stay connected. As adult leaders in your school, you serve as a role model to students. Every time you respectfully disagree with a colleague or have to correct a student's behavior firmly, yet kindly, you are modeling safe behaviors for students. The basis for this module is to create safe learning environments that promote health and well-being for all children in Ohio's schools. This module will cover harassment, intimidation, bullying and teen relationship abuse that occurs verbally or physically at school and on school buses, and/or through the use of technology (email, text messages and social media sites).

This module also includes awareness of and action to take when school staff or faculty witness signs of harassment, intimidation and bullying, and teen relationship abuse. The risk factors for perpetration of these behaviors occur along the social ecological continuum, meaning that they occur on the individual, relationship, community and societal levels and not in isolation from one another. Often, these risk factors are the same, as one study recently identified, including

things like, "...exposure to community violence, witnessing parental intimate partner violence, delinquent behavior and childhood physical or sexual abuse."

These kinds of violence happen too frequently and represent serious barriers to learning for young people. Whether a student is a target of violence by adults or by other students, the impact on the student's life, and his or her learning, can be profound. The same can be said for the majority of students who are neither the aggressors nor the targets, but rather are bystanders and witness the violence. Often, these students do not have the skills to intervene in appropriate ways or knowledge to tell a trusted school staff member or other adult. Sometimes overlooked, though also important to recognize and respond to, is the impact bullying or teen relationship abuse behaviors have on the student who is perpetrating them. Knowing about and establishing relationships with key community resources are essential. Schools are not expected to do this work alone.

Possible negative health outcomes of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and teen relationship abuse, whether the target of the actions or the bystander, include mental health issues such as depression, substance use, post-traumatic stress disorder, hyper-vigilance, self-injurious behaviors and/or suicide. Some young people who are targets of violence or are the perpetrators may become aggressive, abusive and violent toward others. School professionals can and must interrupt the destructive cycle of violence through proactive measures and appropriate referrals.

It is important to **recognize, reach out, and refer** before problems can escalate to life-altering levels. Noticing and acting on risky behaviors employed by students who bully others or choose to use abusive and controlling behaviors in the school building, school bus or with their dating partner is critically important for school professionals. School staff should fully understand and refer back to their mandated reporter obligations, or seek advice and assistance if unsure about what to do. In many cases, students who are living with abuse, targeted for bullying, or are in an abusive relationship have been conditioned by the student who bullies to believe that no one can help them. School professionals may be their only hope.

Ohio law instructs schools to address these serious issues. Youth who are bullied, harassed, intimidated, or are experiencing relationship abuse are not able to adequately focus on academics due to the violence and increased stress in their lives. Effective teaching creates learning conditions for student engagement, quality of school life and student success when their teachers care about them.

In addition, anti-harassment, intimidation, bullying and teen relationship abuse are community issues that need a community response. Schools are just one piece of the puzzle, and quite possibly the only, or often, the first institution with

direct contact with youth on a daily basis. Your proximity to youth puts you in a prime position to recognize and act on the various issues students struggle with on any given day.

Universal training on anti-harassment, intimidation, bullying, and teen relationship abuse exposes all youth and school staff including school bus drivers to information on these issues. Underlying the universal approach is that no one is immune from harassment, intimidation, bullying, and teen relationship abuse; it can and does happen to youth regardless of social, economic, class, racial or ethnic characteristics. It would be unfair and inaccurate to assume that only “troubled students” or students displaying outward signs of distress need quality information, prevention education, or intervention.

### **Bullying - How Do I Know What to Look For?**

Research from 2011 identified bullying as a public health issue. The findings suggest that prevalence and incidence rates for bullying are difficult to narrow down due to the wide range of studies using various definitions and measures of the problem. This basis of research indicates that *nearly 30 percent of American youth* have been affected by bullying experiences. The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that 22.7% of Ohio’s 9-12 grade students reported bullying on school grounds and 6.2% did not go to school because they felt unsafe.

In general, bullying is understood as *repeated, intentional and aggressive* acts by one student, or a group of students against another student(s) perceived as being weaker, or having less social power than the person(s) doing the bullying. The behavior can be:

- Direct and physical (including hitting, pushing, spitting);
- Indirect or social (including name-calling and rumors);
- Relational (including exclusion from relationships to control others); or
- Gender-based (includes verbal and physical unwanted sexual attention and coercion, and/or insults, intimidation based on sexual orientation\*).

**\*Note:** *Some forms of gender-based bullying may actually be sexual harassment, and will need to be addressed according to Title IX.* For more information, please reference the Dear Colleague Letter, April 2011 issued by the U.S. Department of Education:  
(<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.html>).

### **Teen Relationship Abuse/Dating Violence - How Do I Know What to Look For?**

According to the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, teen dating violence is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner. Abuse may include insults, coercions, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behavior, in a heterosexual or same sex dating relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the dating partner.” Of note and unique to abuse in same-sex relationships, threats of being “outed” (revealing a partner’s sexual orientation to others such as family, friends, classmates, etc.) were used by abusive partners.

***Abusive and violent behaviors include the following:***

**Physical abuse**

- Pinch, hit shove, kick, throw, grab, shake, slap, punch
- With the intent of controlling and manipulating

**Sexual abuse**

- Any **unwanted** sexual contact
- Completed or attempted sex act
- Sexual contact (touching)
- Non-contact sexual abuse (voyeurism, threats, pornography)
- Can range from kissing to rape

**Psychological, emotional, or verbal abuse or coercion**

- Controlling and/or monitoring, etc.
- Manipulating and/or humiliation
- Name calling, verbal assaults, and threats
- Withholding info from dating partner

**Electronic or Technological Abuse**

- Unwanted and excessive texts or posts on the Internet
- Causes emotional distress and serves no legitimate purpose
- Stalking, manipulation

## **Consequences of Bullying**

In general, research concludes that bullying has many significant mental health and physical effects for the target of the bullying behaviors face-to-face and online. A quarter of victims experience more than one type of victimization, and suffer from suicidal ideations, anxiety and depression symptoms as a result. They further note that bystanders may suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from witnessing bullying, and that perpetrators are at a greater risk for increased escalation in the types of bullying in which they may later engage. Other

consequences include low self-esteem, and avoidance behaviors, anger control, maladaptive coping strategies, and higher levels of internalizing and externalizing problems, feelings of worthlessness, alienation, substance abuse, and homelessness, and impacts school climate, attendance, and dropout rates.

Bullying may also take on different forms at different ages. Attention to bullying behavior that takes place on line is common among adolescent and should on the radar of adults to prevent or intervene. In addition, bullying may become sexual violence at the middle or high school ages. Some studies have shown a predictive pattern of future victimization and perpetration in their adult relationships for those teens with history of teen dating violence.

The students who either silently tolerate (out of fear or acceptance) bullying behavior or actively promote the violence can be addressed in universal, evidence-informed curricula that promote healthy relationships, bystander intervention and responsible school citizenship. Such intervention with bystanders can be extremely effective because bystanders can be taught how to address the behaviors together to tell students who bully to stop and/or contact adults who will intervene. But research indicates that school professionals need to know what to do, too; 71% of teachers believe that they always intervene in bullying situations, while only 25% of students report that teachers always intervene\*\*\*.

\*\*\*Note: The incidence rates are taken from the following: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, American Psychological Association, National Center for Juvenile Justice, The Journal of the American Medical Association, 2001, NYS Psychologist, May/June 2003, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center.

## **What can teachers and other educators do?**

In what direct ways can schools reduce violence and promote a safe environment for all students and staff? One important answer is that schools can create and reinforce a respectful school climate. In *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents*, research is cited from around the country that highlights the connection between effective learning and academic, emotional, social, behavioral and physical safety. According to the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice and the American Institutes for Research, effective school violence prevention builds a school wide foundation of safety for all children. This involves:

- Supporting positive discipline, academic success and mental and emotional wellness through a caring school environment face-to-face and online;
- Teaching students appropriate behaviors and problem-solving skills;
- Providing positive behavioral support;

- Delivering appropriate academic instruction with engaging curricula and effective teaching practices; and
- Training for staff to recognize early warning signs and make appropriate referrals.

One approach familiar to teachers and recommended by Futures without Violence is the use of “teachable moments.” In general, teachable moments are events that happen in conversation between students that lend themselves to further exploration.

Futures without Violence suggest this model: **Say it, Claim it, Stop it.** The model is clear, concise and effective when used consistently to disrupt unhealthy behaviors.

Let’s look at each one:

1. **Say it.** The school staff member says what the offending behavior was that just occurred. Saying it allows all students to hear what is and what is not acceptable in a staff member’s presence.
2. **Claim It.** The school staff member owns her/his space and makes clear to students that offensive and hurtful words or behaviors are not tolerated in their space.
3. **Stop It.** The school staff member tells the student that the words or behaviors are not to be used again.

Futures without Violence indicates that the school staff member’s calm and consistent use of this model sets clear expectations and boundaries for all students about what types of language and behaviors will not be tolerated.

Finally, healthy relationships rely on several skills that are learned over time. They require ongoing practice through an evidence-informed curriculum approach:

- Communication, which involves learning to listen as well as to express oneself effectively;
- Recognizing and setting boundaries, which involves being able to identify an individual’s comfort level about relationship issues, and to navigate and negotiate those boundaries with a partner;
- Critical thinking to analyze the motivations for one’s own actions and the actions of others;
- Assertiveness to address and withstand peer pressure as well as pressure within a dating relationship and skills to enter and exit relationships safely and respectfully;
- Empathy and capacity to respond to and to intervene and help friends in unhealthy situations and relationships;
- Responsible use of technology and social networking.

It is fair to say that students will struggle with building these skills, and school staff, teachers and bus drivers may see an increase in negative behaviors. This is to be expected, but can be mitigated by consistently and fairly applying the **Say it, Claim it, and Stop it** model, and by providing ample opportunities for students to practice their newly acquired skills.

It is critical that you do not try to mediate a situation of bullying or violence. Bullying is not a mediation issue. One of the characteristics of a bullying interaction is a power differential between the student who bullies and the student being bullied. Unfortunately, power differentials cannot be mediated. The student who bullies and the student being bullied should be worked with separately.

## How to Respond - Recognize, Reach out and Refer

The indicators of bullying are similar to some of the indicators we have discussed in the previous modules. You can see why making timely referrals can address a host of potential problems students have. As indicated, there are specific warning signs that a student might become violent. Here, too, the need for early identification and referral is evident.

The most important thing you can do is to recognize in students the signs and symptoms of distress, reach out to them, tell them you care and make the appropriate referral so that they can get the help they need to be successful in school and in life. It is not optional for you to **recognize, reach out, and refer** incidents of bullying in your school. Ohio law now mandates that schools have a policy which prohibits bullying, harassment and intimidation, with a specified legal definition of these terms and with specific requirements related to reporting, investigating and intervening in these incidents.

Once aware of students being harassed, intimidated or bullied, the following key messages will assist educators as they respond to student disclosure.

### 1. Key messages to use with a student once disclosure has occurred:

- Thank you for sharing something so personal with me.
- It is important you know that I am concerned and want the behavior to stop.
- You deserve to be safe.
- Abuse is not your fault.
- I appreciate that you trust me with this information.
- Allow me to explain the limits of confidentiality and the Mandated Reporter Role.
- Let's talk for a little bit about what our next steps are.

- I am glad you brought this issue to my attention. I may not be able to answer all your questions, but I will get you connected to someone who can help.
- I am concerned about you. Can we talk about this more with the guidance counselor (or other trusted adult at school)?

**2. Before a disclosure (abuse, mental health issues, bullying, etc.):**

- Know your own biases about these issues.
- Practice how you will respond to a student disclosure, incorporating youth-centered and non-judgmental approaches.
- Be open to learning and incorporating new information that challenges your own beliefs.
- Know who to refer to appropriate school supports/services.
- Support and refer. You will not be expected to investigate a student's situation/claims nor should you.
- Prepare how you will take care of yourself after a disclosure by a student of suicidal intention, abuse, trafficking, etc.
- Inquire as to whether there is a staff-convened task force or working group on these issues? If so, does it make sense at this time to join or consult with them?

## Reporting and Referral Requirements

According to Ohio's Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Model policy, Teachers and other school staff, who witness acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall promptly notify the building principal and/or his/her designee of the event observed, and shall promptly file a written incident report. Teachers and other school staff who receive student or parent reports of suspected harassment, intimidation, and bullying shall promptly notify the building principal and/or his/her designee of such report(s).

**Formal Written Complaint:** This report shall be forwarded promptly (no later than the next school day) to the building principal or his/her designee.

**Informal Complaint from a Student:** The teacher or other professional employee shall prepare a written report of the informal complaint. The report shall be promptly forwarded (no later than the next school day) to the building principal or his/her designee.

Ohio's Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Model policy addresses both informal and formal complaints. School personnel are encouraged to address the issue of harassment, intimidation or bullying in other interactions with students. School personnel may find opportunities to educate students about harassment, intimidation and bullying and help eliminate such prohibited behaviors through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially

appropriate behavior. School personnel should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, humiliating or intimidating another student/school personnel, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of “harassment, intimidation or bullying.”

Ohio’s Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Model policy states a school district employee, student, or volunteer shall be individually immune from liability in a civil action for damages arising from the report of an incident. This immunity is based on making the report in good faith and in compliance with the procedures specified in the policy.

As an educator in the state of Ohio, you are a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse. Ohio law mandates teachers, school employees and school officials report unknown or suspected child abuse and neglect to children’s services or a police officer. This report is confidential in civil court actions and the name of the reporting party cannot be released. The report is admissible in criminal proceedings. Reports can be made anonymously and should be made following your school district’s policies and procedures.

A March 2007 amendment to the Ohio Revised Code states that an educator’s failure to report suspicion of child abuse is a first- degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in prison and up to a \$1,000 fine.

In addition, educators should adhere to district policies for reporting incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying. Educators should be knowledgeable of their district or building policy and procedures for reporting and referring identified students. Educators should know to whom incidents should be reported and to whom students should be referred in their building. Other connections can be made with social service agencies or 211 systems in your community.

There are school wide efforts to ensure schools are safe places – places where kids who are depressed or suicidal get help, where kids who are using alcohol and drugs are noticed, and where bullies, their targets, and children living in abusive homes are helped. This is the kind of school our children deserve and that we can all work to achieve. We hope that you will work with your school improvement team, or school climate committee, to create schools like this.

## Role of School Professional

1. What experiences have you had with students that display signs and symptoms of harassment, intimidation and bullying in your classroom or school building?
2. How comfortable and confident do you feel about **identifying** a student who displays the signs and symptoms of harassment, intimidation and bullying?

3. How comfortable and confident do you feel about **referring** a student displaying the signs and symptoms of harassment, intimidation and bullying?
4. What is the referral process for students in your building displaying the signs and symptoms of harassment, intimidation and bullying?

## Quiz

**Q1: Healthy relationship skills must be taught, learned and practiced in the home or at school.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q2: Negative health outcomes of harassment, intimidation, bullying and teen relationship abuse, whether from the target of the actions or the bystander, include:**

- A. mental health issues
- B. depression
- C. substance use
- D. post-traumatic stress disorder
- E. hyper-vigilance,
- F. self-injurious behaviors and/or suicide
- G. aggressive, abusive and violent behaviors toward others
- H. All of the above

**Q3: Students who are living with abuse, targeted for bullying, or are in an abusive relationship have been conditioned by the student who bullies to believe that no one can help them.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q4: Youth who are bullied, harassed, intimidated, or are experiencing relationship abuse are able to adequately focus on academics due to the violence and increased stress in their lives.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q5: Anti-harassment, intimidation, bullying and teen relationship abuse are public health and community issues that need a community response.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q6: Bullying is understood as repeated, intentional and aggressive acts by one student, or a group of students, against another student(s) perceived as being weaker, or having less social power than the person(s) doing the bullying.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q7: Teen dating violence is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q8: Bullying may become sexual violence at the middle or high school ages. Some studies have shown a predictive pattern of future victimization and perpetration in their adult relationships for those teens with a history of teen dating violence.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q9: The students who either silently tolerate (out of fear or acceptance) the bullying behavior or actively promote the violence cannot be addressed in universal, evidence-informed curricula that promote healthy relationships, bystander intervention, and responsible school citizenship.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q10: Schools cannot create and reinforce a respectful school climate, reduce violence and promote a safe environment for all students and staff.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q11: A school wide foundation of safety for all children involves:**

- A. Supporting positive discipline, academic success, and mental and emotional wellness through a caring school environment, face-to-face and online
- B. Teaching students appropriate behaviors and problem-solving skills

- C. Providing positive behavioral support
- D. Delivering appropriate academic instruction with engaging curricula and effective teaching practices
- E. Training for staff to recognize early warning signs and make appropriate referrals
- F. None of the above
- G. All of the above

**Q12: Futures without Violence suggests:**

- A. Remove the student from the class
- B. Suspend or expel the student
- C. Teachable moments
- D. Say it, Claim it, Stop it.

**Q13: It is critical that you do not try to mediate a situation of bullying or violence. Bullying is not a mediation issue. One of the characteristics of a bullying interaction is a power differential between the student who bullies and the student being bullied. Unfortunately, power differentials cannot be mediated. The student who bullies and the student being bullied should be worked with separately.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q14: Ohio law now mandates that schools have a policy prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation, with a specified legal definition of these terms and with specific requirements related to reporting, investigating and intervening in these incidents.**

- A. True
- B. False

## Quiz – Answer Key

**Q1: Healthy relationship skills must be taught, learned and practiced in the home or at school.**

- A. True
- B. False**

**Answer:** Healthy relationship skills must be taught, learned, and practiced in the home **AND** at school.

**Q2: Negative health outcomes of harassment, intimidation, bullying and teen relationship abuse, whether from the target of the actions or the bystander, include:**

- A. mental health issues
- B. depression
- C. substance use
- D. post-traumatic stress disorder
- E. hyper-vigilance
- F. self-injurious behaviors and/or suicide
- G. aggressive, abusive and violent behaviors toward others
- H. All of the above

**Q3: Students who are living with abuse, targeted for bullying, or are in an abusive relationship have been conditioned by the student who bullies to believe that no one can help them.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q4: Youth who are bullied, harassed, intimidated, or are experiencing relationship abuse are able to adequately focus on academics due to the violence and increased stress in their lives.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Answer:** Youth who are bullied, harassed, intimidated, or are experiencing relationship abuse are **NOT** able to adequately focus on academics due to the violence and increased stress in their lives.

**Q5: Anti-harassment, intimidation, bullying and teen relationship abuse are public health and community issues that need a community response.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q6: Bullying is understood as repeated, intentional and aggressive acts by one student, or a group of students, against another student(s) perceived as being weaker, or having less social power than the person(s) doing the bullying.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q7: Teen dating violence is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner.**

- A. True
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**Q8: Bullying may become sexual violence at the middle or high school ages. Some studies have shown a predictive pattern of future victimization and perpetration in their adult relationships for those teens with history of teen dating violence.**

- A. True
- B. False

**Q9: The students who either silently tolerate (out of fear or acceptance) the bullying behavior or actively promote the violence cannot be addressed in universal, evidence-informed curricula that promote healthy relationships, bystander intervention, and responsible school citizenship.**

- A. True
- B. False**

**Answer:** The students who either silently tolerate (out of fear or acceptance) the bullying behavior or actively promote the violence can be addressed in universal, evidence-informed curricula that promote healthy relationships, bystander intervention, and responsible school citizenship.

**Q10: Schools cannot create and reinforce a respectful school climate, reduce violence and promote a safe environment for all students and staff?**

- A. True
- B. False**

**Answer:** Schools **CAN** create and reinforce a respectful school climate, reduce violence and promote a safe environment for all students and staff?

**Q11: A school-wide foundation of safety for all children involves:**

- A. Supporting positive discipline, academic success, and mental and emotional wellness through a caring school environment face to face and online;
- B. Teaching students appropriate behaviors and problem-solving skills;
- C. Providing positive behavioral support;

- D. Delivering appropriate academic instruction with engaging curricula and effective teaching practices; and
- E. Training for staff to recognize early warning signs and make appropriate referrals.
- F. None of the above
- G. All of the above**

**Q12: Futures without Violence suggests:**

- A. Remove the student from the class
- B. Suspend or expel the student
- C. Teachable moments
- D. Say it, Claim it, Stop it.**

**Q13: It is critical that you do not try to mediate a situation of bullying or violence. Bullying is not a mediation issue. One of the characteristics of a bullying interaction is a power differential between the student who bullies and the student being bullied. Unfortunately, power differentials cannot be mediated. The student who bullies and the student being bullied should be worked with separately.**

- A. True**
- B. False

**Q14: Ohio law now mandates that schools have a policy prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation, with a specified legal definition of these terms and with specific requirements related to reporting, investigating and intervening in these incidents.**

- A. True**
- B. False

## **National, State and Local Resources**

StopBullying.gov coordinates closely with federal partners in the Bullying Prevention Steering Committee, an interagency effort led by the Department of Education that works to coordinate policy, research, and communications on bullying topics. StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying. For more information, visit <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>.

The Ohio Department of Education and several state agencies have formed the Ohio Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Initiative to sponsor professional development about Ohio's Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Model policy and best practices for creating a safe and supportive learning environment. Visit the [www.education.ohio.gov](http://www.education.ohio.gov) and use the search term bullying.

Locally district and building leaders should partners with mental health agencies, law enforcement, health department, local rape crisis center, or domestic violence shelter to receive prevention education or intervention supports. Relationships with these agencies can inform staff through professional development, students through evidence based curriculum and the community through joint activities of strategies for behavior change to create healthy schools and communities.