

Assessment of Bullying and Victimization

Assessments provide the baseline for understanding the nature and extent of bullying problems and a foundation for developing prevention and intervention programs. Effective assessments will identify the prevalence of bullying, the factors associated with bullying, and the environmental issues surrounding the problems of bullying. Assessments inform the selection of a bullying prevention program and the tailoring of programs to address the developmental and environmental issues identified through the assessment process.

What is Assessment?

- Examines the extent and the nature of bullying problems in different contexts (e.g., peer group, school) from different perspectives (e.g., children's and adults' reports).
- Evaluates the effectiveness of bullying prevention initiatives.
- Facilitates an understanding of the type and intensity of intervention required to help different students.

Critical Questions

An assessment in any child or youth context provides critical insights into many aspects of children's relationships and the responses to bullying problems. Surveys of children, youth, their parents, and their leaders can provide answers to the following questions:

- How often does bullying happen?
- Who is involved?
- What are they doing? (e.g., types of bullying at different ages)
- When does bullying occur?
- How severe is bullying?
- How frequently does bullying occur?
- Where does bullying occur?
- How long-lived are bullying problems?
- What behaviors and attitudes support bullying?
- How developed are children's relationship skills and competencies?
- How do other children participate?
- How willing are children/youth to join in and/or to stop bullying?
- How do victimized children themselves handle bullying problems?
- How do bystanders handle bullying problems?
- How do adults handle bullying problems?
- How does an organization handle bullying problems?
- What does an organization do to prevent bullying problems?
- What are adults' attitudes about bullying and intervention strategies?
- How is the community involved in bullying prevention and intervention efforts?

Why Conduct an Assessment of Bullying and Victimization?

Assessments can provide benchmarks for monitoring and accountability. Assessments not only provide data for an understanding of the current state of relationship problems within a setting, but they also form the basis of program evaluation.

Assessments are key to:

- Evidence-based practice: Verifying that the organization's prevention or intervention program is decreasing bullying.
- Evaluating the processes associated with change within a bullying prevention or intervention program.
 - What worked?
 - How well did it work?
 - For whom did it work?

If the assessment indicates that the bullying program is effectively reducing bullying and promoting positive relationships, it provides critical evidence for securing funding and sustainability. Regular assessments can enhance motivation and increase commitment to bullying prevention and intervention programs.

To ensure that the assessment tool is effectively providing the information that the organization requires, it needs to be comprehensive and assess:

- The relationships of the children and youth as well as those with adults in the organization.
- Different types of bullying at different ages and for boys and girls.
- Reports from multiple stakeholders: students, school staff, parents, other significant adults, and community leaders.