

Cyberbullying Prevention and Intervention Tips

Prevention

1. Establish Policies

Set clear guidelines for technology use at your institution and update policies accordingly. Publicize guidelines by hanging posters or distributing fliers, and making youth aware of the consequences for online cruelty.

2. Educate Youth

Engage youth in activities and discussions about ethical standards for online activities, teach them that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and help them identify strategies for responding to cyberbullying and online hate. The mentoring of younger students by their older peers is a great way to put such education into practice.

3. Promote Online Safety

Increase awareness of Internet safety strategies among youth and their families by sending home informational materials and sponsoring community programs that provide practical information about how to respond to cyberbullying.

4. Monitor Technology Use

Institute supervision and monitoring practices that keep relevant staff at your institution informed about how technology is being used at your site, and that help them to enforce rules and policies. Include blocking/filtering software as part of a comprehensive monitoring strategy, but do not rely solely on these tools.

5. Encourage Reporting

Establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for cyberbullying incidents and make youth aware of them. Encourage youth to tell a trusted adult about threatening or harassing messages that they or others receive. Reinforce the difference between “tattling” and responsible reporting, and impress upon youth



the destructive consequences of keeping silent about bullying and bias.

6. Select a Point Person

Designate a cyberbullying “expert” at your institution, who is responsible for keeping up with laws, policies, best practices and current trends regarding cyberbullying and Internet safety; and who builds relationships with relevant community members, including local law enforcement officials that deal with cybercrimes. Make sure youth at your institution know who to go to with concerns about cyberbullying or online safety.

7. Set an Example

Model appropriate technology use by refraining from sending or forwarding offensive jokes and mean comments, and by reporting hate and harassment when it occurs. Avoid texting or talking on a mobile phone in inappropriate places and demonstrate to youth that you “walk the talk” when it comes to safe and responsible technology use.

8. Be Vigilant

Look for warning signs that a young person in your care might be the target or perpetrator of cyberbullying. If you observe obsessive technology use, fear or avoidance of technology, social withdrawal or other behaviors that concern you, talk with your supervisor or a mental health expert at your institution about how to intervene.

Cyberbullying Prevention and Intervention Tips

Intervention

1. Save Evidence

Advise youth to keep all proof of bullying and harassment, including e-mails, texts, phone numbers and screen names. Tell them to take screen shots or print the evidence, and keep on file to substantiate claims of inappropriate or illegal behavior.

2. Investigate and Respond

Interview the individuals involved in the incident and work with Internet and cell phone service providers to gather as much information as possible about what took place. Determine appropriate consequences for the perpetrators in accordance with your institution's policies and the seriousness of the infraction.

3. Involve Law Enforcement

Report extremely harmful online speech, such as harassment, stalking, threats of violence and pornography to the police.

4. Consult an Attorney

Before carrying out consequences, check with your institution's legal counsel to make sure that all disciplinary measures are in line with your institution's policies and the law, and that you are not inadvertently violating the First Amendment rights of individuals. If appropriate, counsel may also advise the target's family about their options for taking legal action against the perpetrator or the perpetrator's family.

5. Follow Up with the Perpetrator's Family

Discuss the incident with the perpetrator's parents or guardians to establish ongoing communication and consistent expectations between home and your institution. Provide information and education as appropriate so that the perpetrator's family understands how best to address the negative behavior, monitor their child's online behavior and ensure responsible use of technology in the future.

6. Provide Support

Assist the target and the target's family in coping with the impact of the online cruelty, and to build skills for dealing with such problems in the future. Make sure not to blame the target for being bullied or to

unintentionally punish the target by limiting access to technology.

7. Block Harassers

Protect targets from further victimization by helping them to block offending e-mail addresses, screen names, "friends" on social networking sites and cell phone numbers. If necessary, help families to change phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

8. Report Incidents

Help targets to file complaints with Internet and cell phone service providers. Most social networking and media sites (e.g., Facebook, YouTube) have "report abuse" functions and will respond to reports of harassment promptly.

9. Reach Out

Work with local schools, youth groups and community organizations to share information about ongoing problems with cyberbullying (making sure to maintain confidentiality where necessary). Since the cyber-world has no boundaries, communicating with the different institutions that youth are a part of can help to establish consistency with regard to the messages and consequences that youth receive.

10. Educate

Discuss strategies for responding to cyberbullying and ways to be an ally with all youth. Online harassment and cruelty affect the entire community, not just those who are directly involved in an incident. Broad-based education about responsible technology use can contribute to a climate that is welcoming and inclusive for all members of your institution.