

BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Guidance for Early Education & Child Care Providers

Bullying Defined

“Bullying is when a person or group of people feel the need to be stronger than someone else. Bullying includes actions such as attacking someone physically or verbally and/or excluding someone from a group on purpose. This behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated.”

Bullying in Young Children

It Starts Early

Aggression towards peers is most common amongst young children, which is why they are at a higher risk of being bullied. This behavior can start in children as young as 12 months.

Their Definition is Different

Though young children can see actions as hurtful, they don't often see the behavior as a pattern, or, if a child is acting like someone who bullies, why their behavior is harmful to their peers.

Troubles Recording and Recognizing

Children who are still learning to communicate can't express or record their feelings consistently. This also leads parents of young children to report bullying less often than parents of older children.

Teasing vs. Bullying

Bullying is intentional. Before proceeding in handling a bullying situation, it's crucial to know what the child or children intended by their behavior.

Best Practices for ECE Providers

Model Positive Interactions

Suggest positive interactions, like sharing and taking turns. Talk to your students about the importance of kindness and the consequences of harmful behaviors.

Vigilance Pays Off

Monitor children's behavior in order to stop or redirect aggressive behavior if it occurs. Monitoring can also allow you to catch positive behavior and reward it.

Teach Appropriate Responses

Children should be taught to say "Stop" when behaviors make them upset or unhappy, and they should also know to immediately get an adult. Reinforce that talking to adults is *not* tattling.

Use Simple Consequences

Set clear rules for behavior, but avoid harsh discipline strategies. Present opportunities to fix the problem, be that apologizing or helping clean up, while reinforcing positive behaviors.

Engaging with Your Community

Bullying prevention and providing social and emotional learning does not have to be the sole responsibility of early education and child care professionals. Parents not only should be notified of problem behaviors, but should also work with you to help the child. Health and mental health professionals can assist you in assessing your children's development and suggest ways to better prepare them. State agencies devoted to regulating child care facilities can also help build up your workforce. With these efforts, the children in your care can grow in their social skills, which will better set them up for success in elementary school and in life.

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