Inform Yourself and Your Association

- Visit www.nea.org/neabullyfree, a good go-to source for resources about how to help bullied students and how to prevent bullying in your school.
- Seek input and collect data from other school staff to whom students go for support.
- Request a bullying prevention and intervention training session from NEA at www.nea.org/neabullyfree (there is a training link). Make sure the training is scheduled at a time that is convenient for security services ESPs to attend.
- Ask your school district to provide training on the content of current policies for bullying prevention and intervention. Work with your local affiliate to ensure these trainings are scheduled at times that are convenient for security services ESPs to attend along with other school staff.
- Become involved in bullying prevention teams, committees, and other activities at your school or Education Association.
- Initiate meetings with other staff to share concerns about bullying in general or specific students in particular.
- Acknowledge that you have a unique role to play in preventing student bullying and keeping all students safe.

NEA’s Bully Free Pledge

I agree to be identified as a caring adult who pledges to help bullied students. I will listen carefully to all students who seek my help and act on their behalf to put an immediate stop to the bullying. I will work with other caring adults to create a safe learning environment for all students in my school.

Be that caring adult. Take the pledge at nea.org/neabullyfree

Bully Free: It Starts With Me!

Resources:

- www.nea.org/neabullyfree
  NEA’s official website for the NEA Bully Free: It Starts with Me campaign
  www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oca/letters/colleague-201010.html

- Guidance on bullying from the U.S. Department of Education
  www.pta.org/bullying.asp

- National PTA guide on safeguarding children from bullying
  www.nea.org/home/3207.htm

- Education Support Professionals website with links to bullying resources, including the 2010 NEA Nationwide Study of Bullying prevention and intervention.
  www.nea.org/neabullyfree

- Educator Tip Sheets are available, such as: How to Intervene on the-Spot Intervention at School
  http://www.nasro.org

- The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), a non-profit established in 1991, is an organization for school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security/safety professionals working as partners to protect students, school faculty and staff, and the schools they attend.

- This document has been printed by Organized Staff Union Labor at the National Education Association

SECURITY SERVICES ESPS AND BULLYING PREVENTION

School Security Staff Witness Bullying Daily

Bullying behavior is a growing concern among America’s educators. Bullying is generally defined as repeated aggressive acts intended to do harm, and is characterized by a power or status difference between the students. Bullying includes not only physical aggression such as hitting or stealing, but also verbal aggression, such as threatening, name calling, spreading rumors, socially rejecting and isolating someone, or cyberbullying (where perpetrators can hide behind the anonymity of the Internet).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), more than 70 percent of students play some role in bullying, whether as one who bullies, is bullied, or witnesses bullying. A U.S. Department of Education study found that in 2006-2007, one-third of U.S. students 12 through 18 reported being bullied. Students who have been bullied report feeling depressed, anxious, and isolated. Many have low self-esteem. Their school attendance and performance may suffer. And in some cases, as the nation has seen recently, they are so tormented, they take their own lives.

Even though there are many training programs that can provide educators with tools to intervene in bullying situations, bullying often occurs outside the classroom, beyond teachers’ reach. Research consistently shows that bullying often occurs where there is little adult supervision—such as in the hallways and stairwells between classes, in bathrooms and locker rooms, and on the playground. Often, well-intentioned bullying prevention programs don’t take this into consideration, missing the opportunity to inform non-teaching staff about how to intervene in bullying situations.

In addition, studies show that students who are bullied often feel more comfortable confiding in someone other than the teacher or other authority figure. Because they are among the few staff members who have keys to the entire building and who have authority to walk through every part of the school campus, security staff often encounter students hiding in the basement, in a closet, in a bathroom, or in a far corner of the school grounds out of fear of being bullied. Knowing how to respond to these situations would go a long way to helping security services staff make students feel safe. And, since security services staff usually live in the school districts in which they work, they are uniquely positioned to understand local factors that may be affecting students’ behaviors when they’re not in class.

NEA has long been committed to bullying and harassment prevention and intervention. For decades, members have received training in how to recognize and intervene in student-to-student bullying situations. NEA conducted a nationwide survey of 4,870 ESPs in 2012 that included questions about their experiences with bullying. Among the respondents, 156 were security services staff.

Highlights of their responses are presented on the next page.
What Security Services ESPs Said

They see bullying as a problem in their school. Fifty-three (53%) percent of security services ESPs surveyed said bullying was a major or a moderate problem in their school. They viewed bullying as a significantly greater problem at their school than did other ESPs.

They witness bullying. Security services ESPs were more likely than other ESPs to report seeing a student being bullied at their school. Around 20% of them reported witnessing it as frequently as several times a month and 11% saw bullying daily.

They hear reports of bullying from students. Approximately 42% of security services ESPs indicated that a student reported bullying to them within the past month.

A majority of security services ESPs say it’s “their job” to intervene in bullying situations.

They feel it’s their job to intervene. Almost all of the security services ESPs surveyed—99%—report that they agree it is “their job” to intervene when they see bullying situations.

They need training on bullying prevention and intervention. While nearly all the security services ESPs surveyed report that their school district has a bullying policy, one quarter of them report that they have not received training on that policy.

They need to be invited and encouraged to join school committees on bullying prevention. Only 34% of the surveyed security services ESPs reported being involved in formal school teams, committees or prevention programs dealing with bullying. This is more than some other ESP job categories, but still leaves room for improvement, given their high rate of observing bullying.

ESPs report feeling slightly more connected to their school community than teachers, which influences bullying intervention. Connectedness is the belief by adults in the school that they are cared about as individuals and professionals involved in the learning process. Research has shown there is an important link between feeling connected to the school and being comfortable intervening with all forms of bullying among all types of students. The more staff members, including security services ESPs, feel connected to their school, the more likely they are to intervene and stop bullying when they see it.

VIEW FROM SECURITY


I am a Youth Assistant in a large suburban high school. That’s our user-friendly term for someone who does security work in our district and works with students on a daily basis. Because I spend so much time in the halls, cafeteria and other common areas where students are more apt to feel “comfortable,” I have a unique view of bullying behavior.

As a security person, it’s absolutely my duty to stop bullying whenever or wherever I see or hear it. I also believe it’s my duty just because I’m an adult working with children, even 18-year-old ones. I’ve witnessed bullying in many forms over the past 17 years: the haves and the have-nots, the gay-lesbian-transgender students, as well as the racial bullying from both sides and physical but also verbal and emotional bullying. I always report any incident of bullying to an administrator, as well as attempting to talk to the perpetrator. It’s when we turn our heads and look away that we condone it.

I was bullied in high school because I was small. Back then it was called “teasing” and you were just supposed to laugh it off. It was hurtful and the memories never go away, it doesn’t matter how old you get. I try to make sure that those aren’t the memories my high school students come away with. We need more workshops that address the issue, to educate everyone from students to staff and administrators, so everyone knows what it looks like and how to deal with it; we all need to be aware of what our kids are going through. It’s not just about grades and prom.

TIPS FOR SECURITY SERVICES ESPs

To Prevent Bullying

✔ Treat students the way you want to be treated and the way you want them to treat each other.
✔ Focus on developing empathy and respect; discourage aggressive responses to bullying.
✔ Model respect for diversity among the student population.
✔ Use positive, non-verbal interactions—a smile, a nod, a thumbs up, a high five, a pat on the back.
✔ Notice something positive the students do and say something about it to them or someone else where they can hear it.
✔ Don’t expect students to solve bullying incidents themselves; they lack the skills.
✔ Encourage students to report incidents of bullying to you and other adults.
✔ Encourage administrators to acknowledge the key role security staff play as the eyes and ears in identifying instances of bullying.
✔ Negotiate with administrators to ensure security services personnel are provided training on bullying, so you know what you’re looking for (see resources). Become trained on characteristics of students who bully and those who are likely to be targets.
✔ Notice and speak to students who consistently sit alone; also notify a counselor or administrator.
✔ Inform administrators that increasing adult supervision and monitoring in the hallways when classes change or in other vulnerable locations can help ensure bullying won’t go unnoticed.
✔ Be visible throughout the day in a variety of locations throughout the school, such as in hallways, on stairwells, and in the cafeteria, not solely at the school entrance.
✔ Advocate for and remain active in school-wide student bullying prevention programs.
✔ Suggest establishing an incentive program for classrooms on their best behavior in the hallways.
✔ Request that bullying boxes be strategically placed throughout the school for students to anonymously report to security staff about bullying being experienced or witnessed.
✔ Establish and maintain rapport with parents, who can be encouraged to talk to their children about bullying issues and about being able to trust the security services personnel.

To Intervene in Bullying

✔ Learn about bullying so you know what you’re looking for (see resources).
✔ Ensure all security services staff receive training on how to intervene appropriately during a bullying incident.
✔ Learn what your school’s consequences are for students who bully and what supports exist for targets of bullying.
✔ Work with administrators to give authority to security services personnel to intervene appropriately during a bullying incident.
✔ When you see something, do something—be assertive and calm.
✔ Express strong disapproval of and intervene appropriately to stop bullying when it occurs.
✔ Start with verbal warnings. Use the name of the student who is bullying.
✔ Report incidents you witness as required by your school’s policy.
✔ Maintain your own log of bullying incidents.
✔ Talk to counselors and administration about what you’ve witnessed so they are alert to possible retaliation during the balance of the school day.
✔ Request that the school website list ways to reach the security services staff before, during or following a bullying incident.
✔ Seek opportunities for additional training on bullying prevention and intervention, such as attendance at the National Association of School Resource Officers conference.

They are likely to live in their school community. The ESP survey found that 56% of security services ESPs live in the school community where they work; this is considerably higher than the 39% of teachers who live in the community served by the school. This means that security ESPs know the students and their families, and can be an invaluable resource when seeking answers to bullying incidents.