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Cyberbullying: An Introduction

The School Safety Center

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/default.aspx>



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Welcome!

This presentation will introduce key concepts in cyberbullying.

It is meant to be in introduction.

Therefore, it will not answer every question you and others on your staff have.

We encourage you to

discuss cyberbullying issues with your legal office

refer to the resources which are suggested here and on the Safety Center and d Tech web pages,

contact your local ESD, and

contact The School Safety Center

if you need further assistance.

School Safety Center: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/default.aspx>



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QUESTION: What is bullying? How do we define it?

ANSWER: By way of review:

Bullying is...

when a student or students are being exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students.

Bullying exists when...

there is intentional harm-doing
where a negative action
is repeated over time;
and there is an imbalance of power



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QUESTION: How does state law define bullying?

ANSWER: [RCW 28A.300.285](#) defines

- Harassment, intimidation, or **bullying** as an intentional **electronic**, written, verbal or physical act that
- Physically harms a student or damages the student's property; **or**
 - Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education; **or**
 - Is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; **or**
 - Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.
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QUESTION: The state law mentions “electronic” forms of bullying. What does that mean?

ANSWER:

Our state law specifically mentions electronic forms of bullying.

This is commonly referred to as “**cyberbullying**”.

Cyberbullying is done in a variety of ways using a variety of devices, but it is *not just a technology issue*.

There is also a very close relationship between cyberbullying and ‘regular’ bullying.

For students, they are very likely one and the same.



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QUESTION: How do we define cyberbullying?

ANSWER:

Cyberbullying is bullying.

Cyberbullying is willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices.

Hinduja & Patchin, *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard*

Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social cruelty using the Internet or other digital technologies.

Willard, <http://csriu.org>



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QUESTION: What do it mean that this is not “just a technology issue”?

ANSWER:

Cyberbullying is bullying.

It is a component of broader online safety issues.

As such, it is an educational, health & safety,

- prevention-intervention, risk & protective,
- social-emotional, developmental,
- school climate,
- academic achievement issue.

Therefore, it is **not just a technology issue**, per se.



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QUESTION: What are some ways in which students bully and cyberbully?

ANSWER:

As we know, bullying can be:

Direct:

Indirect:

Physical: *Kicking, punching, hitting...* *

Done by a “henchman” **

Verbal: *Insults, name calling; gossip & rumors,...* **

Relational: *Nasty pictures, exclusion, isolation, impersonation,...* **

* **Cyberbullying** may present itself at school as physical conflict.

** These forms of bullying lend themselves to **cyberbullying**.



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QUESTION: How is cyberbullying different from 'real world' bullying?

ANSWER:

There are many ways in which it differs.

For example:

- the speed at which it occurs,
- a sense of anonymity for aggressors,
- the potential for an unknown, unlimited number of people involved as messages are forwarded,
- the potential that it will go viral.



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QUESTION: How is cyberbullying different from 'real world' bullying?

ANSWER:

There are other ways, as well:

- a lot can happen before a target is "hit",
- there is no safe harbor for the target; he or she can't go 'home' to get away,
- greater physical and emotional distances between aggressor and target.
- it is permanent.



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QUESTION: What are some examples of cyberbullying?

ANSWER: Here's one example:

Young people often share too much information which should be kept secret, log in information for example.

Friends – or former friends – can use another person's information to pretend to be that other person.

Ann was Barb's friend. Ann knows Barb's screen name and password. Ann pretends to be the Barb, and sends hurtful, untrue messages about Carol. Carol is hurt, but she gets mad at and retaliates against Barb.



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QUESTION: What are some examples of cyberbullying?

ANSWER: Here's another example:

Using a fake identity, John creates a page on a social networking site.

He calls it the "We Hate Mary" site.

John invites friends to post nasty messages about Mary, all using fake identities. Soon there are lots of mean comments about Mary.

After a while, Mary is shown the 'hate' page.

Mary is hurt by the messages.

Also, she no longer knows who her real friends are.



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QUESTION: What are some examples of cyberbullying?

ANSWER: Here's a 3rd example:

Rita and Susan were good friends – until now.

Rita used a picture of Susan. She put it onto a donkey and sent it to all the other girls.

She said, “Susan is an ass. She can't be our friend anymore.”

All the other girls laughed; they also shunned Susan.

Susan felt hurt, isolated and sad.

She did not know why this was happening.



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QUESTION: Why do young people do this?

ANSWER:

They have 24/7 access to a variety of personal technologies.

The technologies provide a sense of anonymity.

They may see their online personas as if they were outside themselves. (*It's not really me.*)

They see a lot of the activities as fun. (*I was joking.*)

They do these things because they get some kind of positive personal or social feedback.



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QUESTION: Why do young people do this?

ANSWER:

They do not think ahead.

Nor do they think about the impacts or consequences.

They are naïve, still kids.

They are making up the rules as they go.

They are often online alone – without any adult guidance or supervision. (*Carrie James of Harvard University calls this the dearth of ethical supports for young people online.*)

James, *GoodWork® Project Report Series, Number 54, 2008*



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QUESTION: Is sexting a form of cyberbullying?

ANSWER:

The short answer is: it depends. It can be but isn't always.

Sexting is not a singular thing. It covers a range of possible actions and motivations.

Let's define the term:

Sexting is online communication involving

- youth produced sexually explicit or suggestive images
- created and shared through the use of personal communication technologies.



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QUESTION: Is sexting a form of cyberbullying?

ANSWER:

Sexting may be done for a number of reasons. These range from

- a 21st century version of you-show-me-yours-I'll-show-you-mine,
- to generating or maintaining romantic interest,
- to more malicious, criminal or abusive reasons: **cyberbullying**, threats, extortion, child pornography, etc.

Sexting response requires clear policies and procedures, common sense, compassion and a known plan of action.



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QUESTION: What about the 1st Amendment and freedom of speech?

ANSWER:

Remember that cyberbullying is bullying.

Deal with cyberbullying as you would with other instances of bullying.

However, the use of personal technologies may impact how this happens.



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QUESTION: What about the 1st Amendment and freedom of speech?

ANSWER:

Remember: cell phones and other personal devices walk in and out of school and allow 24/7 access and sharing.

Apply the nexus between on and off-campus behavior:

- 1. location & proximity school**
- 2. time: hour & date**
- 3. the effect on others**
- 4. severity of activity & likely connection to student or staff safety**
- 5. impact on overall environment and safety of the school.**



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QUESTION: What about the 1st Amendment and freedom of speech?

ANSWER:

One final thought:

When questions arise around Freedom of Speech or any other real or potential legal issues around cyberbullying, **contact your legal office.**



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QUESTION: What can schools do about cyberbullying?

ANSWER:

Work with staff and other members of your school community.

- **Plan** ahead.
- **Bring** policies and procedures up to date.
- **Train** staff.
- **Talk to your students.**
- **Incorporate** cyberbullying into ongoing anti-bullying and harassment efforts and programs.



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QUESTION: What can schools do about cyberbullying?

ANSWER:

In addition:

- **Identify** staff with permission to override your filter. (Know how.)
- **Gather** evidence, if necessary. (Learn how.)
- **Educate** families about cyberbullying.
- **Notify** parents of targets and of known or suspected cyberbullies.
- **Notify** the police if the known or suspected abuses / behaviors involve a threat.



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QUESTION: What else should staff be aware of?

ANSWER:

Our youth live in a digital world.

They do not always distinguish between real and cyber or digital experiences in the same way as adults .

They often see them as the same.

As a result, what schools see and discipline as a **fight** or **physical conflict**

may actually be the result of ongoing cyberbullying.



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QUESTION: What can students do?

ANSWER:

Students can:

- **recognize** cyberbullying, whether it is happening to them or to friends,
- **avoid** retaliating if they are the targets,
- safely **intervene** on behalf of targeted students,
- **choose** not to participate by not forwarding, supporting or adding to mean messages, posts, texts or blogs.



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QUESTION: What can students do?

ANSWER:

Students can also:

- **stand by** their friend, the target,
- **save** evidence of the bullying,
- safely **report** cyberbullying to a trusted adult,
- **have a plan** of action for their own online activities.



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QUESTION: How and why should students save evidence?

ANSWER:

Cyberbullying is even harder to see than regular bullying. Therefore, it may be harder to show and prove.

Saving evidence is on the tech side of cyberbullying.

Ideas for saving evidence include:

- Not deleting hurtful messages,
- Printing off mean and hurtful messages,
- Saving web links, web addresses,
- taking screen shots,
- forwarding mean messages to a trusted adult.*

*** But not sexted images!**



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QUESTION: What should students know or include in their online plan of action?

ANSWER:

Students should know their trusted adult(s).

When logging on, young people need to understand:

- their technologies give them a lot of power and freedom,
- with power and freedom comes responsibility.
- They need to be responsible digital citizens.



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QUESTION: What should students know or include in their online plan of action?

ANSWER:

As responsible digital citizens, they need to remember:

- to protect their passwords and other personal information,
- everything they post is permanent, and
- everything should be considered public.
- Their message says a lot about the them, as people.



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QUESTION: What can students include in their plan of action for their online activities?

ANSWER:

Students should understand and remember:

- to think before they push 'send' because
- once pushed, a message is sent instantly,
- once sent, a message can not be recalled,
- once sent, a message may go viral,
- a mean message hurts a *real* person.



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QUESTION: What are some good resources we can use?

ANSWER:

There are several. Here is a brief list of resources.

1. <http://www.cfchildren.org> – The Committee for Children
2. <http://csriu.org> – Center for the Safe & Responsible Use Internet Use
3. <http://www.cyberbullying.us> – Cyberbullying Resource Site
4. <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/prevention/cbms.html> - SPS Middle School Cyberbullying Curriculum
5. <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/marc> - MA Aggression Reduction Center Site

A more complete list can be found on the OSPI School Safety Center web site.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/default.aspx>



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QUESTION: Are there any final questions?





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For More Information and Resources

Please visit

The School Safety Center Web Page

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/default.aspx>

Or contact:

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