

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is a multilevel, multicomponent school-based program designed to prevent or reduce bullying in elementary, middle, and junior high schools (students 6 to 15 years old). The program attempts to restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying. School staff is largely responsible for introducing and implementing the program. Their efforts are directed toward improving peer relations and making the school a safe and positive place for students to learn and develop.

While intervention against bullying is particularly important to reduce the suffering of the victims, it is also highly desirable to counteract these tendencies for the sake of the aggressive student, as bullies are much more likely than other students to expand their antisocial behaviors. Research shows that reducing aggressive, antisocial behavior may also reduce substance use and abuse.

INTENDED POPULATION

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is designed for students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools. All students participate in most aspects of the program, while students identified as bullying others or as targets of bullying receive additional individual interventions.

BENEFITS

- Reduces existing bullying/victim problems
- Prevents development of new cases of bullying
- Improves peer relations at the school

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Proven Results

- A 30% to 70% reduction in student reports of being bullied and bullying others; results are largely parallel with peer ratings and teacher ratings
- Significant reductions in student reports of general antisocial behavior (e.g., vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy)
- Significant improvements in classroom order and discipline
- More positive attitude toward schoolwork and school

INTERVENTION

Universal

Selective

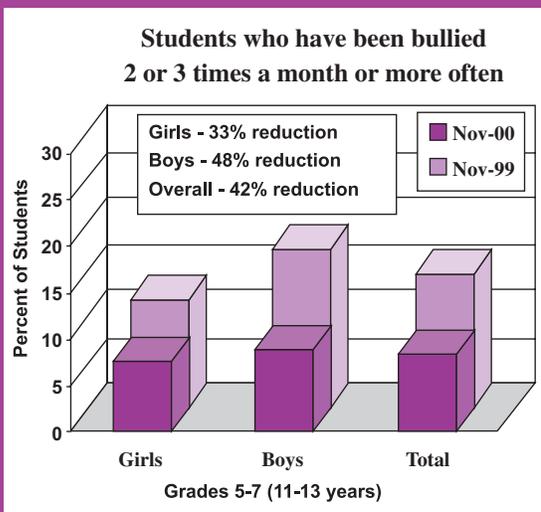
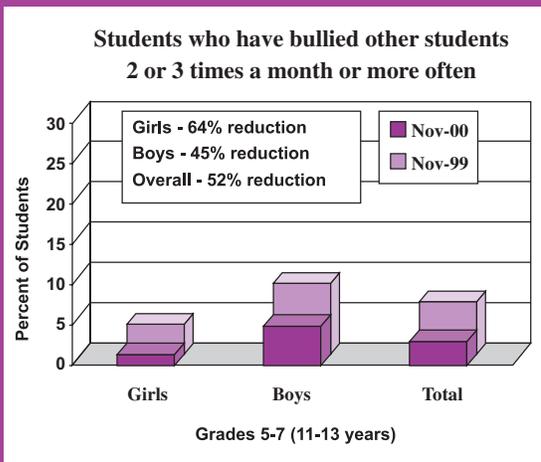
Indicated



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

OUTCOMES

Some key results are reported under the heading Proven Results. Two graphs from the last evaluation of 10 schools in Oslo, Norway, are presented below. The reductions in bully/victim problems varied between 33 and 64 percent for the various subgroups (girls and boys 11 to 13 years old in grades five to seven).



HOW IT WORKS

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program works with interventions at three levels:

Schoolwide Interventions

- Administration of the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire about bullying (filled out anonymously by the students)
- Formation of a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee
- Staff training
- Development of schoolwide rules against bullying
- Development of a coordinated system of supervision during break periods

Classroom-level Interventions

- Regular classroom meetings about bullying and peer relations
- Class parent meetings

Individual-level Interventions

- Individual meetings with children who bully
- Individual meetings with children who are targets of bullying
- Meetings with parents of children involved

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program requires significant and ongoing commitment from school administrators, teachers, and other staff. A first step is to establish a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee composed of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the program's onsite coordinator.

Training

All school staff participate in a half- to 1-day training session. In addition, teachers are expected to—

- Thoroughly read the *Teacher Handbook: Olweus' Core Program Against Bullying and Antisocial Behavior* and the book *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*.
- Hold weekly 20- to 40-minute classroom meetings.
- Participate in regular Teacher Discussion Groups during the first year of the program.

Additionally, school personnel on the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee—

- Participate in a 1.5-day training with a certified trainer.
- Attend 1- to 2-hour monthly meetings.

Program Management and Timing

Depending on the school's size, a program will require a part- or full-time onsite coordinator. The optimal approach to program implementation involves selecting the onsite coordinator and administering the questionnaire survey in the spring; training staff in August, before school opens; and holding a schoolwide kickoff at the beginning of the fall semester.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is available for interested schools, including followup telephone consultation provided to the onsite coordinator every 3 to 4 weeks during the first year of implementation.

Program Resources

It is required that each teacher have a copy of the *Teacher Handbook* and *Bullying at School*. Other required materials include the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire and accompanying PC software for processing and evaluating student responses. One videotape and accompanying guidebook, appropriate for grades three through eight, should be purchased for every six classrooms. Supplemental lesson plans may also be purchased.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In 1983, after three adolescent boys in northern Norway committed suicide, most likely as a consequence of severe bullying by peers, the country's Ministry of Education commissioned Professor Dan Olweus to conduct a large-scale research and intervention project on bully/victim problems. The resulting Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, developed at the University of Bergen in Norway, has been refined, expanded, and evaluated with positive results in two new large-scale projects in Norway. As part of the Norwegian Government's plans for the prevention of delinquency and violence among children and youth, the Olweus Program is now being implemented on a large-scale basis all over Norway. The program has also been successfully implemented in other countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. During the 1990s, Professor Olweus worked closely with a number of colleagues in the United States, notably Dr. Sue Limber and Dr. Gary Melton at Clemson University in South Carolina, to implement and evaluate the program in the United States.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Two different types of evaluation designs have been used to assess the program. In several evaluations, what is often called an "age-cohort design" with time-lagged contrasts between adjacent but age-equivalent cohorts was used. One of the strengths of this quasi-experimental design is that several of the cohorts serve both as intervention and control/baseline groups (in different comparisons). Also, in one evaluation project, a traditional control group design was used.

PROGRAM DEVELOPER

Dan Olweus, Ph.D.

For almost 30 years, Professor Dan Olweus has been involved in research and intervention in the area of bullying among school children and youth. In 1970, he started a large-scale research project, now generally regarded as the world's first scientific study of bully/victim problems. In the 1980s, he began the first systematic study of bullying intervention and documented the positive effects of this program. During the late 1990s, Professor Olweus and his research and intervention group at the University of Bergen conducted several new large-scale intervention projects using a somewhat different study design, again gaining good results. Professor Olweus has been named "the world's leading authority" on bully/victim problems by *The Times* newspaper of London. His book, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*, has been published in 15 languages.

CONTACT INFORMATION

To locate and order program resources, visit:

http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/ncrj/pdfs/bullying_fact_sheet2.pdf

For program information:

Dan Olweus, Ph.D.

Research Center for Health Promotion

Christiesgate 13

N-5015 Bergen

Norway

Phone: 011-47-55-58-23-27

E-mail: olweus@online.no

Marlene Snyder, Ph.D.

Institute on Family & Neighborhood Life

Clemson University

158 Poole Agricultural Center

Clemson, SC 29634

Phone: (864) 710-4562

Fax: (864) 656-6281

E-mail: nobully@clemson.edu

RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services

Model Program—Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice