



Lakeside Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy

Bullying Policy

Lakeside Presbyterian Church seeks to create an environment that is positive and encouraging for all participants. Accordingly, we have no tolerance for bullying. Any instance of bullying will be met with immediate action on the part of Lakeside staff and volunteers. Any participant who attends any of the activities hosted by Lakeside will be held accountable to the standards of behavior and consequences explained below. Participation is therefore viewed by Lakeside Presbyterian Church as an acknowledgement on behalf of the participant to abide by the standards listed below.

Definition:

Bullying is simply any and all acts intentionally directed at an individual or group of individuals that would reasonably be expected to cause emotional or physical harm. Recognize that bullying can come in many forms. Any act which fits the aforementioned description will be considered bullying whether in the form of a direct verbal encounter, an indirect verbal encounter (i.e. spreading gossip through others), online messaging, online postings, text messaging, or phone messaging.

Procedure and Consequences:

Volunteers and staff will use situational judgment while abiding by the procedures listed below. All volunteers and staff have agreed to follow the procedures listed below. If a child or youth is found to have taken part in bullying the following procedure will be followed by staff and volunteers:

1. The child or youth will be immediately sent home from the activity. If the church group is on a trip, the volunteer or staff will use discretion as to whether or not the offender(s) will be sent home or simply separated from the group. If the staff or volunteer determine that the offense is severe enough to warrant a participant being sent home from a trip, it will be the responsibility of the parents to facilitate travel home.
2. The parents of the offender will be immediately notified.
3. The volunteer or staff person in charge at the time of the offense will make a full report to the pastoral staff.
4. Depending on the severity of the incident the following consequences will result:
 - Determine if a permanent suspension is necessary.
 - If it is a first time offense:
The offender will be suspended from activities for one week. The offender must be 1. willing to make proper amends to the victim. The offender must 2. display an attitude of sincere regret before being allowed to return to the program. The offender will 3. meet with a volunteer or staff to discuss the behavior. If all of these consequences are met the offender will be allowed to return at the end of his/her suspension.
 - If it is not a first time offense:
The pastoral staff will set an appointment to meet with the offender and his/her parents. It is possible that the offender will no longer be welcome to participate in church events.

For more information visit www.pta.org/bullying.

UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

By Tara L. Kuther

<http://www.aets.org/article175.htm>

Each day hundreds of thousands of children dread going to school and facing the taunts, jeers, and humiliation wrought by bullies. When we think of bullying, the easily identifiable physical and verbal harassment comes to mind, including teasing, taunting, threatening, and hitting. Relational bullying is more difficult for adults to observe and identify. Children who bully through relational means socially isolate their victims by intentionally excluding them or spreading rumors about them. Bullying, then, refers to physical or psychological intimidation that occurs repeatedly, is intended to inflict injury or discomfort on the victim, and creates an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse.

The bullying relationship is characterized by an imbalance of power, such that the victim of bullying finds it hard to defend him- or herself and begins to feel powerless against the bully. The child who bullies typically is bigger, older, stronger, or more popular than the victim of bullying, and his or her intent is to exert power over the victim. For example, girls who bully through exclusion and other forms of relational aggression tend to have more social power than their victims. The bully is aware that his or her behavior causes distress, the bully enjoys the victim's reaction, and the bullying continues and escalates. Bullies hurt others in order to feel strong and powerful at a given moment.

It's very difficult for most parents to determine whether their children engage in bullying behaviors because most bullying occurs out of parents' sight.

Some adults and children rationalize bullying because victims are overly sensitive, cry easily, or act in ways that set them apart from other children. Even if the victim does show these characteristics, adults and children must know bullying is not a healthy coping response—it signals that a child needs to learn how to manage his or her emotions, release anger and frustration in more healthy ways, and learn more constructive strategies for getting along with others. Your role, as parent or teacher, is to help children establish more mature and healthy ways of relating with others, thereby ensuring that they will grow into caring and adaptive adults.

Who is likely to be victimized?

There are at least two types of victims: passive victims and reactive victims. The stereotypical image of the bullied child is the passive victim: He or she avoids confrontation, is physically slight, quiet, does not tease others, and does not defend him- or herself from the bully. The passive victim turns inward when bullied—crying and withdrawing rather than fighting back.

Reactive victims are much less common than passive victims. The reactive victim provokes attacks by being aggressive, disruptive, argumentative, and antagonizing towards bullies and other children, and retaliates when he or she is bullied. Sometimes reactive victims are referred to as bully/victims because they straddle the fence of being a bully and/or victim. They are difficult to identify because they seem to be targets for bullies, but they often taunt bullies and other children. Not only do reactive victims fight back when bullied, but they sometimes channel their rage and anger into bullying others, especially those younger and weaker than themselves. In this way, some victims of bullies transform into bullies themselves, perpetuating the abuse and singling out new victims.

What are the effects of bullying?

Bullying is not a normal part of growing up. Victims of bullying suffer psychological and sometimes physical scars that last a lifetime. Victims report greater fear and anxiety, feel less accepted, suffer

from more health problems, and score lower on measures of academic achievement and self-esteem than students who are not bullied. Victims often turn their anger inward, which may lead to depression, anxiety, and even suicide. The experience of bullying is also linked with violence, as the fatal school shootings in Littleton, Colorado, and Jonesborough, Arkansas, have illustrated.

However, it's not just victims who are hurt by bullying. Bullies fail to learn how to cope, manage their emotions, and communicate effectively—skills vital to success in the adult world. Without intervention, bullies suffer stunted emotional growth and fail to develop empathy. Since bullies are accustomed to achieving their immediate goals by pushing others around, they don't learn how to have genuine relationships with other people. Instead, they externalize and blame others for their problems, never taking responsibility, nor learning how to care for another's needs. Bullies who don't learn other ways of getting what they want develop into adult bullies who are more likely to experience criminal troubles, be abusive toward their spouses, and have more aggressive children, perhaps continuing the cycle of bullying into the next generation.

Ending bullying: What works

The most effective way of addressing bullying is through comprehensive schoolwide programs. Schoolwide programs, developed collaboratively between school administration and personnel, students, parents, and community members, seek to change the school's culture to emphasize respect and eliminate bullying. So what has been shown to work in preventing and ending bullying?

- Increased awareness, understanding, and knowledge about bullying on the part of school staff, parents, and students
- Involvement of the wider community, including parents and service providers
- Integration of bullying-related content into the curriculum in ways that are appropriate to each grade
- Increased supervision and monitoring of students to observe and intervene in bullying situations
- Involvement of students
- Encouragement of students to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization
- A plan to deal with instances of bullying
- Class and school rules and policies regarding bullying and appropriate social behavior
- Promotion of personal and social competencies (e.g., assertiveness, anger management, self-confidence, and emotional management skills)
- A schoolwide community of respect in which every student is valued
- Collaboration between parents, educators, service providers, and students to reinforce messages and skills across settings (e.g., home, school, community)
- Serious commitment to implementing the program on the part of administrators and school staff

Tara L. Kuther, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at Western Connecticut State University, is the author of Gimme Your Lunch Money: A Guide to Bullies and Bullying (Parent's Guide Press, 2003).