PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS AGAINST BULLYING (PCAB): A CURRICULUM FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN TRANSITIONING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

By Margarita Rubio
California State University, Long Beach
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Introduction

• Bullying is defined as “intentional and repeated aggressive behavior, which involves an imbalance of power between the victim and bully” (Olweus, 1993, p. 3).

• Bullying is a worldwide occurrence in which approximately 45% of students of all ages around the world are reported to have been involved as victims, bullies, or both (Harel-Fisch et al., 2011).

• In the United States, annually, an estimated 6,000,000 students between 12 and 18 years of age have been bullied (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

• Although bullying is present in elementary, middle, and high schools, it is most prevalent in middle schools (Wang & Iannotti, 2012).

• When parents discover that their children are being bullied, they report not knowing how to support their children who are bullied, how to react to their children who are bullies, and even when they do report the bullying to school staff, the issue is often not made a priority (Brown, Aalsma, & Ott, 2012).
Social Work Relevance

• This project is commensurate with the values of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (2008).

• The core values that will heavily be emphasized are those of dignity and worth of people and importance of human relationships.

• Parents and caregivers will be treated with dignity and taught skills that will hopefully empower them to take a strengths-based approach against bullying.

• The importance of the relationships between children and parents or caregivers will be reinforced in order to change negative bullying behaviors.

• The majority of bullying incidents occur in school grounds and are often mediated by school social workers. When school social workers provide parents and caregivers with resources and strategies that can be reinforced at home, the approach against bullying can be more holistic (Kiriakidis, 2011).
Cross-Cultural Relevance

- Bullying was found to be present to some extent among students from all ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and sexual identities (Kiriakidis, 2011).
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) students as well as students who are differently abled are more likely to be victims of bullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009).
  - Students from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods report more involvement in physical bullying than those from upper socioeconomic areas (Wang et al., 2009).
  - Adolescents from upper socioeconomic neighborhoods are the most involved in cyber bullying (Wang et al., 2009).
  - Frequency of bullying is higher among African American and Hispanic students than Caucasian youth (Wang et al., 2009).

- This curriculum includes techniques and topics that are multicultural and can be applied with parents and students from varying ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and abilities.
Methods

Rationale for the Curriculum

• Bullying intervention programs that include a component for parents and caregivers have been effective since they convey an ecological approach (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

• Support from parents and caregivers have been significantly more impactful in children’s lives than support from school staff when it comes to bullying (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009).

• If parents and caregivers are exposed to the formal definition of bullying, are taught the effects of it, and are provided with tools to prevent and intervene in bullying situations, their competence to take action against bullying can increase.

• When middle school students are bullied frequently but they have support from a trusted adult, they report having better life satisfaction and are less affected by bullying than students who do not have those supports. (Flaspohler et al., 2009).
Curriculum

Curriculum goal:
Provide parents and caregivers of children transitioning to middle school with awareness, knowledge and understanding, and skills that could help them prevent their children from being bullied or become bullies, to intervene should these incidents occur, and to feel confident of their parenting role in bullying circumstances.

Specific objectives are to enable participants to:
1. Understand the definition of bullying.
2. Recognize how widespread bullying has become.
3. Identify risk factors for bullying and being bullied.
4. Identify the signs and symptoms of bullying and being bullied.
5. Know bullying reporting policies for their children’s school districts.
6. Report bullying when necessary.
7. Talk with their children about having a zero-tolerance view of bullying as a family value.
8. Prepare their children for the risks of being bullied.
9. Practice communication skills and self-esteem strategies that can help develop and maintain positive parent-child relationships.
10. Be advocates for their children to help decrease bullying.
Curriculum

Design and Format:
• This six hour curriculum is designed as three 2-hour workshops, to be held once a week.
• The format includes lecturettes, small group discussions, role plays, and power points.
• Includes a Facilitator’s Guide that provides the content, process, and handouts for the workshops.

Workshop Topics:

Workshop #1: Understanding the concept of bullying, bullying statistics, the different types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, and cyber), and the effects of bullying.

Workshop #2: Discussion of bullying risk factors, bullying policies, and reporting practices.

Workshop #3: Discuss the importance of developing positive communication between parents/caregivers and children and building positive self-esteem.
Evaluation

- Based on Pasztor’s levels of evaluation (2009), this curriculum will be evaluated using “Level 1 Participant Satisfaction” and “Level 3 Implementation” evaluation methods.

- **Level 1 Evaluation:** includes an opinion form that will be distributed after each of the three workshops. The survey consists of participant satisfaction questions and their opinions about the topics covered.

- **Level 3 Evaluation:** will identify how participants have applied the skills learned in the workshops. The opinion form that is distributed at the end of the third workshop contains an extra set of questions that participants who are willing to get interviewed 3-6 months after the last day of the workshop will fill out. The questions will relate to how the parents have applied skills of bullying advocacy, positive communication, and positive self-esteem building with their children.

- Brief informal evaluations by facilitators at each workshop are also conducted. The Facilitator’s Guide includes a “Post Workshop Observation Sheet” that facilitators can use to write down significant assessments of both workshop content and process.
Implications for Social Work

Policy
Currently there are no federal laws that specifically cover bullying, but it is addressed differently in states’ education codes and schools’ safety plans. (Koons, 2013).

In school settings, school social workers can assist by being part of the School Board that establishes the schools’ safety plan and helps create the anti-bullying policies.

Practice
Social workers must be knowledgeable about the prevalence of bullying in order to service children and families more effectively regarding bullying issues.

One of the core values highlighted by the NASW Code of Ethics states the importance of human relationships, so that social workers encourage clients to be part of the helping process (NASW, 2008). Bullying is an issue that affects human relationships in various ways whether it impacts relationships between peers or school staff and students, or parents and students.

Advocacy
It is essential that social workers, especially, school social workers and social workers who serve children and families, advocate for families’ rights when their children are being bullied and providing them with appropriate services. It is also crucial to advocate for services for children who bully and their families.
References


