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How to start solving your school bullying problem

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To solve your school bullying problem, it will take a real commitment by leadership and parents to make a change to create a safe environment

Key points:

- *School leaders have a responsibility to address and solve bullying in their schools and districts*
- *All stakeholders and all aspects of bullying must be involved in solutions*
- *See related article: [How my 5th graders are taking a stand against bullying](#)*

Student bullying is a nationwide problem. Parents are outraged and demand that school administrators evaluate their campus security protocols to keep all students alive and safe.

A southern California school district agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a lawsuit brought by the family of a 13-year-old boy who died after he was [assaulted](#) at school. On Sept. 16, 2019, two 14-year-old boys were videotaped attacking the victim outside classrooms at the school. One boy struck the teenager in the head from behind and he fell, hitting his head against a pillar. The boys then continued punching the boy, who died nine days later from a brain injury.

Last school year, a 14-year-old female student at a high school in New Jersey died by suicide two days after a video of her being viciously attacked by her bullies at school was uploaded online. The school district's superintendent has resigned, and four girls have been criminally charged in connection with the assault.

Bullying at schools is [pervasive across the country](#). According to a recent national survey [report by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America](#), **130,000** kids and teens ages 9-18 reported some form of bullying.

This survey revealed that in the past year, **40 percent** of youth said they were bullied on school property and **18 percent** of youth say they have experienced cyberbullying. Unfortunately, **37 percent** of youth say they have skipped a day of school in the last month.

Research has found that students who are bullied are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, have more health complaints, and skip or drop out of school.

Is there anything school administrators or parents can do to control this problem? The answer is yes, but it will take a real commitment by leadership and parents to make a change to create a safe environment.

Recommendations for school administrators

A comprehensive security risk assessment of each campus is needed and is designed to reduce incidents, pinpoint critical areas of vulnerability, and identify the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. It also helps schools review existing crisis response plans to address and tackle problems such as bullying.

1. **Admit you have a bullying problem:** To begin with, educators need to admit the situation occurs on their campuses.
2. **Provide training to teachers:** Teachers and staff will need [training on what bullying is](#), what the school's [policies and rules](#) are, and how to [enforce the rules](#).
3. **Work with parents:** Schools must work with parents to help them understand that bullying is a severe problem and that they should talk with their children about it.
4. **Develop student awareness:** Similarly, students must be made more aware of the effects that this problem can have on their classmates.
5. **Support LGBTQ students:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning students should not be discriminated against due to their sexual orientation and their gender identity.
6. **Cyberbullying:** Students need to be aware that cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.
7. **Install security cameras:** Cameras need to be installed, especially in areas where bullying is most likely to take place: hallways, near restrooms, inside the lunchroom, gymnasium, on the playground and on school buses.
8. **Having direct evidence is important:** Many parents insist their child would never bully another student. However, when they are shown the video evidence, most promise to work with their child at home. The video also makes it easier for the school to enforce



detentions and suspensions.

9. **Provide adult supervision:** Keep an adult—ideally a teacher or administrator—in the lunchroom during mealtimes, on the playgrounds during recess and in the hallways during passing periods. Most bullies are cowards and will not act up when they know they are being watched.
10. **Set up an anonymous tip line:** Have a [tip line](#) or other means of communication (text, online, etc.) that allows students, parents, teachers, staff and the community to anonymously report incidents.
11. **Empower teachers:** Teachers have concerns that if they report bullying, they might face severe repercussions from their administration. There needs to be a mechanism for teachers to share information about incidents and concerns outside of the normal reporting structure.

It takes planning and the will to act, but bullying can be brought under control. It takes collaboration from all individuals in the school community.

My thoughts and prayers go out to families, friends, and the community who have been impacted by bullying.

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Patrick V. Fiel Sr. is a national security advisor with many years of experience managing security and law enforcement organizations. Patrick has worked with thousands of schools providing security services and solutions. Contact him to schedule a time to discuss how he can assist your school in reducing the threat of bullying. He can be reached at (910) 789-4265 or at pvfsecurity.com.

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