

DRAFT for member comment

**Resolution on Bullying Among Children and Youth
Revised July 2026**

**American Psychological Association
Committee on Children, Youth and Families (CYF)**

APA Resolution on Bullying Among Children and Youth 2026

Bullying is aggressive behavior among peers that is: (a) unwanted, (b) involves an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim, and (c) is repeated or likely to be repeated over time (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Bullying may take many forms, including physical bullying, teasing or name-calling, social exclusion, spreading harmful gossip and rumors, peer sexual harassment, bias-based bullying about race, ethnicity, religion, weight or body size, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity; and cyberbullying, which is bullying through digital means.

WHEREAS current prevalence estimates indicate that as of 2021, 15.0% of U.S. high school students reported experiencing bullying at school, 15.9% reported being electronically bullied, and 22.0% reported experiencing any bullying in the past 12 months (Clayton et al., 2023). For youth ages 12-18, the U.S. Department of Justice (2022) reported prevalence of the following forms of being bullied: being the subject of rumors (13%); being made fun of, called names, or insulted (12%); being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on (5%); and being excluded from activities on purpose (4%);

WHEREAS bullying has been found to be related to negative psychosocial functioning across multiple indicators among children and youth who bully, individuals who are bullied, and those who bully and are also bullied (Armitage, 2021; Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Although most students who experience bullying as perpetrator or victim do not go on to engage in violence later in life, bullying perpetration, and to a lesser extent victimization, increases risk for violence up to 6 years later (Ttofi et al., 2012);

WHEREAS cyberbullying has become an educational and psychosocial problem with potential harmful effects on children and youth (Gini & Espelage, 2014; stopbullying.gov, n.d.). Cyberbullying has been found to be associated with lower school attendance and academic performance, as well as psychological symptoms of stress (González-Cabrera et al., 2014), depression, and anxiety (Nixon, 2014; Yu et al., 2021), and in extreme cases, self-harm or suicidal ideation (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2014). The increased use of social media, rapid advancement of technology to create digital fakes and misleading imagery, and the lack of safety and accountability features (e.g., anonymity of posts) likely contribute to increasing levels of cyberbullying (Ray et al., 2024);

WHEREAS bias-based harassment has been found to be a particularly harmful form of bullying, with stronger associations to negative mental health indicators than general harassment and bullying that does not target identity characteristics (Green et al., 2024). A U.S. nationally representative sample of adolescents found that 28% experienced bias-based harassment, particularly in relation to race, sexual orientation, and gender identity, with multiple forms of bias-based harassment being common (Green et al., 2024). Sexual minority students and students with disabilities were most likely to be targeted for any form of bias-based harassment (Green et al., 2024). Sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth experience higher rates of interpersonal and online victimization, contributing to their heightened vulnerability to suicide (Liu et al., 2025);

WHEREAS children and youth who are bullied due to their weight or body size are more likely to use alcohol or marijuana, display increased anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and psychological distress, consistent across genders, and experience both considered suicide and

attempted suicide at higher rates after in-person and cyberbullying (Haqq, 2021; Klinck, 2020; Patte, 2021; Schvey, 2019; Singh, 2015);

WHEREAS there are gender differences in the types of bullying that children experience, such that boys are more likely than girls to report being physically bullied by their peers and girls are more likely than boys to report being targets of rumor-spreading and sexual comments (Casper & Card, 2017; Irwin et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2013). Girls report being bullied by boys and girls, while boys report being bullied primarily by other boys (Felix & Green, 2010; Hong & Espelage, 2012). Transgender youth report a significantly higher prevalence of bullying compared to their cisgender peers (Suarez et al., 2024);

WHEREAS research suggests that there is no single cause of bullying. Rather, individual, familial, peer, school, and community factors may place a child or youth at risk for bullying his or her peers (Qiu et al., 2024; Swearer & Hymel, 2015);

WHEREAS bullying interventions have been found to be effective in preventing bullying behavior (Gaffney et al., 2019, 2021a). For example, a meta-analysis suggests that they are effective at reducing both perpetration by 19-20% and victimization by 15-16% (Gaffney et al., 2019). The specific components that increased the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs were having a whole school approach, clear anti-bullying policies, classroom rules, information for parents, informal peer involvement, and work with victims (Gaffney et al., 2021b).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the American Psychological Association integrate advocacy for bullying prevention into its violence prevention activities and, where appropriate, into other activities of its directorates, divisions, and state and provincial psychological associations. This can include sharing the psychological science that supports the benefits of school-based social-emotional health curricula that include developing healthy relationships, social skills, and problem-solving as a means to prevent bullying, in addition to specific bullying prevention programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the American Psychological Association encourage appropriate public and private funding agencies to support ecologically valid and culturally sensitive research on bullying behavior and antibullying interventions. This should include focus on universal prevention, but also attention to evaluating secondary intervention efforts for children and youth who are bullied and those who bully others.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA integrate its bullying prevention and targeted intervention work into initiatives with other associations, governmental entities, and other interested parties in the dissemination of information that will help school administrators and staff, parents, mental health professionals, children and youth, and others to prevent and effectively intervene with bullying among children and youth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA encourage vigorous evaluations of bullying prevention and intervention programs used in schools, after-school programs, and other settings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA encourage the implementation and dissemination of evidence-based bullying prevention programs and targeted interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness in schools and communities and that are culturally sensitive. It is important to also focus on bullying that targets identity characteristics as well as cyberbullying. Encourage efforts to implement targeted interventions that promote safer school and online environments to help reduce suicide risk among SGM youth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the APA encourage efforts to educate school personnel, parents, children, and others about the role of media in the mental health of children and youth.

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