

Children's Mental Health Local Advisory Council (LAC)
Bullying Focus Group Meeting
January 17, 2012
Thumper Pond, Ottertail City

Attending: Tammy Friederich & Tamra Jokela (OTC Human Services – 66); Nicole Hansen (OTC Attorney's Office – 66); Lane Magnusson (OTC Public Health- 66); Sarah Kampa & Intern Jolene Halena (Kindred Family Services, fna PATH-66); Jennifer Filgas (Ombudsman for MH/DD-66); Shannon Erickson (Fergus Falls Area Special Education Cooperative-66); Beth Wallman Zimmerman (Lakeland Mental Health Mobile Crisis Program-66); Joannie Gontarek (OTC Probation-66); Melissa Walters (Prairie St. John's-120); Kristin Tuel, Tindy Rund, Shane Thielke & Jon Harris (Fergus Falls ISD #544-135); Thomas Williams (Henning School-40); Jane Wankel (Lakeland Mental Health SBMH Program-50); Jeremy Olson & John Hamann (Underwood School-45); Pete Remboldt (Ashby School-60); Angie Schreader, Courtney Rooney & Julie Vomacka (Perham Schools-40); Carey Johnson (Parkers Prairie Schools-80); Sheila Flatau (Pelican Rapids Public Schools- 110); Ken Gagner (Battle Lake Public School-35); and Jane Patrick, Collaborative Coordinator. (25 attendees from 18 different agencies/programs.)

A. Jane Patrick welcomed and led the group in a special focus group session pertaining to bullying. Jane explained the overall purpose for the meeting and the history of this initiative to date.

B. Goals for today as expressed by the group included:

- Get Ideas
- Develop or find a “common” definition
- Explore Olweus curriculum
- Keep the plan simple and attainable
- Learn what is being done in the region regarding anti-bullying training

C. Definitions

Ken Gagner shared the definition of bullying that is used in Battle Lake and which they adopted from the Olweus program. Bullying is defined as:

"A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."

This definition includes three important components:

1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions.
2. Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time.
3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

Bullying can take on many forms. As part of the *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire*, students are asked if they have been bullied in any of these nine ways:

1. Verbal bullying including derogatory comments and bad names
2. Bullying through social exclusion or isolation

3. Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting
4. Bullying through lies and false rumors
5. Having money or other things taken or damaged by students who bully
6. Being threatened or being forced to do things by students who bully
7. Racial bullying
8. Sexual bullying
9. Cyber bullying (via cell phone or Internet)

D. Thoughts and discussions of Olweus program/curriculum

- It takes a lot of resources, both in-kind and financial if the entire program is purchased and implemented
- Training is costly & staff-time consuming
- The program is evidence-based and comes highly recommended at local and national levels
- Can use “bits and pieces” of the program, but must be fully implemented to be research-based
- More info: <http://olweus.org/public/bullying.page>

E. Promising Practices – small group discussions

School Level

1. Olweus
2. Character education programs at elementary level
3. Educate all adults including parents/community, bus drivers, cooks, paras, parents, teachers, etc.
4. School/adults to document bullying behavior; communicate and follow through with consequences (dates, times, interview)
5. Close monitoring of behavior and swift follow through with consequences is essential
6. “Bully-Proof” group education to give victims tools to be self-assertive

*Additional discussion point - each district’s policy on bullying may be different, but each school is required to have a something on bullying.

Individual Level

1. Olweus
2. Daily check in with “Bully Buddy”
3. Student/School/Parent Mediation
4. Parent meetings/and parent involvement in addressing issues
5. “Bully-Proof” victims; give skills to students targeted
6. Peer mediation; play ground helpers; student leaders
7. “Talking Circles” among students with adult facilitators

Classroom Level

1. Olweus
2. All adults identify and address behavior immediately and consistently
3. 8th grade leadership class- (12 wks/all 8th grade skill building-Tiger Woods Foundation- Underwood School)
4. Odd Girl Out Video/Class (1x=2hrs/annual/Role Play early in year- New York Mills School)

Community Level

1. Olweus
2. Engaging outsiders, volunteers, community is also key
3. Involve law enforcement/probation and/or County Attorney to get point across
4. DARE (many schools do still have this at various levels)

F. Recommended key strategies as voted on by the group:

Key Strategy # 1: Adults/students/community identifies and addresses bullying behavior immediately (14 votes)

Specific strategies needed to implement:

- a. Develop and adopt a common, consistent message as well as expectations for how it will be handled (*i.e. "This is what bullying is and here is what you need to do about it"*)
- b. Training for all school staff, including bus drivers, cooks, etc., with one annual face-to-face training within each group; and periodic updates/follow up at staff meetings throughout the year; consistent message with new and same strategies year after year
- c. Training for students
 - Character Ed
 - Skill building regarding bullying
- d. Training and awareness for the community on what bullying is and how they can help address it.

Main resources required: 1) Quality, affordable curriculum and bullying resources; 2) staff time; 3) student time; 4) community buy-in and participation

Key Strategy # 2: 8th Grade Leadership (12 votes)

- a. Prepare a grant application to obtain 12 week curriculum provided by Tiger Woods Foundation
- b. Implement curriculum at individual school levels

Main resources required: 1) Grant writing; 2) Student/instructional time

Key Strategy #3: Development and communication of guidelines for appropriate swift action and delivery of consequence (9 votes)

- a. Training of staff and community (1 full day of training with follow-up discussions throughout the year; invite community to attend training or add community component for training)
- b. Consistency in monitoring potential harmful behavior and delivering follow through/consequences
- c. Written guidelines on swift and appropriate actions and consequences

Main resources required: 1) development of guidelines (*i.e.* "Above the line below the line" Corwin Kronenberg - Julie Vomacka); 2) staff time; 3) community buy-in and participation.

Key Strategy #4: Parent meetings and participation

- a. Parent training (*i.e.* "Above the line below the line" Corwin Kronenberg);
- b. Written guidelines, expectations and plan of action for victim/bully/parents/school
- c. Follow-up monitoring including electronic communication with parents, teachers, bus drivers, everyone involved with the students
- d. Build relationships: with parents, students & community – get everyone involved in addressing the problem

Main resources required: 1) parent/community buy-in and participation; 2) development and adoption of guidelines; 3) staff time.

G. Next Steps

- a. Finalize outline/plan (Children's LAC/Coordinator)
- b. Identify how to measure implementation and effectiveness of the plan (LAC)
- c. Sharing of plan & specific recommendations with all partners (Collaborative partners/meeting attendees)
- d. Develop written guidelines as recommended above (TBD by LAC)
- e. Share definitions across all agencies/schools (Coordinator)
- f. Partners to present the information to their administration and/or decide if they want to change/adapt policies (Collaborative partners/meeting attendees)
- d. Schools to share resources/specific strategies (Coordinator will request, compile and distribute)
- e. Schools to more fully explore Olweus and determine if it is attainable for their individual districts (school partners/admin teams)
- f. Review and evaluation plan and future needs regarding bullying (LAC)