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## School Bullying Report Makes Recommendations To Address Issue, Support Victims



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School bullying does not directly cause more students to skip school, but challenges to the underlying social and emotional complexities exist, new research shows.

According to [a report released Friday by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#), victims of bullying are often, as a result of social and emotional hurdles, distanced from learning, disadvantaged academically and more likely to fall behind in school attendance. Although the researchers did not find a strong direct correlation between victimization and truancy, the study is limited in its quantitative analysis of just 6th graders within a single suburban Denver school district.

"Parents and schools across the country worry about the devastating harm bullying can cause, and we share this concern for our nation's children," OJJDP Acting Administrator Jeff Slowikowski said in a statement Friday. "This new study highlights the impact of bullying and recommends effective anti-bullying strategies that schools can implement to keep students safe."

Among OJJDP's recommended strategies for schools:

- Offer mentoring programs
- Provide students with opportunities for community service
- Address the difficult transition between elementary and middle school (from one single classroom teacher to teams of

- teachers with periods and class changes in a large school)
- Start prevention programs early.

Researchers also surveyed teachers, who suggested fostering a sense of community in school, model caring behavior and teach students to care for their communities. Caveats for these recommendations, however, are evident in school administrators who "sweep bullying under the rug" or in school districts' attempts to address bullying by requiring teachers to teach a prescribed curriculum, which educators consider "ineffective substitutes for much-needed district and administrative support and professional development." According to the report:

"For antibullying programs to provide long-term outcomes -- not simply decrease victim numbers but help victims remain crime free as adults ---researchers must look beyond narrow programs that produce statistically significant numbers, toward broader (and possibly less measurable) efforts that make a difference in the lives of the victims. Likewise, schools must continue to reach out to all bullying victims, using methods catered to the community's specialized needs, not just programs that conform to a measurable standard."

Most states now have bullying laws that require schools to adopt bullying policies, and [efforts to combat school bullying have escalated over the last decade](#), according to a report released last week by the U.S. Department of Education.

Between 1999 and 2010, more than 120 bills were adopted by state legislatures to [introduce or amend legislation that address bullying, harassment or similar behavior in schools](#). By the time of the Education Department study's conclusion, there were 46 states with enacted anti-bullying laws, 36 with regulations that work against cyberbullying and 13 that give schools the authority to monitor and address bullying behavior even when it occurs off school grounds.

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The list of states with bullying laws grew by one more last week, when [Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed anti-bullying legislation](#), following extensive debate and disparate drafts originating from the state House and Senate. The piece of legislation Snyder signed was the House version that [represents a compromise among Republican lawmakers](#), dropping a bill from the Senate that [critics called "a license to bully."](#)

California is the first state that requires public schools to teach about the contributions of gays and lesbians, and a [measure to curb anti-gay bullying passed the state Senate in September](#).

New Jersey passed a law in January, effective as of September, requiring anti-bullying policies across the state's public schools. Known as the "Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights," [the law is said to be the toughest piece of anti-bullying legislation in the country](#).

Perhaps the most notable story that created a whirlwind of debate surrounding school bullying is that of 14-year-old Jamey Rodemeyer of Williamsville, N.Y., [who took his life in September after being victim to years of bullying for being gay](#). His suicide came after he posted an "It Gets Better" video, encouraging kids to accept and love themselves for who they are, [and thanking Lady Gaga for being his inspiration through her song, "Born This Way."](#)

Following an investigation into the bullying reports, Amherst police said that the harassment Rodemeyer was subject to both online and at school [could not be considered criminal and no charges would be filed](#).

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