



Pointers For Parents

National Youth Violence Prevention Center Warns Parents: Risk of Bullying Is Year-Round

(NAPSA)—As millions of children head out to school each day, the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (NYVPRC) wants parents to know that bullying shouldn't be a childhood rite of passage or a part of growing up for their son or daughter.

"It's important for parents to be on the lookout for signs that their child is involved in bullying," said Susan Blumenthal, M.D., U.S. Assistant Surgeon General and Chair of the NYVPRC Federal Advisory Committee. "This is critical throughout the year, both at school, where most bullying occurs, and during school vacations, when many children spend the day without significant adult supervision."

Research demonstrates the surprising frequency of bullying among children. A study conducted by the National Institutes of Health found that more than 30 percent of sixth- through tenth-graders said they bullied, or were bullied, by their peers.

Though most bullying occurs during the school year, so-called "neighborhood" bullies loom large in the lives of many young adolescents left home alone after school and during school vacation breaks.

"Bullying has been linked to a number of conditions including depression. Children may experience mood changes, withdraw from activities they once enjoyed, or exhibit anxiety about going to school, or spending time with peers. Physical symptoms may include recurrent sleep problems and headaches," said Dr. Blumenthal who is a psychiatrist.

While only a few studies have evaluated the longer-term conse-

Tips for parents on what to do if they suspect their child is being bullied:

- Keep an open dialogue with your child.
- If your child stops talking about harassment/teasing, do not assume it has stopped. Continue asking questions.
- Sometimes kids just want to be heard. Do not try to immediately problem solve.
- Encourage positive activities outside of school to build competencies.
- If your child is suffering, expect help from the school, and make sure you get it.
- Take it seriously—kids don't ask for help lightly. If they are asking for help, it is most likely serious. 

quences of bullying, a study cited in a recent article on bullying published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (April 25, 2001) noted that "individuals with a history of bullying had a four-fold increase in criminal behavior by the time they reached their mid 20s."

There are many resources available for parents wanting to know how to help their child cope with bullying. Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) partnered with other Federal agencies to establish the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, a central source for information on youth violence related topics (including bullying) for parents, teachers and other concerned adults. The NYVPRC Web site, www.safeyouth.org, contains a wealth of information on successful prevention and intervention

programs that address the underlying causes of youth violence and suicide. Visitors can also view and download research on youth violence prevention, find answers to frequently asked questions, obtain statistics and link to an extensive collection of Internet sites.

Some tips to help your child cope with bullying:

- If your child is being bullied at school, discuss the problem with a teacher or administrator. They may not be aware of the situation.

- Work with school officials to make schools safer—www.safeyouth.org contains a wealth of information on innovative school safety programs including bullying prevention initiatives.

- Encourage your child's school to establish peer support groups. Children dislike bullying at their school and want to help stop it. Peers need to be taught how to intervene.

- During school vacations, know where your child spends the day and with whom he or she spends it. If your child experiences problems, make alternative arrangements.

- Talk to your children. Let your child know it's not his or her fault, and that he or she did the right thing by telling you. Support at home is the first step towards preventing bullying behavior. Try role-playing with solutions to difficult situations and encourage family discussions.

- Most importantly, do all you can to build your child's sense of self-esteem. Support and understanding at home are critical in helping children of all ages cope with bullying.