

**Iowa Federation of Families
for
Children's Mental Health**

**Children's Mental Health News
February 20, 2006**

Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is the statewide family advocacy organization that assists families who have children and youth with mental health issues. Our mission is to ensure all these children and families receive coordinated, individualized, strength-based care and supports. We provide families across the state of Iowa with written informational materials, Information and Referral services, many different types of trainings, and legislative advocacy. Most of all, we offer families a non-judgmental support system. Families, professionals and others may access our services by calling our toll-free number (888) 400-6302, or visiting our website at www.iffcmh.org.

Save this Date: June 12, 2006

Dr. Ross Greene:

The Explosive Child Conference

Brochure and registration form are now available at www.iffcmh.org then go to calendar of events.

Conference Registration Fee's

Early Bird Special Single \$55 Team of 3 \$45 per Person

After March 15th Single \$65 Team of 3 \$55 per Person

CEU's Available for \$10.00

Participants attending the conference will be granted 0.6 CEUs or 6 contact hours as provided by the Des Moines Area Community College for the following:

Iowa Board Of Nursing Provider Number 22

Iowa Board of Social Work Provider #0095

Iowa Board of Behavioral Science (includes psychologists) Provider AS97-17

Also available for Foster and Adoptive Parents:

The Department of Human Services has approved this training for 6 credit hours of training Certificate will be given at the conference

Early Bird Registration ends March 15; get your registrations in soon.

What Is Cyber Bullying?

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others." Bill Beasley

Challenging Cyber Bullying

The Internet has created a whole new world of social communications for young people who are using e-mail, Web sites, instant messaging, chat rooms and text messaging (STM) to stay in touch with friends and make new ones.

While most interactions are positive, increasingly kids are using these communication tools to antagonize and intimidate others. This has become known as cyber bullying.

Today's young Internet users have created an interactive world away from adult knowledge and supervision. MNet research shows that 50 per cent of kids say they are alone online most of the time, and only 16 per cent say they talk to their parents a lot about what they do online. Because bullies tend to harass their victims away from the watchful eyes of adults, the Internet is the perfect tool for reaching others anonymously – anytime, anyplace. This means for many children, home is no longer a refuge from the cruel peer pressures of school

The anonymity of online communications means kids feel freer to do things online they would never do in the real world. Even if they can be identified online, young people can accuse someone else of using their screen name. They don't have to own their actions, and if a person can't be identified with an action, fear of punishment is diminished.

Nancy Willard of the Responsible Netizen Institute explains that technology can also affect a young person's ethical behavior because it doesn't provide tangible feedback about the consequences of actions on others. This lack of feedback minimizes feelings of empathy or remorse. Young people say things online that they would never say face-to-face because they feel removed from the action and the person at the receiving end.

There are several ways that young people bully others online. They send e-mails or instant messages containing insults or threats directly to a person. They may also spread hateful comments about a person through e-mail, instant messaging or postings on Web sites and online diaries. Young people steal passwords and send out threatening e-mails or instant messages using an assumed identity. Technically savvy kids may build whole Web sites, often with password protection, to target specific students or teachers.

An increasing number of kids are being bullied by text messages through their cell phones. These phones are challenging the ability of adults to monitor and guide children because, unlike a

computer placed in a public area of a home, school or library, mobiles are personal, private, connected – and always accessible. Kids tend to keep their phones on at all times, meaning bullies can harass victims at school or even in their own rooms.

Built-in digital cameras in cell phones are adding a new dimension to the problem. In one case students used a camera-enabled cell phone to take a photo of an overweight classmate in the shower after gym. The picture was distributed throughout the school e-mail list within minutes.

Schools are struggling to address the issue of cyber bullying among students, especially when it occurs outside of school. When real world bullying occurs in a schoolyard or classroom, teachers are often able to intervene, but online bullying takes place off the radar screen of adults, making it difficult to detect in schools and impossible to monitor off school property.

Taking action on cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is everyone's business and the best response is a pro-active or preventative one.

What parents can do:

Get involved and be aware

- Learn everything you can about the Internet and what your kids are doing online. Talk to them about the places they go online and the activities that they are involved in. Be aware of what your kids are posting on Web sites, including their own personal home pages.
- Encourage your kids to come to you if anybody says or does something online that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Stay calm and keep the lines of communication and trust open. If you "freak out" your kids won't turn to you for help when they need it.

Encourage kids to develop their own moral code so they will *choose* to behave ethically online.

- Talk to your kids about responsible Internet use.
- Teach them to never post or say anything on the Internet that they wouldn't want the whole world - including you - to read.
- Create an online agreement or contract for computer use, with your kids' input. Make sure your agreement contains clear rules about ethical online behavior. MNet's research shows that in homes where parents have clear rules against certain kinds of activities, young people are much less likely to engage in them.

Take action if your child is being bullied online

- Watch out for signs that your child is being bullied online – a reluctance to use the computer or go to school may be an indication.
- If the bully is a student at your child's school, meet with school officials and ask for help in resolving the situation.
- Report any incident of online harassment and physical threats to your local police and your Internet Service Provider (ISP).
- If your child is bullied through a mobile phone, report the problem to your phone service provider. If it's a persistent problem you can change the phone number.

What schools can do

- Integrate curriculum-based anti-bullying programs into classrooms.
- Educate teachers, students and parents about the seriousness of cyber bullying.

- Change the school or board's bullying policy to include harassment perpetrated with mobile and Internet technology. There should be serious consequences for anyone who doesn't follow the guidelines.
- Update the school or board's computer policy to specifically prohibit using the Internet for bullying.

What kids can do

Because most incidents of bullying occur off adults' radar screens, it's important that young people learn to protect themselves online and respond to cyber bullying among peers when they encounter it.

Guidelines for children and teens:

- Guard your contact information. Don't give people you don't know your cell phone number, instant messaging name or e-mail address.
- If you are being harassed online, take the following actions immediately:
- Tell an adult you trust – a teacher, parent, older sibling or grandparent.
- If you are being harassed, leave the area or stop the activity (i.e. chat room, news group, online gaming area, instant messaging, etc.).
- If you are being bullied through e-mail or instant messaging, block the sender's messages. Never reply to harassing messages.
- Save any harassing messages and forward them to your Internet Service Provider (i.e. Hotmail or Yahoo). Most service providers have appropriate use policies that restrict users from harassing others over the Internet – and that includes kids!
- If the bullying includes physical threats, tell the police as well.
-

Take a stand against cyber bullying with your peers. Speak out whenever you see someone being mean to another person online. Most kids respond better to criticism from their peers than to disapproval from adults.

Cyber Bullying: No Muscles Needed

When "Chad," a 7th grader, found out his old girlfriend was dissing his new flame, he wasted no time. Chad headed straight for the computer, and sent Instant Messages threatening to kill his old girlfriend to an extensive buddy list.

Several "buddies" freaked and told their parents, who called the school, which contacted the police. Ultimately, Chad was banished to another middle school and went to juvenile court, where a judge sentenced him to 25 hours of community service.

Unfortunately, about the only unusual thing about this story is that Chad got caught and was held legally responsible.

I-Safe America, an organization promoting Web safety, surveyed 1500 students in 4th through 8th grade, and found that 42 percent have been bullied online. And 53 percent admitted to saying something mean or hurtful to someone else online.

Adolescent impulses frequently find release through computers, multi-use cell phones and PDAs. Often, there's no time for reflection—questionable messages go rocketing off to as many names as you can cram into a contact list.

Unlike Chad, most teens who IM or chat stay on the safe side of the law. This doesn't necessarily preclude mischief, as 14-year-old "Amber" admits. "Sometimes, I'll make up a fake screen name to scare people I don't like—like 'Robsucks89.'"

A Dangerous Mix

Instant gratification and technology are a dangerous mix.

Nancy Willard, director of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use, says "Sometimes kids think it's okay to be cruel online and that this is the social norm in some online communities. Parents should expect their child to follow the family rule—"be kind to others"—off-line and on." (The Center's Web site, <http://csriu.org>, lists a variety of cyber bullying tactics.)

Mark Franek, dean of students at the William Penn School in Philadelphia, thinks schools need to do a better job in educating kids in intelligent use of new technology. At Penn, says Franek, "teachers emphasize that cyberspace is an extension of our community, 24/7—the school community doesn't begin and end at the door." Besides including detailed computer protocol in the school's handbook, Penn administrators brought in police detectives, who alerted kids that electronic messages such as IM's and emails leave "fingerprints"—nine-digit numbers recorded with your ISP (Internet Service Provider).

Violations of the school's honor code land a student in front of the community council, leading to suspension or expulsion. But small things can tweak a student's conscience. For example, the school's director of technology put a mirror up in the lab, bearing the caption "Are you a cyber bully?," with action steps for kids who think they're victims as well.

Why Cyber Bullying Tempts—and Can Return to Bite You

Bullying involves a power play—trying to make someone else feel weak and helpless, while inflating your own value. Online bullying is particularly tempting, since anyone with access to a computer can play. Some reasons it's on the rise:

- **The illusion of anonymity. Most kids say or do things on a computer that they wouldn't have the nerve to do in person.**
- The number of kids using the Internet makes it the preferred way to communicate. The Pew Internet & American Life Project reports that approximately 17 million kids aged 12 to 17 use the Internet. Teens have embraced IM—74 percent of teens IM, compared to only 44 percent of adults.
- It's easy to disguise your identity and pose as someone else. For example, anyone can get a Web based e-mail account with an ISP, make up a screen name and post comments with little consequence.

Some states have begun to take action. In Washington, state Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles sponsored a bill to end cyber bullying, described as: "Harrassment, intimidation or bullying by any intentional electronic... act, when that act a) physically harms a student or damages a student's property; or b) has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education, or c) Is so severe, persistent or

pervasive that it creates in intimidating or threatening educational environment, or d) has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school." The bill is pending.

Sharon Nelson, an attorney specializing in technology-related issues, says that Virginia is one state that has criminalized cyber bullying once it reaches a certain threshold. This is the law that tripped up "Chad." A person is guilty of "harassment by computer" if, intending to intimidate or harass, he or she uses a computer or network to "communicate obscene, vulgar, profane, lewd...or indecent language, or make a suggestion/proposal of an obscene nature, or threaten any illegal or immoral act." Harassment by computer is punishable by up to a year in jail or substantial fine.

Voted Off the 6th Grade Island?

Deborah Lane, Principal of Oak View Elementary School in Fairfax County, Virginia, is well aware of how an online bully can wreck the educational environment for an entire school. One of Oak View's students decided to do a survey on the top five "hated kids" in the 6th grade. In a twist on American Idol, he set up a Web site where kids could vote for their least favorites.

The parents of one "loser" appeared at school, telling Lane their daughter refused to attend school. (She did return later.) The cyber bully's parents had no idea he was running a reverse popularity contest, and parents of the other victims didn't want to involve the police. Lane decided to sponsor an in-school program on the damage online harassment can cause, as well as what parents could do to prevent this behavior.

Technology to the Rescue

One expert Lane invited to Oak View was Brian Zwit, head of Integrity Assurance for America Online. Zwit admits that technology can tempt kids to overstep bounds. For example, CNN and MSNBC's sites allow "instant polling". A user can set up a poll on whatever topic he chooses—including the biggest nerd in the school band—and send results to the whole school, via listserv.

However, technology can also rein in some obnoxious online behavior. All of the major Internet Service Providers offer some form of parental controls.

AOL has developed "AOL Guardian," which reports who their kids exchange messages with and what Web sites they visit, monitored chat rooms for kids 13 and under, and an IM "safe list," restricting people with whom a child can talk.

Yahoo's "parental controls" package allows parents to set different limits for each child using the Internet. There are four levels available: one for kids 12 and under, one for teens 13-15, one for "mature teens" 16-17, and a "full access" option with no restrictions. Yahoo offers a weekly "report card" of a child's online activities during the prior week.

Microsoft's "content advisor" prevents kids from viewing inappropriate content and lets parents set up an "approved" group of Web addresses. There's a "restricted zone" of forbidden sites. "Client filtering" prevents kids from playing specific Internet games and restricts Web surfing time.

Of course, technology can only do so much. "We tell parents you wouldn't send your child out into the neighborhood without restrictions on where he could/couldn't go. It's the same thing with the Internet—you really need rules and guidance," says Zwit. Kids who know parents are shadowing their online adventures tend to be more cautious.

Action Steps for Parents and Schools:

Although pigs probably WILL fly before parents are more comfortable with technology than their kids, there definitely are things parents can do:

- **Let kids know what behavior you find unacceptable. Ask how THEY would feel if someone called them obese, stupid, or a loser.**
- Ask for your child's help in becoming cyber savvy, suggests Detective Ray Kuter of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force in Montgomery County. "Ask your child to show you how to do something online... It makes the kid feel good, and you'll learn more about their level of sophistication."
- Learn what controls are available through your Internet Service Provider. If you're not satisfied, you can switch providers or purchase software to accomplish the same end.
- Have consequences in place if your kids violate family rules on Internet use, especially cyber bullying.
- Keep computers in a public room in your home, Nelson and many others recommend.
- Look for signs that your child might be a victim, says Kuter. These could include nightmares, school avoidance, or a sudden disinterest in the computer. Block messages from bullies or save evidence and try to identify the bully. Notify the school and, if there are threats or harassment, the police department
- Consider enrolling in a course to bring yourself up to speed on computer use.

Schools can be just as effective:

- **Encourage your school district to develop a clear, comprehensive policy on acceptable computer use, both on and off school property. The policy should spell out what constitutes cyber bullying, and list consequences.**
- Establish a relationship with your local police department, perhaps inviting "cyber cops" to your school to speak to parents and kids on proper Internet use.
- Make sure ethics is included in any computer instruction given at your school.
- As Franek points out, you must work hand in hand with parents. Let them know what your "acceptable use" policy is and highlight changes from year to year.

"The difficulty that schools have in responding to cyber bullying is that much of this activity is occurring outside school. What's necessary is a comprehensive school-led/community based approach," Willard said.

by: Joan E. Lisante

CHAT ABBREVIATIONS and Some Blog (on line diary) sites.

www.xanga.com

www.myspace.com

www.facebook.com

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| AFAIK | as far as I know |
| AFK | away from keyboard |
| AKA | also known as |
| ARE | acronym-rich environment |
| ASAP | as soon as possible |
| A/S/L? | age, sex, location |
| B4 | before |
| B4N | bye for now |
| BAK | back at the keyboard |
| BBIAB | be back in a bit |
| BBL | be back later |
| BBML | be back much later |
| BBN | bye bye now |
| BBS | be back soon |
| BEG | big evil grin |
| BF | boyfriend |
| BFN | bye for now |
| BG | big grin |
| BL | belly laughing |
| BRB | be right back |
| BTA | but then again |
| BTW | by the way |
| BWL | bursting with laughter |
| BWTHDIK | but what the heck do I know |
| C&G | chuckle & grin |
| CID | crying in disgrace |
| CNP | continued (in my) next post |
| CP | chat post |
| CRBT | crying real big tears |
| CSG | chuckle, snicker, grin |
| CU | see you |
| CUL or CUL8ER | see you later |
| CUZ | because |
| CYO | see you online |
| DIKU | do I know you? |
| DL | dead link |
| DLTBBB | don't let the bed bugs bite |
| DQMOT | don't quote me on this |
| EG | evil grin |
| EMFBI | excuse me for butting in |
| EOM | end of message |
| EOT | end of thread |
| F2F | face to face |

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| FAQ | frequently asked question(s) |
| FC | fingers crossed |
| FISH | first in, still here |
| FMTYEWTK | far more than you ever wanted to know |
| FOMCL | falling off my chair laughing |
| FTBOMH | from the bottom of my heart |
| FUD | fear, uncertainty, and doubt |
| FWIW | for what it's worth |
| FYI | for your information |
| GA | go ahead |
| GAL | get a life |
| GD&R | grinning, ducking, & running |
| GF | girlfriend |
| GFN | gone for now |
| GIWIST | gee, I wish I'd said that |
| GMBO | giggling my butt off |
| GMTA | great minds think alike |
| GOL | giggling out loud |
| GTRM | going to read mail |
| GTSY | glad to see you |
| H&K | hug and kiss |
| HAGN | have a good night |
| HHIS | hanging head in shame |
| HTH | hope this helps |
| IAC | in any case |
| IAE | in any event |
| IANAL | I am not a lawyer (but) |
| IC | I see |
| IDK | I don't know |
| IHA | I hate acronyms |
| IIRC | if I remember correctly |
| ILU | I love you |
| IM | instant message |
| IMHO | in my humble opinion |
| IMing | chatting with someone online |
| IMNSHO | in my not so humble opinion |
| IMO | in my opinion |
| IOW | in other words |
| IPN | I'm posting naked |
| IRL | in real life |
| IWALU | I will always love you |
| IYSWIM | if you see what I mean |
| JBOD | just a bunch of disks |

| | |
|------------|--|
| JIC | just in case |
| JK | just kidding |
| JMO | just my opinion |
| JTLYK | just to let you know |
| JW | just wondering |
| K | okay |
| KIT | keep in touch |
| KOC | kiss on cheek |
| KOL | kiss on lips |
| KWIM | know what I mean? |
| L2M | listening to music |
| L8R | later |
| LD | later, dude |
| LDR | long distance relationship |
| LHM | lord help me |
| LHU | lord help us |
| LLTA | lots and lots of thunderous applause |
| LMIRL | let's meet in real life |
| LMSO | laughing my socks off |
| LOL | laughing out loud |
| LRF | little rubber feet |
| LSHMBB | laughing so hard my belly is bouncing |
| LSHMBH | laughing so hard my belly hurts |
| LSHTTARDML | laughing so hard the tears are running down my leg |
| LTM | laugh to myself |
| LTNS | long time, no see |
| LTR | long-term relationship |
| LTS | laughing to self |
| LULAB | love you like a brother |
| LULAS | love you like a sister |
| LUWAMH | love you with all my heart |
| LY | love you |
| M/F | male or female |
| MOSS | member of same sex |
| MOTOS | member of the opposite sex |
| MSG | message |
| MTF | more to follow |
| MUSM | miss you so much |
| NADT | not a darn thing |
| NIFOC | naked in front of computer |
| NP | nosy parents |
| N/P | no problem |
| NRN | no reply necessary |

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| OIC | oh I see |
| OL | old lady |
| OLL | online love |
| OM | old man |
| OMG | oh my god |
| OTF | off the floor |
| OTOH | on the other hand |
| OTTOMH | off the top of my head |
| P2P | peer to peer |
| P911 | my parents are coming! |
| PA | parent alert |
| PAL | parents are listening |
| PANB | parents are nearby |
| PANS | pretty awesome new stuff |
| PDA | public display of affection |
| PDS | please don't shoot |
| PLZ | please |
| PM | private message |
| PMFJIB | pardon me for jumping in but.... |
| PMP | peed my pants |
| POAHF | put on a happy face |
| POS | parent over shoulder |
| POTS | plain old telephone service |
| PU | that stinks |
| QSL | reply |
| QSO | conversation |
| QT | cutie |
| RL | real life |
| ROL | raffing out loud |
| ROTFL | rolling on the floor laughing |
| RPG | role-playing games |
| RSN | real soon now |
| RYO | roll your own |
| S4L | spam for life |
| SETE | smiling ear to ear |
| SF | surfer friendly |
| SHCOON | shoot hot coffee out of nose |
| SHID | slaps head in disgust |
| SNERT | snot nosed egotistical rude teenager |
| SO | significant other |
| SOMY | sick of me yet? |
| SOT | short of time |
| SOTMG | short of time, must go |

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| STW | search the web |
| SUP or WU | what's up |
| SWAK | sealed with a kiss |
| SWL | screaming with laughter |
| SYS | see you soon |
| TA | thanks again |
| TAFN | that's all for now |
| TAW | teachers are watching |
| TCOB | taking care of business |
| TCOY | take care of yourself |
| TFH | thread from hell |
| TGIF | thank God it's Friday |
| THX | thanks |
| TIA | thanks in advance |
| TILII | tell it like it is |
| TLK2UL8R | talk to you later |
| TMI | too much information |
| TNT | 'till next time |
| TOPCA | 'til our paths cross again |
| TOY | thinking of you |
| TPTB | the powers that be |
| TTFN | ta ta for now |
| TTT | thought that too |
| TTYL | talk to you later |
| TU | thank you |
| UW | you're welcome |
| VBG | very big grin |
| WB | welcome back |
| WDALYIC | who died and left you in charge? |
| W/E | whatever |
| WFM | works for me |
| WIBNI | wouldn't it be nice if |
| WTG | way to go |
| WTGP | want to go private? |
| WTH | what/who the heck |
| WUF | where are you from? |
| WYSIWYG | what you see is what you get |
| YBS | you'll be sorry |
| YG | young gentleman |
| YL | young lady |
| YM | young man |

Take Action Against Bullying

Did you know that research has found that remarkable things can happen if parents and caregivers spent at least 15 minutes of undivided time a day listening and talking with their children? Research also tells us that children really do look to their parents and caregivers for advice and help about difficult choices and decisions.

Every day in our schools and communities, children are teased, threatened, or tormented by bullies. Bullying is a problem that creates a climate of fear, that affects the whole school, and in some cases, the entire community. When we fail to recognize and stop bullying behavior as it occurs, we actually promote violence. We are saying to the bully, "You have the right to hurt people," and to the victim, "You are not worth protecting." Safe schools are everyone's responsibility and everyone can help keep our schools safe.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying involves repeated acts of physical, emotional, or social behavior that are intentional, controlling, and hurtful. Bullying is a learned behavior, evident as early as two years of age. Bullying can be either direct or indirect. Direct bullying usually is seen and felt readily. Indirect bullying (deliberate exclusion, name calling, etc.) is much more difficult to identify, often is more difficult to remedy, and should be clearly seen as different from direct bullying. Boys are more typically engaged in direct bullying and girls in indirect bullying, but that is not always the case. Just be alert and consider the following:

Bullying is defined by a power imbalance between the bully and the target.

A bully's power can be derived from physical size, strength, verbal skill, popularity, or gender.

A bully's target feels tormented, helpless, and defenseless.

Bullying can include hitting, name-calling, threatening, intimidating, kicking, spreading rumors, teasing, pushing, tripping, excluding someone from a group, or destroying someone's things.

WHY STOP BULLYING?

Bullying interferes with learning in school and may lead to increased absenteeism and dropout rates.

Students feel less safe and less satisfied in school when there are high levels of bullying in the school.

Bullying children may become bullying adults and are more likely to become child and spouse abusers.

The longer bullying lasts, the harder it is to change. Bullies identified by age 8 are six times more likely to have a criminal conviction by age 24.

Bullying may be linked to other delinquent, criminal and gang activities, such as shoplifting, drug abuse, and vandalism.

The targets of bullies grow socially insecure and anxious with decreased self-esteem and increased depression rates, even into adulthood.

IS YOUR CHILD BEING BULLIED?

If your child exhibits one or more of these warning signs, he/she may be a victim of bullying. Talk

with your child to explore further whether or not he/she is being bullied.

A child being bullied often:

Withdraws socially; has few or no friends.

Feels isolated, alone and sad.

Feels picked on or persecuted.

Feels rejected and not liked.

Frequently complains of illness.

Doesn't want to go to school; avoids some classes or skips school.

Brings home damaged possessions or reports them "lost."

Cries easily; displays mood swings and talks about hopelessness.

Has poor social skills.

Talks about running away; talks of suicide.

Threatens violence to self and others.

Changes in eating or sleeping patterns.

Takes, or attempts to take, "protection" to school (a stick, knife, gun, etc.).

Displays "victim" body language—hangs head, hunches shoulders, avoids eye contact.

Children being bullied may show some of these signs, or may show few.

If you suspect your child is being bullied

Do:

Make sure your child knows being bullied is not his or her fault.

Let your child know that he or she does not have to face being bullied alone.

Discuss ways of responding to bullies.

Teach your child to be assertive.

Tell your child not to react, but to walk away and get help if pursued.

Tell your child to report bullying immediately to a trusted adult.

Contact the school/teacher.

Don't:

Ask children to solve a bullying problem between themselves—because of the differences in power, the child who has been bullied will suffer further. Bullying problems require adult intervention.

Advise the bullied child to fight the bully—fighting is in violation of the school conduct code and

the child might be seriously injured.

Try to mediate a bullying situation. Bringing together children who are bullied and those who do the bullying, to “work out” the problems between them, generally is not a good idea. It may further victimize a child who is being bullied and it sends the wrong message to both parties.

Blame either the victim or the bully. Instead, gather as much information as possible. Look at your own child’s behavior and style of interaction and consider how you might help him/her to handle these types of situations in the future. Contact the school for assistance.

WARNING SIGNS INDICATING A BULLY

A bully often

Seeks to dominate and/or manipulate others.

Enjoys feeling powerful and in control (whether real or not).

Is both a poor winner (boastful and arrogant) and a poor loser.

Seems to derive satisfaction from other’s fears, discomfort, or pain.

Is good at hiding behaviors or doing them where adults can’t notice.

Is excited by conflicts between others.

Blames others for his/her problems.

Displays uncontrolled anger.

Has a history of discipline problems.

Displays a pattern of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and aggressive behaviors.

Has a history of violent and aggressive behaviors.

Displays intolerance and prejudice towards others.

May use drugs, alcohol or be a member of a gang.

Lacks empathy towards others.

IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS A BULLY

Be sure that your child knows that bullying is NOT acceptable behavior.

Tell your child the penalties for bullying and be sure that you enforce them fairly and consistently.

Help your child learn alternative ways to deal with anger and frustration.

Teach and reward more appropriate behavior.

Work out a way for your child to make amends for the bullying.

Help your child develop an understanding of the impact of their bullying on the target.

Seek help or counseling if the behavior continues.

If contacted by the school, STAY CALM; TRY NOT TO BECOME ANGRY AND DEFENSIVE!
Make yourself really listen. Remember this is ultimately about the well-being of your child!

BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

When developing and implementing bullying prevention programs, be sure to include the following steps:

Increase the awareness of everyone at school (students, staff and parents) toward bullying problems.

Assess the scope of the problem.

Identify both the children who are bullying and the children who are being bullied.

Intervene in a timely manner with clear and consistent consequences for the child who is bullying and with support and protection for the child who is being bullied.

Encourage by-standers to intervene appropriately to help stop the bullying.

Reward pro-social behavior of all students.

Bullying: NO WAY

Prevent your child from becoming a VICTIM:

Instill self-confidence in your child.

Help your child establish good social skills.

Teach your child to speak out for him or herself.

Teach your child to seek help, if harassed, from you and other caring adults.

Prevent your child from becoming a BULLY:

Present yourself as a model of non-violent behavior.

Clearly state that violence is not acceptable.

Assist your child in finding non-violent strategies for anger management and conflict resolution.

Seek help from mental health/school counselors to help stop bullying and aggressive behavior.

Teen Blogs Alarm Parents, Schools

The Internet, combined with the advent of cheap, easy-to-use blogging tools such as MySpace and Xanga, is allowing teenagers to post their innermost thoughts online. But unlike the diaries of old (which came complete with little padlocks), teens' blogs are open for the world to see. That -- along with the types of information teens are posting on their sites -- have parents, teachers and others who are concerned with the welfare of young people concerned.

Although many teens use these sites to make friends and to serve as a creative outlet, others have posted everything from risqué photographs to brutally frank and disturbing confessionals to violent

threats. In fact, kids have been known to exaggerate the wildness of their lifestyle, blogging about sex, drugs and drinking when in fact living very G-rated lives.

Advocates for teen online safety warn that not only is this content illegal in many cases, but can put the teens themselves in danger. A young person who posts provocative material, for instance, can find himself or herself the target of unwanted attention; the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that one in five children receives online sexual solicitations. These advocates also warn that such blogs can come back to haunt teens later, as college admissions offices and employers are "googling" candidates more frequently and taking note of what they find.

Schools are working to educate students on responsible online behavior, while parents are wrestling with the dilemma of respecting their kids' rights while protecting them. Just as the appearance of the automobile and telephone rewrote the rules on personal interaction, the Internet and blogging are causing us to rethink what's ethical, appropriate and safe when sharing information with others.

Source: Washington Post

Link To Keeping Kids Safe On The Internet

www.netsmartz.org

<http://www.isafe.org>

<http://www.missingkids.com>

http://www.safekids.com/child_safety.htm

<http://www.ou.edu/oupd/isparent.htm>

<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/foryoungpeople/childrenparents/especiallychildren.htm>

If the above links or any others in this newsletter don't work all you need to do is cut and paste or type them in your browser and you will be able to pull them up.

If you have any questions about blogs or internet bullying please call Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health at 319-462-2187 or toll free 1-888-400-6302. You can also e-mail us at help@iffcmh.org

For many parents who are raising children and youth with mental, emotional and behavioral disorders it is very hard to find resources, training, services or someone to talk to that understands what they are going through. For over 10 years Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health has provided families and providers that service. Please use the below form to send in your donation.

HELP SUPPORT IOWA FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Yes, I would like to help children and adolescents with special mental health needs and their families. Enclosed is my gift of:

\$50.00 \$75.00 \$100.00 \$200.00 \$500.00 Other \$ _____

or go to <http://www.iffcmh.org/donateform.htm>

Your Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

County of Residence _____

Optional:
Parent/Family Member _____ Professional _____
Both _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Please make checks payable to:
Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
106 South Booth
Anamosa, Iowa 52205

If you would like to dedicate this gift, please specify:

In Honor of In Memory of

Thank you for your generosity.

____ Please add my name to your mailing list to receive newsletters and training/conference information.

Your gift is tax-deductible to the full-extent of the law. Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization.