

Bullying Task Force Notes: June 4, 2012

Members Present: Willie Bridges, Brenda Cassellius, Vangie Castro; Rep. Jim Davnie; Sen. Scott Dibble, Philip Duran; Alana Friedman Julie Hertzog; Kevin Lindsey; Lyn Mitchell; Jacob Reitan; Walter Roberts, Thomas Scott

Ex officio Members: Kirk Schneidawind.

Agenda amended:

Adding listening session

Last meeting date

Youth listening session

Report back: Definitions workgroup

Recommend two definitions: Bullying and harassment; lumped intimidation into bullying.

Got the basics and are now finessing language. Add bystanders and indirect bullying. Work in progress, took elements from Iowa, ND and NJ. Will send a draft to Rose by June 8. Unbalance of power needs to be spelled out. How does one prove power differential in court? Important to add.

Not much case law. The standard is, 'would a reasonable person feel harm.' Definition itself and then a definition of key terms would be helpful, as definition. A definition in statute would be litigated.

Discussion of harassment: imbalance of power is not part of that definition in statute... no final decision was made regarding changing harassment statute. Tracked human rights language with bullying definition.

Review: Best practice recommendations submitted by Task Force members

Discussion of submitted recommendations

- Which schools must comply.--all public schools. Have to explicitly state that rules apply to charter schools and private schools. Look under "educational records" in Minnesota statutes. Will check out the legal language. Human rights act applies to secular schools.
- State level recommendation #3: who will participate in bullying discussion of prevention? What state agencies? DHS, MDH, as well as others—DPS, DHR.
- Emphasis should be on environment that supports academic and social growth: equity access and achievement. Removes a barrier to academic success. Lyn and Rep Davnie will develop a preamble.
- Need stronger language under the community piece—mental health and human service needs, other actions like a county wide health line. Do extend the focus outside of school.
- Some discussion about accountability and commitment from districts to clarify what they will do. MN does not have state standards in health. It would be good to have

health standards. All that fits into a health curriculum. There are national health standards. Other states have implemented SEL standards across the curriculum.

- Interested in a coordinator in the district. A point of entry for parents in particular. Could include these elements in a school improvement plan. Not now required in the state plan. Align bullying prevention to ECFE, school improvement, other places...

Panel Presentations

Don Gemberling—Handout; Re defining bullying carefully. Label stays with student. Role of data privacy in any actionable offense.

Brian Stoll, Wright County Probation—Powerpoint ; Started with safe schools meetings so people (school administrators, probation, social services, police, sheriff's office) could communicate—cup of coffee, get to know each other, problem solve. Communities are not separate from each other because of Facebook—sexting issue in one school can easily come to another school. Cyberbullying happens 24 hrs. a day and is connected to the masses. Teen drivers and teen cellphones. Driving, you are trained, have provisional license, etc. No training if you get a phone. The consequences of a DWI and sexting are similar, emotionally, as well as legally.

Restorative justice and community conferencing to address sexting and cyberbullying. Education, choice, participation in conferencing, collateral conferencing, does not go to the court, only in the sheriff's office. Have to put a closure to the situation, because we are all in the same community, so that everyone can move on into the community. Community service, see a probation officer and educational process.

Bridget Biggs, PhD, Mayo Clinic—handout; *Preventing and Treating Bullying and Victimization*.

Systemic perspective: what is happening in the school, in the social setting, in the peer group. Also need a maintenance plan.

Questions: look at the review of programs by Craig: see the list.

- Peaceful Schools has community engagement. Universal interventions—Communities have to be networked and involved. The community is part of the school.
- Keys to effective implementation: universal values. Do focus groups with youth and staff and parents regarding values. The values that are held by the group, the school.
- When a program asks for help, the community will come out in force to help.
- Reactive punishments are not helpful: need to understand why the bullying is happening in order to address it. Universal punishment, one size fits all, is not appropriate in all cases. Boy Scout example, creative solution that involved no punishment.
- Follow-up question to Stoll and Bridges. Who could have avoided criminal charges if there had been better more effective interventions earlier? An effective intervention

will help especially if it done early. Changing the culture of the school to a positive climate will have a positive effect on the youth.

- Mediation is not appropriate for bullying. Need to look at kids as individuals and not as a label.
- The school should be able to work collaboratively with police and county attorney to get help, so they don't feel as if they are alone and the school throws their hands up in the air.
- Roles of school staff members—student support staff as well as bus drivers etc. All adults serve 2 roles: model of respect, and as a model witness or bystander Have to train all the people who are with kids.
- Data practices are confused. People are told they cannot talk to each other, even though that is not what the law says.
- What laws would help a police officer prevent bullying. What do we need? Brian Stoll have a safe schools coalition, districts that do not have that, then the district either sends it to the county for charges the felony, or they ignore it. If the child pornography laws could change, make sexting a misdemeanor, which would help allow for a more effective response. The law is either nothing or everything.
- The sexting issue does highlight the community involvement, as the youth affect everyone in the county and in the state....
- Criminal justice community and the schools—just those players in some school districts and in some places there are religious community members. But each district works different—there is no cookie cutter solution. CD therapist, Bus Company, nurse, county folks, not a formal process but what everyone needs, and the networking are critical. Is there a way to make a consistent system?
- Glad for the note of caution in engaging law enforcement regarding bullying, example of a case where law enforcement caused a stop in the investigation because the lawyers showed up.
- Peer to peer only, or the issues of adult example.

Task Force members are to submit recommendations regarding implementation and consequence to Rose by Friday for review at the next meeting.

Final items

- Need description for the taskforce describing the listening session.
- July meeting date: July 26, last meeting.
- Next meeting, Youth focus group, and then a box lunch for the task force.
- Evening session for the metro session: 6:30-8:30 in the evening. Date TBD
- Maybe have a restorative justice process demonstration.
- Pam Alexander, Hennepin County Judge