

# **Guidance for Selecting an Evidence-Based Bullying Prevention Program**

*Program review for:  
Colorado Department of Education: Office of Learning Supports*

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### **Purpose Statement and Selection of Programs for Guidance**

The School Bullying Prevention and Education Grant (BPEG; House Bill 11-1254) was designed to provide funding to reduce the frequency of bullying incidents in schools. This includes:

- Implementing evidence-based bullying prevention practices with fidelity;
- Ensuring family and community involvement in school bullying prevention strategies; and
- Adopting specific policies concerning bullying education and prevention.

Pursuant to 22-93-106, C.R.S., the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is to maintain a page on its public website where resources and evidence-based best practices in bullying prevention are made available.

In an effort to provide unbiased, objective recommendations for evidence-based bullying prevention programs to be used as part of the BPEG, the Office of Learning Supports (OLS) at CDE commissioned the following review. The review was completed by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln under the guidance of Dr. Susan Swearer, an internationally recognized bullying research expert.

#### **Criteria for Inclusion as an Evidence-Based Bullying Prevention Program**

Several criteria were used to determine which prevention programs were selected during the external review. These criteria included:

- The program must have research demonstrating effectiveness in reducing bullying
- Differentiation between programs that measure (a) attitudes, beliefs, and/or knowledge of the components of the program and (b) changes in bullying behavior
- The methodology and rigor of the studies that were used as evidence of effectiveness
- Ratings of effectiveness from organizations such as:
  - SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices
  - National Institute of Justice's CrimeSolutions.gov
  - What Works Clearing House
- The cost of the program must be reasonable considering the funding available through the grant program

#### **Criteria for BPEG Guidance**

Based on the review completed by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, several evidence-based bullying prevention programs were recommended. The OLS reviewed these programs and selected four as guidance to BPEG applicants. Programs were excluded if:

- The evidence base did not specifically measure bullying behaviors (e.g., measured "fighting" or perceptions of self-control)

- The cost of the program was prohibitive to scale-up in Colorado

Selection criteria were also considered for programs to best fit the goals of the grant. These criteria included:

- A wide range of grades addressed by the program
- Research indicating wide-ranging positive effects in addition to a reduction in bullying (e.g., anxiety, substance use, improved school climate)

### **Solicitation of Evidence-Based Bullying Prevention Programs**

Additional evidence-based bullying prevention programs can be found by reviewing the website of several different program effectiveness organizations. A list of these organizations can be found on the CDE's Bullying Prevention and Education Resources webpage.

### **BPEG Applicant Guidance**

Applicants are encouraged to select any program that they believe would best fit their school regardless of whether or not it is one of the programs recommended by the OLS. However, if a program outside of the recommended list is selected, applicants must describe the evidence supporting the efficacy and effectiveness of the program in their application.

Any questions regarding evidence-based bullying prevention programs should be directed to the Bullying Prevention and Education Grant Coordinator:

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## **PBIS and Bullying Prevention**

**Description:** School-wide approaches to bullying prevention have long been advocated for in the bullying literature. However, while many youth will benefit from general strategies, others may need additional support. One strategy that has gained prominence for a wide-range of behavior concerns is positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS). Researchers have long argued for the use of PBIS as a way to reduce school-aged bullying concerns (see Swearer, Espelage, Love, & Kingsbury, 2008 for review and recommendations). Under this model, staff and other important stakeholders (e.g., parents, students) work to develop consistent expectations and guidelines for appropriate behaviors for students in all areas of the school, as well as to provide opportunities for students to learn and use these positive skills on an everyday-basis. By teaching and reinforcing these specific behaviors and peer interactions, staff work to increase positive and prosocial interactions while providing less social attention for negative or less appropriate behaviors. PBIS also requires that staff are provided with training and opportunities to best learn how to effectively respond to negative behaviors, such as bullying.

The *Bullying Prevention- PBIS Program* (BP-PBIS) is a whole-school bullying prevention program that is designed to be incorporated as part of a school's comprehensive PBIS plan. The program seeks to teach students to differentiate between respectful and disrespectful behavior. By doing this, bullying behaviors are given less social attention while positive peer interaction is rewarded. The curriculum includes lessons that teach students how to respond to disrespectful behaviors (e.g., "Stop/Walk/Talk"). Subsequent lessons promote the use of these skills with other types of behaviors (e.g., gossip, inappropriate remarks, cyberbullying). The BP-PBIS program guide also addresses staff skill acquisition, such as learning to reward stop/walk/talk behavior and how to respond to student reports of bullying.

The program's website provides information and guides (PDF) for both the elementary BP-PBIS and the middle and high school version (i.e., *Expect Respect*). Guides for the program can be downloaded here:

[BP-PBIS](#) (PDF)

[Expect Respect](#) (PDF)

**Cost:** The BP-PBIS is available online for free; however, effective systems coaching is recommended to ensure the best results for reducing bullying behaviors. Additional tools, such as program implementation checklists and student and self-assessments, are provided on the [program's website](#).

### 1. Training

- a. **Webinar:** A webinar is provided free of charge on the Colorado Department of Education website to provide BP-PBIS schools an overview on the theoretical underpinnings of BP-PBIS, basic components of the program, and practical implementation ideas.

- b. **Face-to-Face Training:** A face-to-face training will be provided once a year to schools interested in implementing the practices within BP-PBIS.
- c. **Follow-up Online Academy Course:** There will also be an online course provided on building leadership teams implementing BP-PBIS

### **Evidence:**

Research on PBIS has provided support for the use of the approach with bullying-type behaviors. For example, Waasdorp, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2012) examined the effectiveness of PBIS by randomizing 37 schools into treatment and control groups. Waasdorp and colleagues (2012) found that, while bullying perpetration increased over time for both the treatment and control groups, students in PBIS schools experienced less teacher-reported bullying than did students who did not receive PBIS services. Therefore, universal programs, such as PBIS, may effectively address the bullying prevention needs of schools while providing a more general and far-reaching approach.

Research on the BP-PBIS program has resulted in promising outcomes. For example, using a multiple-baseline design with six students, Ross and Horner (2009) found lower levels of bullying throughout treatment, as well as positive ratings from school staff regarding the effectiveness of the program. In addition, Ross and Horner (2014) examined differences in survey scores after implementation of the BP-PBIS program and found significant increases in student perceptions post-treatment, such as assertiveness and bystander responsibility. Thus, a primary focus of prevention and intervention efforts should be to not only decrease problematic or aggressive behaviors, but also to promote more positive interactions overall. For example, teaching the “stop” routine to students may provide them with an assertive, and more acceptable, response when bullying-type behaviors are observed.

### **Resources:**

- Ross, S. W., & Horner, R. H. (2009). Bully prevention in positive behavioral support. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 42, 747–759. doi:10.1901/jaba.2009.42-747
- Ross, S. W., & Horner, R. H. (2014). Bully prevention in positive behavior support: Preliminary evaluation of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade attitudes toward bullying. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 22, 225-236. doi:10.1177/1063426613491429
- Swearer, S. M., Espelage, D. L., Love, K. B., & Kingsbury, W. (2008) School-wide approaches to intervention for school aggression and bullying. In B. Doll & J. A. Cummings (Eds.), *Transforming school mental health services: Population-based approaches to promoting the competency and wellness of children*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
- Waasdorp T. E., Bradshaw C. P., Leaf P. J. (2012). The impact of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on bullying and peer rejection: A randomized controlled effectiveness trial. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 166(2), 149-156. doi:10.1001/archpediatrics.2011.755.
- <http://www.pbis.org>

## **Positive Action (PA)**

**Description:** The PA program is developed on the philosophy that we, “feel good about ourselves when we do positive actions.” The program focuses on developing students’ academic interests and cooperation with others through the use of, “scripted lessons that are easy to prepare and teach. All of the materials called for in each lesson are included in a kit. These materials include posters, games, worksheets, and puzzles.” The PA program contains 140 lessons broken into 6 units based on grade level. Each lesson lasts for approximately 15-30 minutes.

**Cost:** A complete breakdown of costs is available from the [PA publisher’s website](#).

### 1. Recommendations

- a. It is recommended that each teacher have a PA Bullying Prevention Kit which has materials for 30 students. Each year following the first year of implementation, there is a *Bullying Prevention Kit Refresher* that provides the consumables of the program for another 30 students.
- b. *Bullying Prevention Kit*
  - i. \$250
- c. *Bullying Prevention Kit Refresher*
  - i. \$75

### **Training:**

1. Online Training
  - a. \$550 for the first 2 hours
  - b. \$150 for each additional topic: High School, Climate Development, Family Classes and Community
  - c. Effective for up to 20 participants
2. Face-to-Face Orientation
  - a. \$3,000 per day plus traveling expenses
  - b. Effective for up to 50 participants

**Evidence:** What Works Clearing House (WWCH) reviewed twelve studies on PA; one study by Flay, Acock, Vuchinich, & Beets (2006) met standards as evidenced-based and another study by Flay & Allred (2003) met criteria with reservations. Using a randomized-control study, Flay and colleagues (2006) found the program had positive effects on reducing risk-taking behaviors (i.e. tobacco and alcohol use, suspension rates), serious violence, and also had positive effects on improving academic performance: bully behaviors were not directly assessed.

Additionally, Flay & Allred (2003) employed a quasi-experimental design across 36 schools, and found PA had positive effects on reducing violent behaviors and suspension rates; bullying behaviors were not directly assessed. Based on results of studies that met evidenced-based standards, WWCH determined PA has positive effects on elementary students behavior and academic achievement.

- 1) More information about WWCH review on PA can be found at:
  - a. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid=380>

In addition to the studies evaluated by WWCH, the National Institute of Justice evaluated additional studies of PA and included the program in their database of evidence-based interventions, which can be found at [www.crimesolutions.gov](http://www.crimesolutions.gov). One study reviewed, conducted by Beets and colleagues (2009), used a matched-pair randomized control design with ten intervention schools and ten control schools. Results from the study showed a reduction in violent behaviors and problem behaviors (i.e. substance use, sexual activity, violent behaviors) for students in intervention schools; bullying behaviors were not directly assessed.

The second study reviewed, conducted by Li and colleagues (2011), also used a matched-pair randomized control design with seven intervention schools and seven control schools. Results from the study showed a reduction in violent behaviors, substance use, and bullying behaviors in intervention schools. Based on results of studies reviewed, the National Institute of Justice rated PA as effective.

- 1) More information about the National Institute of Justice's review on PA can be found at:
  - a. <http://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=113>

In addition to the information above, NREPP included evidence on the following outcomes: Substance use, social-emotional mental health, problem behaviors, academic achievement, absenteeism, and family functioning utilizing experimental designs.

- 1) More information about NREPP review on PA can be found at:
  - a. <http://legacy.nreppadmin.net/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=400>



## **Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit (SS-BPU)**

**Description:** The *Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit* (SS-BPU) is a whole-school bullying prevention program designed for grades K-5. A 30-minute interactive lesson plan is implemented each week over five lessons covering topics such as recognizing and reporting bullying, as well as bystander intervention. Descriptions of the lesson plans for grades K-3 and 4-5 can be found [here](#). In addition, all school staff are provided with varying levels of training to implement the SS-BPU. Three training modules are completed by school staff to ensure a comprehensive and consistent understanding of bullying behaviors and intervention. All trainings are available to staff through the SS-BPU website. Module 1 of the staff training addresses implementation concerns for school principals and program coordinators, such as communicating bullying policies and procedures to staff and families. Module 2 addresses all school staff and assists in recognizing, responding to, and reporting bullying. Module 3 provides detailed training for those implementing the program (e.g., classroom teachers, counselors) to ensure understanding of the curriculum and lessons, as well as strategies for engaging families in the prevention program. In addition to activities and training directed students and school staff, the SS-BPU also includes a family component. Families are provided Home Link activities to build upon the topics discussed during that week's school-based lessons. By including activities that address bullying knowledge and beliefs for students, families, and school staff members, the SS-BPU helps create a consistent skill base for addressing bullying across the most impactful settings for the child (i.e., school, home).

It should be stated that SS-BPU is designed to be implemented as part of the *Second Step: Social and Emotional Learning Program* (SS-SEL). In addition, while there is not currently a SS-BPU for middle school students, the middle school SS-SEL program includes units on bullying prevention. Also, it should be noted that the SS-BPU was developed based on its predecessor, the *Steps to Respect* program. Thus, while outcome-based research on the SS-BPU is limited, the program is based on and includes all components from the evidenced-based *Steps to Respect* program.

**Cost:** For complete pricing details for the SS-BPU, and all other Community for Children curriculums, download the [Product and Price List](#).

1. Recommendations:
  - a. As mentioned above, the SS-BPU was designed as a supplemental curriculum to the *Second Step: Social and Emotional Learning Program* (SS-SEL). Thus, it is recommended that both the social and emotional learning and bullying prevention units should be purchased and implemented for each grade level. Both programs can be purchased together through the Committee for Children website for additional savings.
  - b. Grades K-5 *Second Step SEL* and *BPU*
    - i. \$3,299
  - c. Grades K-5 *Second Step BPU*

- i. \$1,099
- d. Individual *Second Step BPU* lesson notebooks
  - i. \$199

**Training:**

1. All staff trainings are included and available through online modules.
  - a. Module 1: 45-60 minutes
  - b. Module 2: 75-90 minutes
  - c. Module 3: 45-60 minutes

**Evidence:** Reviews listed below detail research outcomes from the predecessor prevention program, *Steps to Respect*. *Steps to Respect* was deemed evidenced-based and rated as effective by crimesolutions.gov. In addition, SAMHSA rated both the program's quality of research and dissemination highly.

- Brown, Low, Smith, & Haggerty (2011)
  - In this study, Brown and colleagues (2011) examined the *Second Step* program in 33 California elementary schools. The design of the study was a randomized control trial and focused on outcomes for third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Results from the study found that, compared to schools that did not receive the *Second Step* program, intervention schools saw a significantly lower increase in bullying behaviors from pre- to post-test. Additionally, bullying-related problems in school (e.g., “how big of a problem in your school is students spreading rumors or lies about students they are mad at or don't like?”) decreased significantly more in intervention schools.
- Frey, Nolen, Edstrom, & Hirschstein (2005)
  - This 2005 study by Frey and colleagues analyzed the outcomes of students exposed to the *Second Step* program compared to those without exposure to the program. A total of 1,253 students were assessed in the intervention and control groups. Results found that students who received the intervention did not require as much adult intervention and behaved less aggressively.

Other examples of research outcomes reviewed below include lower rates of non-bullying aggression and increased positive bystander behaviors when compared to control participants. For full descriptions of the evaluation studies' methods and outcomes, see the reviews listed below.

1. See SAMHSA for review:
  - a. <http://legacy.nreppadmin.net/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=336>
2. See Crimesolutions.gov for review:
  - a. <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=221>

## **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)**

**Description:** The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP) was developed by Dr. Dan Olweus, a leading international bullying expert. The OBPP was designed for elementary through high school students and includes program components that address four distinct levels: school-level (e.g., assess bullying using the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, create school rules targeting bullying behaviors), classroom-level (e.g., enforcement of school anti-bullying rules, meetings with parents), individual-level (e.g., individual interventions for students involved in bullying), and community-level (e.g., share bullying practices with community members). For more information regarding the program's components and sequence, download the [Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Scope and Sequence Report](#). An important initial step is to assess the readiness for implementing the OBPP, as well as the current bullying climate in your school. For more information on the assessments developed for the OBPP, see the [preparation page](#) on the publisher's website. All program materials and assessment measures can be purchased through the publisher's website. See the [program materials](#) page for more information.

It should be noted that the publishers recommend that program implementation should be discussed and planned with a Certified Olweus Trainer. A list of OBPP trainers by state can be found [here](#).

**Cost:** For a breakdown of the average cost of the OBPP materials and supplemental curriculums, see the [Sample Cost Breakdown](#). For purchasing inquiries, see the [materials page](#). In addition, the publisher recommends contacting a Prevention Sales Manager for a custom quote for your school.

### 1. Program Materials

- a. It is recommended that each teacher receive an *OBPP Teacher Guide* and that each Bullying Coordinating Committee member receive a copy of the *OBPP Schoolwide Guide*. Therefore, for a school with 500 students, 30 teachers, and 12 committee members, the total cost of the OBPP will be \$3,007.15. For more sample costs across school sizes, see the [Sample Cost Breakdown](#). However, the publisher states that, beyond the *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire*, the materials will be a one-time purchase.
- b. *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire* (30 copies)
  - i. Cost: \$43.95
- c. *OBPP Schoolwide Guide with DVD/CD* (1 copy)
  - i. Cost: \$98.95
- d. *OBPP Bullying Prevention Program Teacher Guide with DVD/CD* (1 copy)
  - i. Cost: \$62.95

## 2. Supplemental Materials

- a. Other supplemental materials include:
  - i. *Class Meetings that Matter: A Resource for Grades K-5*
    1. Cost: \$86.95
  - ii. *Class Meetings that Matter: A Resource for Grades 6-8*
    1. Cost: \$86.95
  - iii. *Class Meetings that Matter: A Resource for Grades 9-12*
    1. Cost: \$86.95
  - iv. *Class Meetings and Individual Interventions DVD Set*
    1. Cost: \$214.95
  - v. *Class Meetings and Individual Interventions for High School*
    1. Cost: \$195.00

## 3. Additional Costs

- a. For other costs listed by the publisher, see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section.
- b. Examples include
  - i. Two-day training by a certified Olweus trainer
  - ii. Ongoing program evaluation
  - iii. Supplies for events

### **Training:**

1. The publisher highly recommends training and consultation with a certified Olweus trainer. This training will include the selected Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee members. For descriptions of the training objectives, typical committee members, and other information pertinent to the training involved in the OBPP, see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section.
2. Training costs vary across trainer and site. However, training cannot exceed \$3,000 for a two-day training program (\$1,500 for one year of phone consultations) and travel costs (e.g., lodging, airfare).

### **Evidence:**

1. See the [Research on the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program](#) for a review of outcome studies.
2. Other reviews and articles examining the OBPP:
  - a. See discussions and reviews on the [publisher's website](#).

Schroeder, B. A., Messina, A., Schroeder, D., Good, K., Barto, S., Saylor, J., & Masiello, M. (2012). The implementation of a statewide bullying prevention program: Preliminary findings from the field and the importance of coalitions. *Health Promotion Practice, 13*, 489-495.  
doi:10.1177/1524839910386887

- In the article from Schroeder et al. (2012), the OBPP was implemented across 70 schools and nearly 100,000 students in Pennsylvania. Using a pre-post research design, the authors found decreased self-reported bullying and more positive views of teacher responsiveness to bullying behaviors. In addition, the authors reported that these differences were often greater when schools had conducted two years of program implementation when compared to schools with only a single year of intervention. Thus, it is important that prevention and intervention efforts are continued and are not abandoned after one year of program implementation. However, given that the majority of the program's materials are one-time purchases, this time requirement may be easier to implement than in other programs that require continued purchase of materials.