



BULLYING SURVEILLANCE AMONG YOUTHS

UNIFORM DEFINITIONS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
AND RECOMMENDED DATA ELEMENTS

Version 1.0



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RECOMMENDED DATA ELEMENTS**

Version 1.0

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this document to the memory of our co-author, Merle E. Hamburger, PhD, who passed away during the development of this publication. He, with humor and compassion, has empowered and positively changed the lives of all those who knew him. His tireless efforts toward making bullying a priority at the CDC and across the U.S. are part of his legacy.

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INTRODUCTION*

Bullying is one type of violence that threatens a youth's well-being in schools and neighborhoods. The impacts of bullying are felt by individuals, families, schools, and society and may result in youths¹ feeling powerless, intimidated, and humiliated by the aggressive acts of other youth(s). Bullying occurs in many settings, such as schools, after-school programs, or in a youth's neighborhood. It emerges from an interaction of complex factors related to individual characteristics of a youth, relationships with their peers and adults, and school or community norms.

Purpose and Scope:

Bullying Surveillance Among Youths: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0 is designed as a tool to help organizations, researchers, evaluators, community groups, educators, and public health officials define and gather systematic data on bullying to better inform research and prevention efforts. It is intended to improve the consistency and comparability of data collected on bullying. Current efforts to characterize bullying vary considerably. The lack of a uniform definition hinders our ability to understand the true magnitude, scope, and impact of bullying and track trends over time. Consistent terminology with standardized definitions is necessary to improve public health surveillance of bullying and inform efforts to address bullying.

The current definition applies to bullying that occurs between peers and excludes abuse perpetrated by adults against children or youths. It also excludes family violence and violence that occurs within the context of an intimate or dating relationship. These different forms of violence (e.g., child maltreatment, sibling violence, teen dating violence, intimate partner violence, elder maltreatment) can include aggression that is physical, sexual, or psychological (e.g., verbal, belittling, isolating, coercive). However, the context and uniquely dynamic nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in which these acts occur is different from that of peer violence.

It is important to keep in mind that youths who are experiencing or involved in bullying may be exposed to other forms of violence such as child maltreatment, dating violence, gang violence, other peer violence and delinquent behavior, suicidal behavior, and abuse by adults. Youths who report bullying victimization are often victims of other types of violence such as child maltreatment, being injured in a fight, sexual assault, simple or aggravated assault, and robbery (DeVoe & Bauer, 2011; Duke, Pettingell, McMorris, & Borowsky, 2010; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007; Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, & Scheidt, 2003; Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2010). Also, youths engaging in bullying are more likely to engage in frequent fights and perpetrate sexual violence (Espelage, Basile, & Hamburger, 2012; Nansel et al., 2003). Thus, it is strongly recommended that those concerned about youths' safety not limit their data collection efforts to bullying alone, but rather gather information on the broad threats to youths' safety. Uniform definitions and recommended data elements for some of these different types of violence is available at www.cdc.gov/injury.

This document is divided into four sections, the first of which provides background on the problem, including what is presently known about the public health burden of bullying and the need for a uniform definition of bullying. The uniform definition and description of key terms is presented next followed by considerations to keep in mind when gathering data on bullying. The last section provides a list of recommended data elements designed to assist individuals collecting information on bullying and to serve as a technical reference for the collection of surveillance data. The data elements are grouped into "core" and "expanded" data elements. Core elements are those which are recommended for inclusion in data collection systems in order to track the magnitude, scope, and characteristics of the bullying problem and to identify groups at high risk for being bullied. Expanded data elements are included to support users who may wish to collect other important contextual information about bullying (i.e., witnesses' responses to bullying) depending on community needs, interests, and the feasibility of gathering additional data. A large number of expanded data elements are provided with the expectation that the vast majority of users will only use a subset of them.

* The introduction is updated through November 2012.

1. The term youth(s) described in this document refers to school-aged individuals 5 to 18 years of age.

The Development Process:

This document was developed with funding from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and represents a collaborative effort between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Education, and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) with extensive feedback and assistance from external researchers and practitioners working to prevent bullying in schools and communities. It was developed using a process and format similar to other CDC definitional efforts. The CDC has developed uniform definitions and recommended data elements for several types of violence, including:

- *Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0, 2002;*
- *Sexual Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0, 2002;*
- *Child Maltreatment Surveillance: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0., 2008;*
- *Self-Directed Violence Surveillance, Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements, 2011;*
- *Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma: Recommended Definitions for Public Health Surveillance and Research, 2012; and*
- *Elder Maltreatment Surveillance: Uniform Definition and Recommended Data Elements (in progress)*

Much like the above definitional efforts, this initial release of *Bullying Surveillance Among Youth: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0* is intended to serve as a starting point to guide public health surveillance of bullying.

History of the Uniform Bullying Definition Project

In 2008, the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Steering Committee was founded in order to provide effective and consistent federal guidance on bullying. This Steering Committee was tasked with combining and coordinating the efforts of six federal agencies (Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services, Justice, Defense, Agriculture, and Interior).² In 2010, the Steering Committee convened the first Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit, which brought together over 150 non-profit and corporate leaders, researchers, practitioners, parents, and youths to identify challenges to bullying prevention efforts. Discussions at the Summit revealed inconsistencies regarding the definition of bullying behaviors and the need to create a uniform definition of bullying. In addition, a review of the 2011 CDC publication of assessment tools used to measure bullying among youths (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011) revealed inconsistent definitions of bullying and diverse measurement strategies that make it difficult to compare the prevalence of bullying with other findings across studies (Vivolo, Holt, & Massetti, 2011). The uniform definition was developed in response to this feedback.

2. Since 2008, federal participation in this effort has expanded to nine agencies: Departments of Education (ED), Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture, National Council on Disability, Department of Interior, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the Federal Trade Commission.

The Consultative Process

In January 2011, ED provided funding for the CDC to develop a uniform definition of bullying through a process of consulting with bullying experts and practitioners. Staff from multiple federal government agencies including the CDC, ED, and the HRSA selected an expert panel of 12 researchers and practitioners representing multiple disciplines (e.g., education, public health, and psychology), various organizations (e.g., academic institutions, schools, state public health departments), and diverse areas of expertise. The expert panel provided advice and feedback on this document during two in-person meetings held in May and September 2011 as well as multiple conference calls throughout 2011. Additional feedback on a draft bullying definition was solicited from attendees from the Second Annual Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit held in September 2011.

A draft of the document was completed and reviewed by a separate group of external bullying experts and other federal partners in May 2012. After integrating feedback from external experts and federal partners, the CDC finalized the document. Although feedback from researchers and practitioners was essential in the formulation of this document, this document was not constructed through a consensus process, and the CDC is responsible for the final content.



SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The Public Health Approach to Bullying

This document is guided by a four-step public health model (Institute of Medicine, 1988) that works to reduce bullying among youths by focusing on preventing bullying before it happens and using scientific evidence to identify and address factors that increase or decrease the risk of bullying at the individual, relational (e.g., a child's relationship with a friend or parent), organizational/community, and societal level (e.g., policies that impact factors contributing to or reducing bullying). The first step of the model involves uncovering the “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, and “how” associated with bullying. Data on the magnitude, scope, characteristics, and consequences of the problem at local, state, and national levels are systematically gathered to demonstrate how frequently bullying behavior occurs, where it occurs most often, who the victims and perpetrators are, and its impact on victims, families, and communities. This step in the public health model is referred to as “problem definition and surveillance.” Surveillance is defined as the ongoing, systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data for use in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public health practice (Thacker & Berkelman 1988). Surveillance systems that capture information on bullying are mostly implemented in school settings, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) and the Health Behaviors in School-age Children (HBSC) survey.

It is not enough to know the magnitude and characteristics of a public health problem. It is also important to understand “why” it occurs and which factors protect people or put them at risk for experiencing or perpetrating violence. These factors help identify where prevention efforts need to be focused. Thus, identifying risk and protective factors is the second step in the public health model. With a better understanding of the factors that place youth at risk for bullying, we can begin to develop and test prevention strategies that seek to change the relevant factors that increase a youth's risk in experiencing bullying. In this third step of the public health model, programs and policies are implemented and rigorously evaluated to determine “what works” to prevent bullying among youth. The final step of the public health model is to ensure widespread dissemination and adoption of the programs that prevent bullying.

It is important to define public health problems in a way that allows for consistent measurement so that variation in the level of the problem detected in a community can more likely be attributed to the underlying problem and not to differing definitions of the problem. Thus, consistent with the first step of the public health model, this document provides a uniform definition of bullying among youth.

The Need for a Uniform Definition of Bullying

Bullying is an important public health issue that has garnered significant attention in the United States over the past decade. Presently, researchers and schools have been collecting data on bullying behaviors; however, there are inconsistencies with and confusion about how to define this phenomenon (Swearer, Siebecker, Johnsen-Frerichs, & Wang, 2010). The most commonly used definition of bullying was developed by Dr. Daniel Olweus and stresses three components: 1) aggressive behaviors that are 2) repeated and 3) involve a power imbalance favoring the perpetrator. According to this definition, an individual is a victim of bullying when he or she is exposed repeatedly over time to negative actions by one or more individuals and is unable to defend him or herself, excluding cases where two children of similar physical and psychological strength are fighting (Olweus, 1993; 1994).

Distinguishing bullying from other types of aggression between youths is seen as critical because the unique characteristics of bullying included in many definitions, such as repeated aggression and a power imbalance favoring the aggressor, may make bullying more harmful to experience than similar forms of aggression without these characteristics (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2007; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Also, there is evidence that some prevention programs that target physical fighting and other forms of youth aggression are unsuccessful in preventing bullying behaviors (Taub, 2001; Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002) and certain bullying prevention programs are not effective at preventing violence and aggression (Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007). Thus, different prevention programs may be required to prevent bullying separate from other types of aggression that are not repeated and do not involve a power imbalance. Moreover, bullying is

sometimes equated with harassment. Even though there may be overlap in some of the concepts, distinguishing bullying from discriminatory harassment is critical due to the need to respond effectively and appropriately to the unique characteristics and legal requirements associated with harassment (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2010).³

The inconsistent definitions used to measure bullying coupled with evidence indicating the importance of distinguishing bullying from other types of aggression between youths highlight the need for a uniform definition. A uniform definition supports the consistent tracking of bullying overtime, facilitates the comparison of bullying prevalence rates and associated risk and protective factors across different data collection systems, and enables the collection of comparable information on the performance of bullying intervention and prevention programs across contexts.

Although the definition focuses on identifying bullying behavior that occurs between youths, it is critical to recognize that bullying behavior emerges not only from the characteristics of youths themselves, but is affected by the responses of youths and adults who witness bullying, community and school norms, and larger social factors (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007). The most effective prevention programs will respond to the range of contributing factors instead of solely focusing on the individuals engaging in or experiencing bullying behaviors (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Green, 2001; Swearer & Doll, 2011; Vivolo et al., 2011).

The Public Health Burden of Bullying among Youth

Prevalence

Differences in the measurement and definition of bullying have contributed to varying estimates of its prevalence among youth. Estimates range from 13% to 75% (Swearer et al., 2010). Although national estimates of bullying in the U.S. use different definitions of bullying and produce varying estimates, these estimates consistently indicate that a considerable amount of youth are bullied.

National estimates of the prevalence of bullying are typically drawn from three national surveys: the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the School Crime Supplement (SCS), and the Health Behaviors in School-age Children (HBSC). The 2011 YRBS, a national survey of high school students, found that approximately 20% of students reported being bullied at school during the past 12 months (Eaton et al., 2012). In the 2011 SCS, 28% of 12 to 18 year olds reported being bullied at school (Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). Finally, the 2005-2006 HBSC, found that 11% of sixth through tenth graders in the U.S. reported being bullied two or more times in the last two months at school (Iannotti, 2012).

Each of these three surveys used different definitions of bullying; thus, making comparisons and integrating their findings very difficult. For instance, the lower estimate of bullying found in the YRBS, as compared to SCS, may partially be explained by its use of a more restrictive definition of bullying than the SCS or alternatively by the different ages of youth surveyed.⁴ In addition, youth bully others and are bullied in many different ways, including physically, verbally, and relationally (i.e., efforts to harm youth through attacking their relationships with other people). In the 2011 SCS, 18% of students were verbally bullied (e.g., made fun of, called names, or insulted), 8% experienced physical bullying (e.g., pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on), and 5% were physically threatened by another student during the school year (Robers et al., 2013). The SCS found that 18% of students were the subject of rumors and 6% were excluded from activities on purpose during the school year (Robers et al., 2013).

3. For a full understanding and more specific guidance on school districts’ obligations to address discriminatory harassment, including bullying and violence, please visit the Office for Civil Rights’ Reading Room at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html>

4. The YRBS defines bullying as repeated aggression (teasing, threatening, spreading rumors, hitting, shoving, or hurting) among youth where the targeted youth has less strength or power than the perpetrator. This is more restrictive than the bullying variable used in the SCS that is based on compiling affirmative responses to a series of questions assessing aggressive acts such as calling a youth hurtful names.

Increasingly, use of technology, such as the Internet and electronic devices, has provided a new context in which bullying can occur. A 2011 study found that 95% of 12 to 17 year olds use the Internet and 80% use social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter. Nine percent of these 12 to 17 year olds reported being bullied via text messaging and 8% experienced electronic bullying⁵ through email, a social network site, or instant messaging in the last 12 months (Lenhart et al., 2011).

In general, studies have found that fewer students are bullied electronically than in-person (DeVoe & Bauer, 2011; Li, 2007; Robers et al., 2013; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Ybarra, Mitchell, & Espelage, 2012). Both the YRBS and SCS found a higher percentage of students reporting in-person bullying than electronic bullying. Specifically, the 2011 SCS found that 28% of 12 to 18 year olds reported being bullied at school compared to 9% who reported experiencing electronic bullying during the school year (Robers et al., 2013). The 2011 YRBS found a smaller difference with 20.1% of high schools students reporting being bullied at school in the past 12 months compared to 16.2% of students who reported ever being electronic bullied anywhere (Eaton et al., 2012).

Impact of Bullying on Youth

Victims of bullying are more likely than those who are not bullied to report feelings of low self-esteem and isolation, to perform poorly in school, not to have a lot friends at school, have a negative view of school, experience psychosomatic problems (e.g., headache, stomachache, or sleeping problems), and to report mental health problems (depression, suicidal thoughts, and anxiety) (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Nansel, Craig, & Overpeck, 2004; O'Brennen & Bradshaw, 2009; Sourander, Helstelä, Heleinus, & Piha, 2000). For instance, a national survey of 10 to 15 year olds in the U.S. found that 38% of youths who were bullied reporting being very or extremely upset about the most serious incident of bullying they had recently experienced at school (Ybarra et al., 2012). Evidence further suggests that people who both experience and perpetrate bullying (i.e., bully-victims) may exhibit the poorest functioning (e.g., depression, health problems, and externalizing disorders), in comparison with youths who just report being bullied or perpetrating bullying (Haynie et al, 2001; Nansel et al., 2004; Veenstra et al., 2005). Finally, experiencing bullying during childhood predicts being depressed as an adult (Farrington, Loeber, Stallings, & Ttofi, 2011; Ttofi, Farrington, Losel, & Loeber, 2011).

Some recent, yet limited, research suggests that the unique characteristics of bullying included in many definitions, such as repeated aggression and a power imbalance favoring the perpetrator, identify a distinct form of aggression that may be more harmful to experience than similar forms of general aggression without these characteristics. Recent research from Ybarra, Boyd, and colleagues (2012) found that adding a follow-up question about differential power yielded a more accurate classification of bullying. There is also some evidence that these unique characteristics may make bullying more harmful to experience than similar forms of general aggression without these characteristics. For instance, depressive tendencies, social disintegration, and negative self-evaluations of youths who were bullied became increasingly more severe as the repetition of aggression increased from once or twice in the past two to three months to once a week or more (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Another study found that youth who experienced repeated aggression that was purposeful and involved a power imbalance, felt more threatened, less in control, and more depressed than those who experienced repeated aggression that did not involve a power imbalance favoring the perpetrator (Hunter et al., 2007).

5. Bullying behaviors perpetrated through the use of technology are referred to as both cyberbullying and electronic bullying in the literature. In this document, bullying involving technology is referred to as electronic bullying.

SECTION 2: THE UNIFORM DEFINITION

The uniform definition of bullying presented below conceptually builds from the extensive work on bullying and is similar to the widely used definition of bullying developed by Olweus (Olweus, 1993; 1994). The definition, however, also attempts to address some of the current critiques, especially those arguing that a single act of aggression can be bullying (Arora, 1996; Finkelhor, Turner, & Hamby, 2012; Olweus, 1993).

In order to support the use of the uniform definition, the context, modes, and types of bullying are defined along with the key terms in the definition such as aggression, power imbalance, and harm. As with the other CDC uniform definition documents, (Basile & Saltzman, 2002; Crosby, Ortega, & Melanson, 2011; Leeb, Paulozzi, Melanson, Simon, & Arias, 2008; Parks, Annest, Hill, & Karch, 2012; Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelley, 1999) this initial release of *Bullying Surveillance Among Youths: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0* is a starting point that will need to be revised periodically as more becomes known about bullying.

Definition of Bullying Among Youths

Bullying is any **unwanted aggressive behavior(s)** by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners⁶ that involves an **observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated**. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational **harm**.

Modes and Types of Bullying

Modes of Bullying

1) Direct: aggressive behavior(s) that occur in the presence of the targeted youth. Examples of direct aggression include but are not limited to face-to-face interaction, such as pushing the targeted youth or directing harmful written or verbal communication at a youth.

2) Indirect: aggressive behavior(s) that are not directly communicated to the targeted youth. Examples of indirect aggression include but are not limited to spreading false and/or harmful rumors or communicating harmful rumors electronically.

Types of Bullying

1) Physical: the use of physical force by the perpetrator against the targeted youth. Examples include but are not limited to behaviors such as hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, tripping, and pushing.

2) Verbal: oral or written communication by the perpetrator against the targeted youth that causes him or her harm. Examples include but are not limited to mean taunting, calling the youth names, threatening or offensive written notes or hand gestures, inappropriate sexual comments, or threatening the youth verbally.

3) Relational: behaviors by a perpetrator designed to harm the reputation and relationships of the targeted youth. Direct relational bullying includes but is not limited to efforts to isolate the targeted youth by keeping him or her from interacting with their peers or ignoring them. Indirect relational bullying includes but is not limited to spreading false and/or harmful rumors, publicly writing derogatory comments, or posting embarrassing images in a physical or electronic space without the target youth's permission or knowledge.

6. The current uniform definition of bullying excludes sibling violence and violence that occurs within the context of an intimate or dating relationship. The different forms of violence (e.g., sibling violence, teen dating violence, intimate partner violence) can include aggression that is physical, sexual, or psychological (e.g., verbal, belittling, isolating, coercive). However, the context and uniquely dynamic nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in which these acts occur is different from that of peer violence (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). Consequently, it is important to assess teen dating violence and sibling violence separately from bullying in order to establish separate prevalence estimates and to understand the patterns and dynamics involved. The CDC defines teen dating violence as “the physical, sexual, or psychological/emotional violence within a dating relationship, as well as stalking” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

4) Damage to Property: theft, alteration or damaging of the target youth's property by the perpetrator to cause harm. These behaviors can include but are not limited to taking a youth's personal property and refusing to give it back, destroying a youth's property in their presence, or deleting personal electronic information.

Context of Bullying

Bullying may occur within multiple contexts such as at school and school events, travelling to and from school, a youth's neighborhood, or on the Internet. Within these contexts bullying can include a range of behaviors such as physical aggression, verbal aggression, efforts to isolate or harm a youth by attacking his or her relationships with others, or damaging property.

Bullying that occurs using technology is considered electronic bullying and is viewed as a context or location, such as a school, where verbal, relational, and property (e.g., deleting personal data) bullying occurs through electronic means. Electronic bullying can be identified using the general definition of bullying.⁷

Bullying is often witnessed or known about by other youth who may also be harmed as a result. Because bullying is often witnessed, the response to bullying by adults and youth (e.g., supporting the targeted youth, watching and not intervening, or supporting the perpetrator) may encourage or discourage bullying behaviors.

Key Terms

Youth are school-aged individuals 5 to 18 years of age.

Unwanted means that the targeted youth wants the aggressive behaviors by the perpetrator to stop. For instance, two youths may enjoy taunting or making fun of each other in a playful manner. This should not be considered bullying.

Aggressive behavior is the intentional use of harmful behavior(s), threatened or actual, against another youth. Instead of attempting to assess whether the perpetrator intended for the victim to experience an injury as a result of the bullying behavior, intentionality can be captured by assessing the perpetrator's intent to use harmful behaviors against the targeted youth. For instance, telling damaging rumors about a youth, threatening another youth, or shoving another youth would be considered intentional because the perpetrator is using harmful behaviors against another youth. This approach to measuring intentionality is consistent with how the CDC and the World Health Organization measure other types of violence (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

Has occurred multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated means that the youth experiences multiple incidents of aggression perpetrated by a single youth or group of youths over a specified time period or there is strong concern a single aggressive behavior by a youth or group of youths has a high likelihood of being followed by more incidents of aggression. Repeated aggression that involves different perpetrators and is perceived as unrelated by the youth should not be considered repeated. If the youth, however, experiences multiple separate incidents of aggression over time, this is considered repeated if the targeted youth perceives the aggression as related even if the perpetrator(s) changes across the incidents and no single perpetrator is involved in multiple incidents.

A power imbalance is the attempt by the perpetrator(s) to use observed or perceived personal or situational characteristics to exert control over the targeted youth's behavior or limit the victim's ability to respond or stop their aggression. The power imbalance should not be used to label certain children "powerless" or "powerful," but instead is designed to capture power differences that exist in a certain relationship at a specific time. Power imbalances can change over time and across situations even when they involve the same people. The use of violence or threats of violence may create or enhance an existing power imbalance.

Harm is a range of negative experiences or injuries and can include a) physical cuts, bruises or pain, b) psychological consequences such as feelings of distress, depression or anxiety, c) social damage to reputation or relationship, and/or d) limits to educational opportunities through increased absenteeism, dropping out of school, having difficulty concentrating in class, and poor academic performance.

7. See the Discussion section in Core Data Element 1.12 for information on key considerations to address when measuring electronic bullying.

SECTION 3: CONSIDERATIONS WHEN GATHERING DATA ON BULLYING USING THE UNIFORM DEFINITION

Systematically gathering data on bullying to determine the magnitude, scope, and characteristics of bullying and tracking trends over time with a uniform definition is important to support research, prevention, and response efforts. A few key considerations when gathering data on bullying in your community or school are highlighted below.

An important first step in gathering data on bullying using the uniform bullying definition and recommended data elements is documenting the extent to which the definition can be applied to the real world and captures the behaviors it is meant to assess. The uniform definition is a technical definition and cannot be used verbatim in questionnaires or other data collection tools. However, the concepts described in the definition and data elements can be converted into survey items or data collection protocols. The data elements section provides information to assist with this process. Users, however, will need to select the most appropriate strategies for translating the definition to use in their data collection systems.

It is important that the uniform definition and recommended data elements be tested with diverse populations and that the design, implementation, and interpretation of data on bullying be informed by emerging findings in the field. Thus, field studies or pilot tests are needed to gauge the usefulness of the uniform bullying definition and recommended data elements, ensure their validity, assess feasibility and cost, and identify adaptations needed to work in various settings.

Many existing surveillance systems that capture information on bullying rely on self-reports of youths because this method is feasible, often cost-effective, and collects information on youths' direct experience of bullying. When resources are available, multiple methods such as peer or adult reports may provide additional insights into the prevalence of bullying and address criticisms of self-report assessments of bullying (Furlong, Sharkey, Felix, Tanigawa, & Green, 2010).

Also, ethical, privacy, legal, and safety issues are important to consider when gathering data on bullying. No data should be collected or stored in a manner that could jeopardize an individual's safety or privacy. If data from one system is to be linked with other data sources, consideration should be given to the creation and use of mechanisms such as encryption of unique identifiers to further ensure an individual's safety. Educational agencies or institutions must take special care to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) when collecting, storing, maintaining, and sharing data that involves the use of students' education records. These requirements are described in Appendix A.

Finally, assessment of bullying should be integrated into broader routine monitoring systems (e.g., surveillance of health or multiple types of youth violence) when possible. This helps make bullying surveillance routine, takes advantage of existing resources, and assists in understanding the linkage of bullying with other issues. In some cases, monitoring systems for gathering information on bullying will need to be established.

SECTION 4: RECOMMENDED DATA ELEMENTS FOR BULLYING

4.1 Purpose of the Data Elements

This section lists and describes information, or data elements, that are useful to collect when monitoring bullying for prevention purposes. The data elements are classified as core and expanded. The core data elements include information that is critical to assess in order to determine the magnitude, scope, and characteristics of the bullying problem. Many of these core data elements, especially demographic information such as sex, race, and ethnicity, are routinely collected in most surveillance systems. However, resources may not be available to collect all the core data elements (e.g., limited number of questions available on a survey) or some data elements may be inappropriate to collect from certain youth, data sources, or contexts. In these instances, emphasis should be placed on collecting high quality information to capture the prevalence of bullying.

If resources allow, collection of the expanded data elements—which includes the core data elements—will yield additional information about the context and perpetration of bullying. For instance, these elements collect information about where and when bullying occurs and whether peers and adults witnessing bullying respond by intervening to stop it, watching it, encouraging it, or ignoring it. The context of why and how the monitoring data is being collected and used should drive the selection of expanded data elements. For instance, a school that is implementing an intervention that encourages peers and adults to intervene when they witness bullying may want to collect expanded data elements related to witnesses' responses to bullying. A large number of expanded data elements are provided so users of this manual can select the subset of elements that are most relevant to their initiatives. No surveillance system is expected to collect information on all of the expanded data elements.

The order in which the data elements are listed within the core and expanded section is not intended to suggest a hierarchy; users should prioritize inclusion based on the data element descriptions and their needs and context.

4.2 Explanation of a Data Element and its Description

Each data element is accompanied by a description that includes nine categories such as its definition and suggested response categories to assist in their use. Data elements are not variables and information on the data elements may be collected by using single or multiple questions on a survey or may be created by using a single field or combining multiple fields in an administrative database. Data elements, however, may inform the design of instruments or protocols to collect information on bullying.

Definition/Description: This provides a definition of the data element.

Uses: This describes why it is important to collect the data element.

Type of Data Element: This classifies the data element as either core or expanded. A core data element is viewed as critical information that all data collections systems should try to collect in order to track the magnitude, scope, and characteristics of bullying. Expanded data elements refer to information that would be useful to collect if resources are available and relevant to the purpose of the monitoring system.

Discussion: This provides a brief discussion of the data element that may include key considerations such as guidelines, advice, or challenges when assessing the data element, more information on why the data element is important, or other background information on the usage of the data element.

Data Type: This lists whether the data element is usually collected and stored as a text or numeric variable. Text means that the information associated with this data element is grouped into distinct categories such as the location where bullying occurred (e.g., hallway, cafeteria,) and numbers associated with a category have no mathematical meaning (e.g., 2 is not twice as big as 1). In contrast, numbers associated with numerical data elements have mathematical meaning. Numeric can refer to continuous and ordinal data.

Respondent Can Provide Multiple Answers: This indicates when a data element should only have one response or may have multiple responses. For instance, the frequency of being bullied should only have a single numeric response. In response to questions assessing the perceived reasons for bullying, a respondent might provide multiple reasons such as physical appearance, demographic characteristics, or personality traits. A “Yes” indicates that there can be multiple responses, and all appropriate response categories should be coded. A “No” indicates that only one response should be provided.

Field Values/Coding Instructions: This provides a list of suggested response categories for each data element to inform data collection as well as facilitate comparisons across data collection systems. These response categories are suggestions and the user will need to consider their own context and goals as well as measurement improvements when finalizing their response categories. In some instances, more detailed explanations may precede the presentation of the response categories. Although the response categories for some data elements can be used directly in survey questions (see *Data Standards or Guidelines*), the response categories are not designed to be directly used in survey instruments. Multiple questions and changes in the wording of the response categories will usually be required to accurately collect the information.

Data Standards or Guidelines: The federal government has developed measurement standards and guidelines for some data elements, especially those measuring the demographic characteristics of youths. This field lists the standard and guideline documents relevant to this data element. Descriptions of the standards or guidelines are provided in the *Discussion* and *Field Values/Code Instructions* fields.

Other References: This lists other references that provided information on the response categories for the data element or guidance on measuring the data element.