

No Bullies Allowed!

October 4 through 10 is National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week. Across the U.S., communities are working to make sure schools are caring environments.

Nobody likes to be bullied. Name-calling, pushing or hitting, or leaving out other kids, just plain hurts. Cyberbullying when bullies send kids mean text or online messages over and over again hurts too.

Forty-four states have passed laws that aim to reduce bullying in schools. But according to the National Center for Education Statistics, it still happens far too often. Principals of nearly one out of four U.S. public schools report that bullying occurs every day or every week.

October 4 through 10 is National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week. Families, schools and others will work together to stop the hurtful behavior. "When adults all work together and work with kids we can reduce bullying," says Sue Limber, an expert on school bullying and a professor at Clemson University, in South Carolina.

Many schools promote anti-bullying programs all year long. The Olweus (ol-vey-us) Bullying Prevention Program is used by thousands of schools around the world. Limber says it is successful because it "recognizes that everyone in the school has a role to play in stopping bullying especially bystanders." Bystanders are those who stand by and do nothing while others are being bullied (see "Bullying Is Not Cool").

The Doctor Is In

The nation's largest group of pediatricians recently noted that the Olweus program has been successful in Scandinavia, in northern Europe. In July, the American Academy of Pediatrics published, for the first time, official guidelines for what pediatricians should know about bullying and what they should do to prevent it from happening among kids. The group said that the Olweus program is unique in addressing the roles of three different groups: bullies, victims and bystanders.

The new guidelines also advise pediatricians to raise awareness of bullying and to help kids and their families get help. So don't be surprised if your doctor asks you if you've seen bullying at school and offers tips for what you should do about it.

Kids Speak Up

When Erika Squires, 10, noticed kids teasing a boy who was new to her school in New Braunfels, Texas, she told her mother. Her mother reported it to the guidance counselor, who met with students to remind them about how to be welcoming to everyone.

Walter S. Boardman Elementary, in Oceanside, New York, involves students daily in creating a caring school environment. Sixth graders selected to serve as the school's Caring Majority Ambassadors help set the tone. The ambassadors visit classrooms regularly to spread anti-bullying messages.

On September 29, seventh grader Dana Gelb and other Caring Majority members from last year returned to Boardman to train this year's student leaders. "I still remember and use the lessons I learned in first grade," says Dana.

You can take the Caring Majority's pledge (see "A Promise to Care"). Dana and the Boardman students hope the lessons will stay with you, too.