

# Empowering Advocacy: Navigating Support Plans, Addressing Bullying, and Accessing School-Based Resources

Presented by:  
Autumn Brown, LCSW-S, Registered Play Therapist Supervisor™  
Claire McLoughlin, M.Ed.

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*Decoding the gray areas*
- 2 **Bullying in Schools**  
*What the data- and- students- say.*
- 3 **The Bully-Victim Continuum**  
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## Agenda

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# Is It Bullying?

*Decoding the gray areas*

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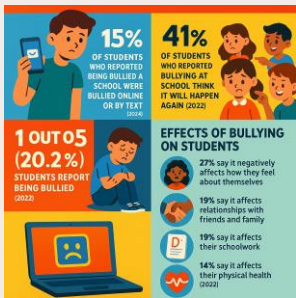


# Bullying in Schools

What the data-and students- say.

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**15%** OF STUDENTS WHO REPORTED BEING BULLIED AT SCHOOL WERE BULLIED ONLINE OR BY TEXT (2022)

**41%** OF STUDENTS WHO REPORTED BULLYING AT SCHOOL THINK IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN (2022)

**1 OUT OF 5 (20.2%)** STUDENTS REPORT BEING BULLIED (2022)

**EFFECTS OF BULLYING ON STUDENTS**

- 27% say it negatively affects how they feel about themselves
- 19% say it affects relationships with friends and family
- 19% say it affects their schoolwork
- 14% say it affects their physical health (2022)

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2024)  
(National Center for Education Statistics, 2022)

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## Definition of Bullying

<p>The behavior is aggressive, unwanted and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hurts or harms another person physically or emotionally,</li> <li>those targeted by the behavior have difficulty stopping the action directed at them and struggle to defend themselves, and</li> </ul>	<p>There is a real or perceived "imbalance of power" which is used to control or harm others and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the student demonstrating the bullying behavior can have more "power" in ways such as higher social status, is physically larger, has access to embarrassing information, or is emotionally intimidating, and</li> </ul>	<p>The behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the student demonstrating bullying behavior have access to the other student</li> </ul>	<p>Important factors to consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of bullying</li> <li>Distinction about amount and duration</li> <li>Perception of aggression</li> <li>Intent versus impact</li> <li>Implications for all students</li> <li>Additional factors</li> </ul>
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(PACER Center, 2024; Texas Education Agency, 2024)

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Students who experience bullying are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school.

<https://www.childrenshealth.org>

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### Warning Signs of Bullying in Students: A Guide for Educators and Counselors

- Isolation from peers, reluctance to participate in group activities
- Fear of riding the bus or attending certain classes.
- Chronic feelings of shame, guilt, or humiliation.
- Avoidant or perfectionistic behavior
- Codependent or people-pleasing tendencies.

#### PHYSICAL INJURIES

**Unexplained bruises**

**Being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school**

**A change in how they are dining at school, including a dip in grades or not handing homework in**

**Asking for, or stealing money (to give to whoever's bullying them)**

(American Psychological Association [APA], 2023)

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### Intersections: Bullying & Incarceration

**BULLYING** → **SCHOOL DISCIPLINE** → **PRISON**

The **U.S. incarceration rate in 2022** was about **541 per 100,000**, ranking fifth globally.

Bullying in corrections, the overlap of trauma and misbehavior, and school-disciplinary pathways feeding into incarceration.

Victimization and perpetration in childhood are linked to a higher risk of criminal behavior in adulthood.

(Aplin, Ghadigbi, & Kahrman, 2021)

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## The Role of Therapists and Educators

*Partners in prevention.*

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### STOP BULLYING

**Train and educate school personnel:** Counselors lead professional development for teachers, administrators, and staff to ensure consistent response, awareness of early warning signs, and coordinated intervention strategies (Bradshaw, 2020).

**Engage parents and guardians:** Family involvement through school-based family counseling or systemic-family approaches may help support victims in multiple settings, reinforce strategies at home, and strengthen protective relationships (Berger et al., 2021).

**Prioritizing Self-Care as an Educator: A Powerful Tool Against Bullying**  
Taking care of yourself as a school representative, teacher, or educator is one of the most valuable tools in preventing and addressing bullying. When you prioritize your own well-being, you enhance your ability to respond with clarity, compassion, and consistency.

Continual professional development, emotional regulation, and access to up-to-date resources equip you to better support students. Staying informed and emotionally grounded makes a tremendous difference—not only in how bullying is managed, but in the positive school climate you help cultivate.

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### Programs in Motion

## SAY SOMETHING by Sandy Hook Promise

**What is the Say Something Program?**  
A violence prevention program to empower students in grades 5–12 to recognize warning signs and threats of potential violence and to act immediately by saving a trusted adult. (Sandy Hook Promise, 2023)

**Why It Matters**  
 80% of school shooters told someone of their plans beforehand (Sandy Hook Promise, 2023)  
 Early intervention can prevent tragedies (Sandy Hook Promise, 2023)

**Core Program Elements**

- Recognize**: Teach students to identify warning signs, especially on social media
- Respond**: Encourage students to report concerns to a trusted adult or an anonymous system
- Reinforce**: Scholers adopt protocols and reinforce the message with staff involvement (2023)

**Implementation Impact**

- Increased help-seeking behavior
- Builds a sense of shared responsibility and community
- Reduces the bystander effect (Cornell & Mayer, 2022)
- Prevention begins with education, awareness, and connection.

(Sandy Hook Promise, n.d.)

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Schools with strong character education programs consistently show **higher academic achievement**, including improved standardized test scores and grades (Wang et al., 2025; Viera Trevisan et al., 2024)

Recent literature emphasizes that character education significantly fosters **empathy, social responsibility, and value-driven behavior** (Hanafiah et al., 2024)

Schools embedding moral reasoning and social emotional learning report increases in **self-esteem, resilience, and interpersonal skills**, across ages (Positive Action, 2024).

Students exposed to sustained character education are more likely to demonstrate **critical thinking, adaptability, and ethical leadership**, preparing them for societal and global participation (Viera Trevisan et al., 2024)

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### Character Growth Through School Years

Early Childhood / Elementary	Middle School	High School
Classroom-level interventions like the <b>Good Behavior Game</b> foster <b>early self-regulation, impulse control, and prosocial behavior</b> , with documented knock-on effects into later years.  Social Emotional Learning integration supports emotional coping and improves school readiness and peer interactions even at young ages (Taylor et al., 2025).	At the middle school level, character education enhances students' <b>emotional literacy, responsibility, and peer empathy</b> , reducing misconduct and increasing engagement (Hanafiah et al., 2024)	For older students, character education nurtures <b>intrinsic motivation, grit, and a growth mindset</b> , which are strong predictors of academic success across subjects (Wu et al., 2022)  Research shows that character and Social Emotional Learning interventions at the high school level also lead to decreased emotional distress, improved peer relationships, and higher academic commitment (Taylor et al., 2025; Trained programs).

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### Play It Out: Using Play Therapy to Transform Bullying Awareness into Healing Action

Intervention Type	Format	Key Goal
Child-Centered Play Therapy	Therapist-led	Emotional regulation, self-expression
Tier-2 Play Therapy	School-based group or individual	Targeted support within trauma-informed systems
Filial Play Therapy	Parent-led after training	Strengthen parent-child bond, executive support
Gestalt/Sensory Play	Expressive arts/play	Emotional ownership and resilience

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# Play Therapy in Schools

*Healing through play.*

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### Gestalt therapy-inspired expressive arts activities, Play Therapy Activities

<p><b>Parts of Me Collage</b></p> <p><b>Goal:</b> Promote integration of different aspects of self.</p> <p><b>How:</b> Students create a collage using magazines, drawings, or stickers that represent different "parts" of themselves (e.g., student, sibling, friend, dreamer, worrier, leader).</p> <p>Use Gestalt dialogue techniques to let students speak from each part (e.g., "What does the Worrier want to say to the Dreamer?").</p> <p>Discussion can focus on accepting and integrating all parts.</p> <p><b>WHO AM I?</b></p>	<p><b>Feelings in the Body (Somatic Mapping)</b></p> <p><b>Goal:</b> Help students tune into physical sensations tied to emotions.</p> <p><b>How:</b> Give students a body outline on paper.</p> <p>Ask them to color or mark where they "feel" emotions in their body using colors and symbols (e.g., red in the stomach for anger, blue in the heart for sadness). Use prompts like: "What does it feel like when you're nervous at school?" or "Where do you feel joy?"</p> <p>Facilitate discussion or journaling after the art is completed</p> 
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PlayStrong Institute (2024)

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### Tier-2 Play Therapy School-Based Activities

<p><b>Feelings Jenga</b></p> <p><b>Goal:</b> Build emotional vocabulary and emotional regulation.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Use a Jenga set and write a feeling or prompt on each block (e.g., "Describe a time you felt proud," "show a face that feels worried," "What helps you calm down?"). As the child pulls each block, they respond to the prompt. The therapist provides guidance, models emotional regulation, and helps the child connect feelings to actions.</p> <p><b>Why It Works:</b> Directive, structured activities like this help children with internalizing or externalizing symptoms improve emotion identification and build coping skills.</p> <p>(Cook et al., 2021)</p> 	<p><b>Coping Skills Bear</b></p> <p><b>Goal:</b> Strengthen self-regulation and coping strategies.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> The child decorates a bear outline and then adds "tools" to its paws and belly—each representing a coping skill (e.g., deep breathing, squeezing a stress ball, asking for help). The therapist introduces one coping tool at a time through modeling and role-play, reinforcing use during emotional moments.</p> <p><b>Why It Works:</b> Coping skills mapping helps at-risk children internalize calming tools in a developmentally appropriate and concrete way.</p> <p>(Swank et al., 2020)</p> 
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### "Together We Build"

A Collaborative Story & Art Activity

**Goal:** To strengthen the parent-child bond through shared storytelling, imagination, and creativity, promoting secure attachment, emotional expression, and positive communication.

**Description:** Parents and children co-create a story and visual representation (drawing, collage, or diorama) during a facilitated 30–45-minute session. The process is non-directive, allowing the child to lead with imaginative ideas while the parent supports, listens, and co-creates.

**Materials Needed:**

- Blank storyboards or large paper
- Crayons, markers, glue, stickers, collage materials
- Optional: building blocks or felt characters

**Facilitator Role:**

- Set the tone with a short mindfulness or grounding exercise
- Encourage parents to let the child lead while staying emotionally available
- Reflect themes of connection, safety, and joy in the child's narrative

**School-Based Implementation:**

- Host this during parent involvement days or family engagement nights
- Partner with school counselors or therapists to guide reflection afterward
- Provide a take-home version for continued bonding

(Falkner et al., 2021)

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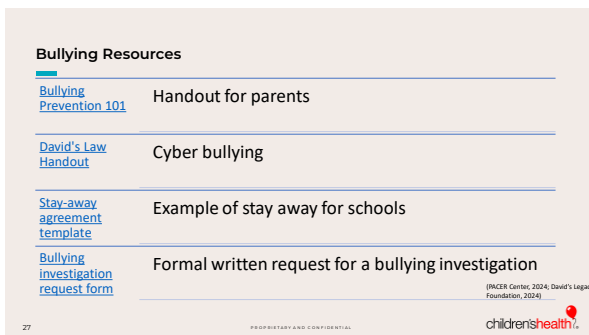
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## SECTION 504 vs. IDEA

SECTION 504	IDEA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES</li> <li>PROVIDES ACCOMMODATIONS IN GENERAL EDUCATION</li> <li>SERVES INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES OF ALL AGES</li> <li>REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ENSURES SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES</li> <li>PROVIDES SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION AND RELATED SERVICES</li> <li>SERVES STUDENTS AGED 3-21</li> <li>INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT OF 1990</li> </ul>

(Mightlow, 2024, Texas Education Agency, 2024)

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## 504 Plan or Special Education?

Initially, a 504 plan should be considered

Students with psychiatric disorders can have a range of abilities and/or deficiencies.

- Some may need more intensive support and specially designed instruction.

If student requires more specially designed instruction, consideration for an IIE may be needed.

Possible eligibilities under SPED

- Other Health Impairment and/or
- Emotional Disability

(Texas Education Agency, 2024)

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## Requesting Special Education Evaluation

**Written request by parent**

- 15 school days
- School MUST reply in writing

**School agrees to evaluate**

- Parent signs consent
- 45 school days to complete evaluation
- 30 calendar days to hold ARD

**ARD meeting**

- Review IIE
- Create IEP/BIP
- Implement IEP
- Update annually

(Texas Education Agency, 2024)

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## Requesting a Section 504 Plan

**Written Request for 504 Plan**

- No firm timeline
- MUST have a diagnosis letter from a physician

**School Holds Meeting**

- Parent not a required member
- School must notify parent that a plan was made

**Implement 504**

Should be updated annually

(Texas Education Agency, 2024)

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### BEHAVIOR ACCOMMODATIONS

**EXTRA TIME**

**EARLY DISMISSAL**

**EXIT**

**IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK**

**PREFERENTIAL SEATING**

**SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING**

**COUNSELING SERVICES**

**DAILY CHECK-INS WITH TRUSTED STAFF**

**FREQUENT REMINDERS**

**POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT**

**QUIET PLACE TO REGAIN COMPOSURE**

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### How can Children's Health School Services help?

- Facilitate communication between schools, home, and clinic
- Collaborate with the medical team to discuss student needs
- Gather medical documentation needed for schools
- Create a transition letter/patient school plan
- Initiate a 504 Plan/FIE
- Plan educational programming
- Attend meetings if needed
- Patient outreach
- Teacher/Staff training

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### Imprints of Hurt Activity

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### Any Questions?

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