Bullying Prevention 101 for Schools:
Dos and Don'ts

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This document provides a list of dos and don'ts for schools in developing anti-bullying practices and policies. Section I outlines overall best practices and objectives for addressing school bullying. Section II provides a deeper dive in specific areas for intervention, and practice and policy development, including: a) school climate, b) curricula, and c) school policy. The final section includes a list of steps that schools should *not* take in their efforts to confront bullying.

The purpose of this document is to provide concrete ways in which schools 1) can assess if they're doing the right things; 2) have tactical recommendations aimed at improving their school culture, curricula, and school policies. Findings are grounded in research findings on actions and activities that have been shown to help schools improve anti-bullying efforts.

SCHOOL CHECKLIST—DOS

I. Overall Best Practices/Objectives for Addressing School Bullying

- Change the school climate (*see* Section II. A #1-2)
- Assess the prevalence and types of bullying/victimization (*see* Section II. A #4)
- Train ALL staff in an ongoing way
- Create an anti-bullying advisory team
- Actively include staff, parents, and students
- Disseminate clear rules and consequences
- Increase adult engagement and supervision
- Provide data-based interventions that are consistent for individual students and among the student body
- Allot class time to focus on social emotional learning

All of these efforts must be continuous and reassessed on a regular basis.

II. Specific Areas for Intervention and Practice and Policy Development

These recommendations should be implemented in a way that is consistent with the anti-bullying law of the state in which the school is located, as well as with other relevant state and federal laws. School officials must familiarize themselves with these legal requirements.

A. School Climate

1) Establish a multi-disciplinary team that includes an administrator, counselor, educator, IT expertise, and student(s) charged with establishing, implementing & maintaining a culture of respect.

2) Engage students to come up with, design, and implement creative solutions and interventions, including, for example, events, public awareness campaigns to address school climate problems (bullying, cliques, judging/racism/homophobia, etc.). [*e.g., see* "Ideas for Students" document]

3) Implement evidence-based non-punitive programs to handle peer conflict – including "drama" that escalates – by combining conflict resolution, counseling, and peer mentoring programs. This can be achieved by implementing a holistic prevention and

intervention program that integrates school climate, curricula, and school policy. [*see* "Implementing Bullying Prevention Programs in Schools"].

4) Regularly assess the evolution of the school culture through administering well-established surveys. [*e.g., see* Bully Survey www.bullysurvey.com] Involve students in the assessment process so that they can help understand the dynamics in their school while also providing feedback.

B. Curricula

1) Train administrators, faculty, and all staff in social-emotional learning (SEL) and bullying prevention.

2) Introduce an evidence-based SEL or bullying prevention curriculum, to be implemented as designed. [*see* "Implementing Bullying Prevention Programs in Schools"].

3) Use online resources that are research-driven and promote the translation of research into practice (such as those at http://www.education.com and http://www.stopbullying.gov).

C. School Policy

1) Design a holistic anti-bullying school policy that includes the following steps:

   a) Work with students and the community to create a clear, data-informed school policy based on generating a culture of respect (i.e., raising awareness/educating and establishing respectful social norms, or social norms that marginalize social cruelty) and informed by the inputs of student government and/or cultural groups.

   b) To the extent consistent with bullying definitions required by state law, use a research-driven definition of bullying to describe bullying behaviors.

   c) Refer to state anti-bullying law and to state-level model policies so your policy is in sync with state law and policies.

   d) Clearly outline reporting for a bullying incident, including a system of checks-and-balances to make sure that there isn't inaccurate reporting.

   e) Set disciplinary responses that are clear and fair; make these mechanisms publicly available to students, parents, and staff.

   f) Conduct incident investigations by a multidisciplinary team that includes students and is in alignment with positive culture development.

   g) Make sure *all* students have good access to professional mental healthcare. It is critical that mental health services are available either at school, or that the school has established links to community mental health resources.

   h) Provide social, emotional, and mental health assistance and counseling for *both* victims of bullying and those who perpetuate it.

   i) Provide training and prevention procedures for all staff, community members, and students who will be a part of this process.

SCHOOL CHECKLIST—DON'TS

III. Recommendations for what *NOT* to Do in Addressing School Bullying

1) DON'T handle your community's bullying concerns with a one-time student assembly.
2) DON'T try to scare students with frightening videos, overly dramatic statistics, and a focus on suicide as the inevitable outcome of bullying.
3) DON'T rely only on simplistic slogans or stereotypes ("mean girls" or "lunch money thief").
4) DON'T rely on inflexible strict punishment or zero-tolerance policies to improve the bullying situation in your school.