

NO BULLY SOLUTION TEAM: OUTCOMES EVALUATION 2012-14

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ABSTRACT

School bullying is increasingly recognized as a cause of short and long-term suffering for its victims and perpetrators, and as a potential impediment to student academic success. Rather than relying on traditional punitive approaches that have been shown to exacerbate the problem, many schools are searching for effective interventions that address bullying in a more meaningful way. No Bully, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, has developed a system that schools implement for preventing and responding to student bullying and harassment. This report evaluates the effectiveness of one part of the No Bully System known as Solution Team. Under Solution Team a teacher or staff member trained by No Bully brings together a group of students that includes the bully, bystanders, and prosocial peers, and leads the team through a series of meetings to end the bullying of one of their peers by cultivating empathy and developing peer-driven solutions. Data from 186 Solution Teams were analyzed for this report. The Solution Team intervention was found to be effective in reducing the intensity of bullying for the target in 93.4% of cases, and in reducing the frequency of bullying for the target in 94.9% of cases. Average feelings of safety at school significantly improved for targets after the Solution Team intervention ($p < .0001$), and in 90.8% of the cases, the adult facilitator reported that the process had been "successful" or "very successful."

FREQUENCY AND IMPACT OF STUDENT BULLYING ACROSS THE U.S.

Research has shown that large numbers of children and youth experience bullying, irrespective of socioeconomic, racial, or urban/rural characteristics (Nansel et al., 2001). Studies find that between 30 and 45 percent of youth experience bullying in their peer group, either as a victim, bully, or both, and that most of this bullying occurs in schools (Dinkes et al., 2009; Kasen, et al., 2004; Nansel et al., 2001). Moreover, frequent victimization (occurring two or more times per month) is estimated to occur at a rate of 20 to 30 percent among students in grades 4-12 (Sawyer, Bradshaw, & O'Brennan, 2008). Being a target of bullying has been found to have a range of mental health impacts, including reduced self-esteem (Hodges & Perry, 1996; Olweus, 1993), depression and anxiety (Craig, 1998), depression with suicidal ideation (Klomek et al., 2008; Roland & Galloway, 2002; Seals & Young, 2003), and alcohol or drug use (Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Thompson, Sims, Kingree, & Windle, 2008). Negative symptoms and behaviors may persist into adulthood; many of these children experience adult depression, suicidality, and criminality (Rigby, 2000), as well as shame, difficulties in forming relationships, and heightened levels of anxiety and depression (Carlisle & Rofes, 2007). In addition to its effects on the psychosocial functioning of youth, bullying has serious consequences for school-related outcomes. Disengagement and low sense of school belonging are highest among students involved in peer victimization (Glew, et al., 2005; Juvonen et al., 2003).

SOLUTIONS TO BULLYING

Not all approaches to address bullying are equally effective. For example, research has shown that punitive "zero tolerance" approaches can exacerbate inequity, worsen school climate, and generally fail to address the underlying issues that fuel bullying and other disruptive behaviors (Evenson, et al., 2009; Harvard University, 2000; Reynolds, et al., 2008). By contrast, approaches that empower youth and give them a role in the resolution of bullying help to create more durable solutions and more positive school climates (Davis & Davis, 2007). One such approach is

Solution Team, which has been developed by the US-based nonprofit, No Bully (Steiger, 2010). Solution Team is the third level within the four-level No Bully System under which a Solution Coach (a member of school faculty or staff trained by No Bully) facilitates students in a process to resolve instances of ongoing bullying or harassment. No Bully describes the Solution Team process as follows:

...a Solution Coach brings together a team of students and leverages their empathy to end the bullying of one of their peers. The educator tells the team they are not in trouble, describes how it feels to be in the target's shoes and asks the team what they can do or stop doing to stop the bullying. The team includes the bully, the bully-followers and positive leaders from the peer group. The educator leads the team through two structured follow-up meetings, the final one attended by the target.

Between 2012 and 2014 No Bully trained 47 schools across California and in Delaware and Hawaii how to implement the No Bully System. This included a foundational training for all staff and faculty, training for key staff and faculty at each school in how to serve as their school's Solution Coaches, parent workshops, and coaching for school leadership. Data from 186 Solution Teams have been compiled and analyzed here to evaluate the effectiveness of Solution Teams to improve experiences for the targets of bullying. Please note that this analysis does not consider the entire No Bully System, only the Solution Team intervention.

METHODS

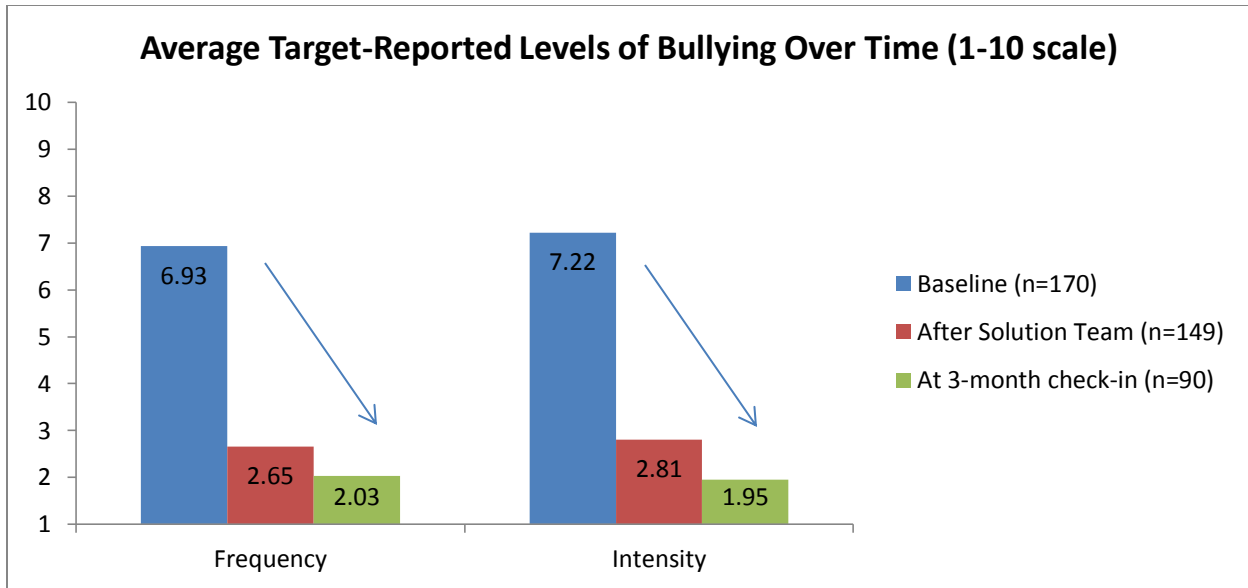
The data for this report were derived from Solution Team Logs. When No Bully trains Solution Coaches it asks them to complete a log each time they attempt to address an instance of bullying using the Solution Team process. The log serves as a record of the process for evaluation purposes, while simultaneously guiding the Solution Coach through the process and thereby helping to ensure fidelity to the model. At three points in the Solution Team process the bullying target is prompted to report on his or her current experience in terms of the intensity and frequency of bullying, and his or her current sense of safety at school. The first data collection point is at the time that the bullying first comes to the attention of the Solution Coach, the second is directly following the Solution Team intervention, and the third is at a follow-up check-in three months later. Data from these logs were shared with the outside evaluator who ran an independent analysis of targets' outcomes.

REDUCTION IN INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY OF BULLYING

Bullying targets who participated in Solution Teams were asked to rate the frequency and intensity of bullying that they were experiencing on a scale of one to ten, with ten being equal to extreme levels and one indicating no bullying at all. At the beginning of the process, before the Solution Team intervention was initiated (Baseline), the average levels of frequency and intensity reported by targets were 6.93 and 7.22, respectively. As shown on the graph below, these average levels dropped precipitously and *significantly*¹ after the Solution Team intervention to 2.65 and 2.81. While not all Solution Coaches followed the protocol to conduct a 3-month check-in (follow-up data were only available in 55% of cases), in those cases where data were available they show further decreases in the average frequency and intensity of bullying (2.83 and 1.95).

The vast majority of targets in the study reported that they had experienced reductions in the intensity and frequency of bullying. Most of the targets (86.4%) reported reduced intensity right after the Solution Team intervention, with 93% reporting reductions at the 3-month check-in point. Targets were even more likely to indicate that the frequency with which they were experiencing bullying had diminished. Most targets (90.2%) reported improvement after the Solution Team, and by the 3-month check-in 94.3% had indicated improvement.

¹ T-tests show the drop between Baseline and post-Solution Team check-in to be statistically significant ($p < .0001$).

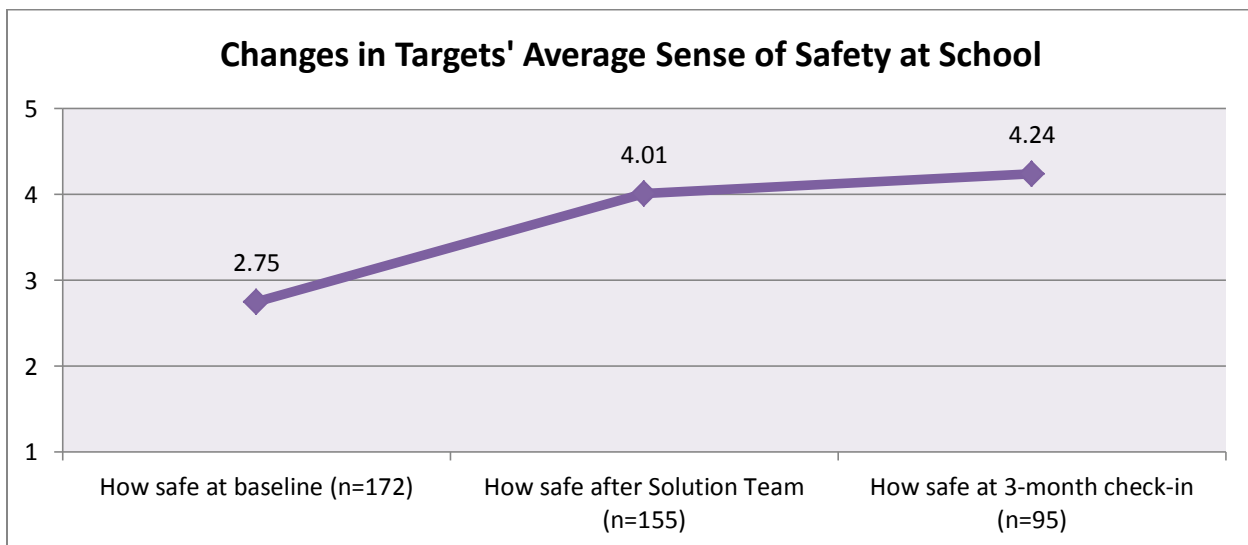


Many participants (43%) experienced *total cessation* of bullying at the time of the Solution Team, as indicated by a frequency score of “1” after the Solution Team. Furthermore, by the 3-month follow-up, a majority (62%) of the students for whom data were available reported that they were no longer experiencing any bullying.

In only 5.9% of the cases where Solution Team was initiated no reductions in intensity or frequency were measured (11 cases) – in these cases either the process was aborted before progress could be made (3 cases) or the frequency and intensity of the bullying simply were not reduced for the target (8 cases).

IMPROVED FEELINGS OF SAFETY AT SCHOOL

The targets on behalf of whom Solution Teams were run were also asked to rate how safe they felt at the three data collection points. In the graph below are the average (mean) self-reported safety scores of Solution Team participants at the three data collection points, with 5 indicating feeling “very safe.” Statistically significant ($p < .0001$) improvements in perceived safety were measured after the Solution Team intervention.



FACILITATOR IMPRESSIONS OF THE PROCESS

In 90.8% of cases the Solution Coach reported that the process had been either “successful” (46.2%) or “very successful” (44.6%).

CONCLUSION

This report provides evidence that school personnel trained in Solution Team achieve a high level of success in remedying and in many cases completely resolving incidents of student bullying. While not part of a large scale randomized study, these findings are promising for a field that is still struggling to find effective interventions. The data suggest that Solution Teams could be a worthwhile tool for schools seeking to improve school climate, engage alternatives to suspension, and mitigate the physical and mental health impacts of bullying.

About the Author: Dr. Moira DeNike holds a doctorate in sociology. She serves as an independent consultant for various nonprofits and school districts in the design and evaluation of programs to improve student outcomes. Some of her work includes planning for the implementation of positive school discipline, evaluating full-service community schools, and supporting schools in the adoption of evidence-based interventions to reduce the use of suspension.

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