

# Bullying Prevention Is Crime Prevention

A research brief by

## FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

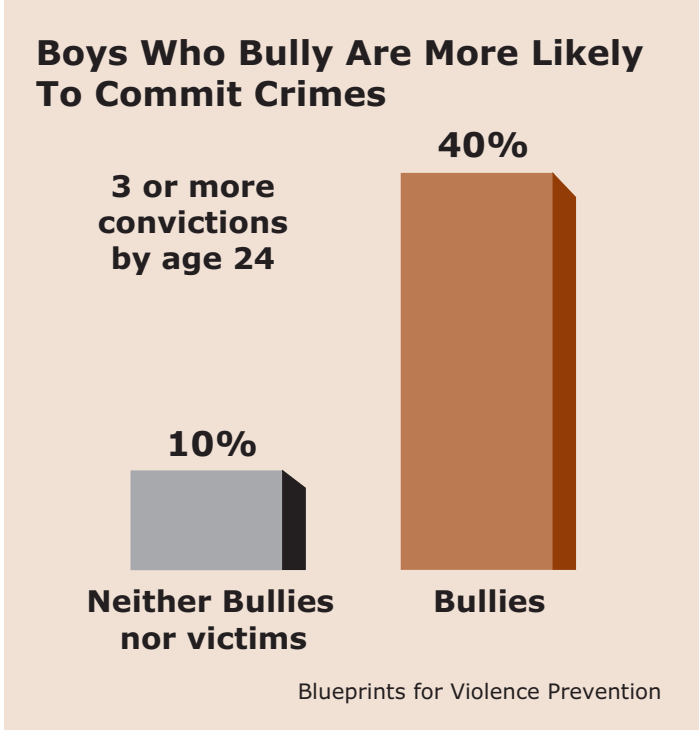
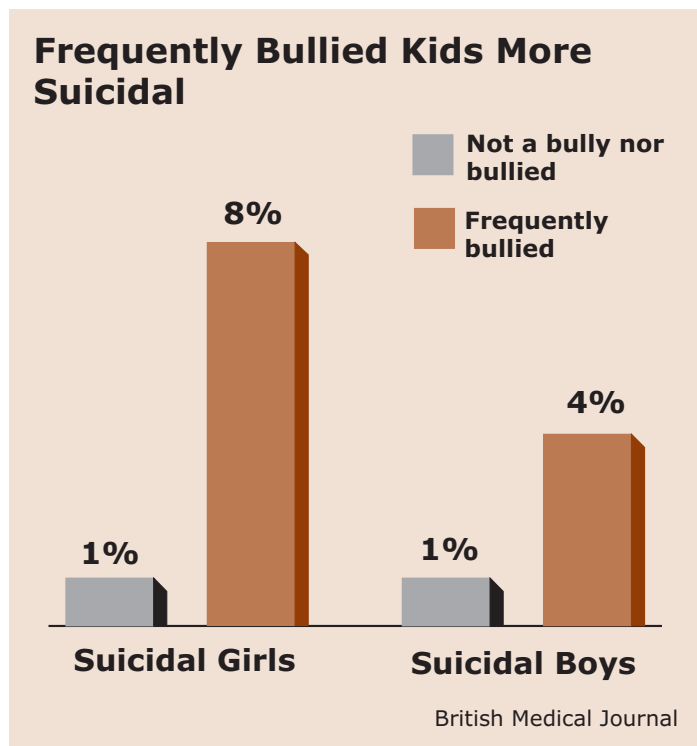
This brief is based on a report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, an anti-crime group of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victims of violence, youth violence experts and leaders of police associations. The report's authors are: James Alan Fox, The Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice, Northeastern University; Delbert S. Elliott, Director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado; Seattle Chief of Police R. Gil Kerlikowske; and FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' president Sanford Newman and research director William Christeson. For the full report and citations for this brief, see [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).

### One in Six Students are Victims of Bullying

Bullying is commonly defined as aggressive behavior or intentional "harm doing," carried out repeatedly, and targeted towards someone less powerful. A national survey found that nearly one in six American children in sixth through tenth grade—more than 3.2 million children—are moderate to frequent victims of bullying each year. And 3.7 million bully other children "sometimes" to "several times a week."

How miserable does bullying make its victims? Compared to their peers, kids who are bullied are five times more likely to be depressed. Bullied boys are four times more likely to be suicidal; bullied girls are eight times more likely to be suicidal.

But recent research shows that successful programs can prevent half or more of bullying. They also reduce the risk of future crime.



### Bullies and Crime

Around the world, bullying is an early warning sign that children and youths may be headed down a path to more serious antisocial behavior. A large U.S. study found that the most serious bullies (those who frequently bullied others both in and out of school) were seven times more likely to report they had carried a weapon to school in the prior month.

And a study conducted in Sweden showed that nearly 60 percent of boys who researchers classified as bullies in grades six through nine were convicted of at least one crime by age 24. Even more dramatic, 40 percent of the boys who were bullies had three or more convictions by age 24.

A Secret Service study of school shootings found that the victims of bullying sometimes lash out and that "almost three-quarters of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured

by others prior to the incident.”

Acting decisively to stop bullying and teach bullies new ways to interact with their peers will prevent much suffering now while reducing future crime.

## Proven Programs Can Cut Bullying in Half — and Sharply Reduce Crime

Research clearly shows that half or more of all bullying can be prevented. Thus far, three model programs that were rigorously designed and tested have been proven to be highly effective.

**The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program**—First developed in Norway after the suicide of a number of boys who had been bullied, the program has now been implemented in several hundred schools in the United States and around the world. It produced a 50 percent reduction in bullying in Norway and a 20 percent reduction in a South Carolina test.

**Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT)**—LIFT shows long-term results are possible from a ten-week anti-aggression program. Compared to LIFT participants, fifth graders whose schools did not receive the program were 59 percent more likely to drink alcohol regularly by eighth grade, and two times more likely to have been arrested during middle school than those who received the program.

**The Incredible Years**—Originally designed for children ages two to eight with high levels of aggressive behavior, the program trains parents

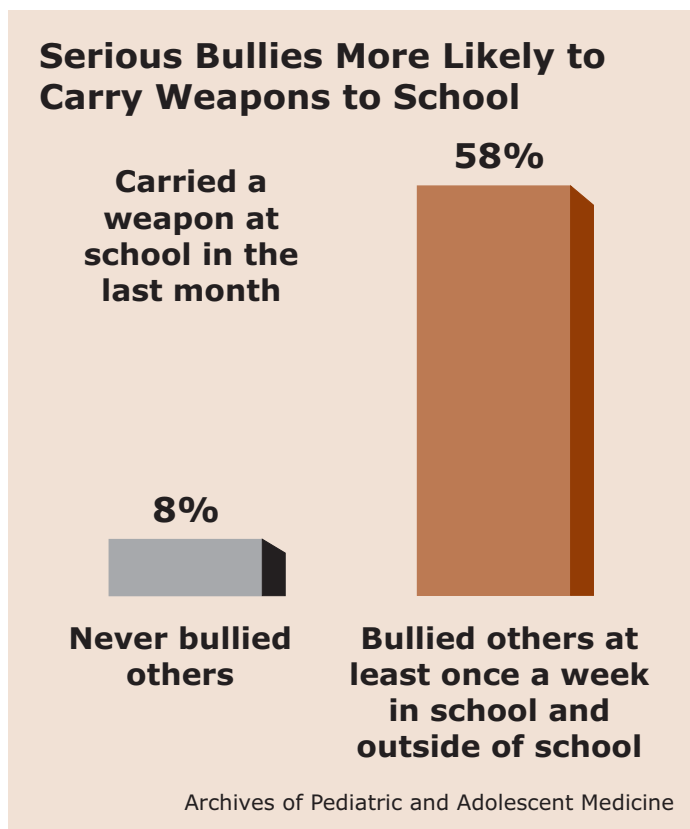
and children in problem-solving skills and non-aggressive social skills. It has stopped the high levels of aggression for approximately two-thirds of the families receiving help. (For contact information on these three programs see: <http://www.fightcrime.org/bullyingcontacts.php>).

## Money Well Spent

Bullying prevention programs are relatively inexpensive for the results they deliver. The upfront training and supply cost for delivering both the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and LIFT programs throughout a school district are only a few thousand dollars. Safe and Drug-Free Schools coordinators, who are currently funded in almost every school district in America, could administer The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Modest funds will typically be needed to implement LIFT and The Incredible Years programs.

These investments will more than pay for themselves by reducing special education costs and future crime. For example, special education classes for 12 years for one child with emotional problems can cost \$100,000 more than regular schooling. Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that each high-risk juvenile prevented from adopting a life of crime could save the country \$1.7 million.

Law enforcement leaders and researchers agree: bullying is not just sad, it's dangerous. Every school should adopt a proven bullying prevention program to save money and lives.



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Source citation and other research are available at [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org)

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## Endnotes:

### **One in Six Students are Victims of Bullying**

#### Definition of bullying:

Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100. See also: Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (1999). Bullying prevention program. In D. S. Elliott (Series Ed.). *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book nine*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

#### One in six American children in sixth through tenth grade are moderate to frequent victims of bullying:

Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.

#### Kids who are bullied are five times more likely to be depressed; boys are four times more likely to be suicidal; girls are eight times more likely to be suicidal:

Hawker, D. S. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychological maladjustment: A meta-analysis review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41(4), 441-445.

### **Bullies and Crime**

#### Secret Service study findings:

Vossekuil, B., Fein, R. A., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). The final report and findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States. Retrieved from the Secret Service Web site: [http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_final_report.pdf)

#### U.S. study findings:

Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.

#### Swedish study findings:

Olweus, D. (1994). Bullying at school: Long-term outcomes for victims and an effective school-based intervention program. In L. R. Huesmann (Ed.), *Aggressive behavior: Current perspectives* (pp. 97-130). New York: Plenum Press. Cited in Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.

### **Proven Programs Can Cut Bullying in Half—And Sharply Reduce Crime**

#### Bullying Prevention Program research results:

Limber, S. (2003, August). Youth development program:

#### Olweus bullying prevention. Retrieved from the Clemson University Web site:

<http://www.clemson.edu/scg/youth/IFNLbully.htm>; Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (1999). Bullying prevention program. In D. S. Elliott (Series Ed.). *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book nine*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

#### Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT) research results:

Eddy, J. M., Reid, J. B., & Fetrow, R. A. (2000). An elementary school-based prevention targeting modifiable antecedents of youth delinquency and violence: Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT). *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8(3), 165-176.

#### Incredible Years research results:

Webster-Stratton, C., Mihalic, S., Fagan, A., Arnold, D., Taylor, T., & Tingley, C. (2001). The Incredible Years: Parent Teacher and Child Training Series. In D. S. Elliott (Series Ed.). *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book eleven*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

### **Money Well Spent**

#### Bullying Prevention and LIFT costs:

These general conclusions are based on: M. Snyder. Personal communication, July 3, 2003. Marlene Snyder, Ph.D., is a trainer with the Clemson University based Bullying Prevention Program; Unpublished materials supplied from the LIFT intervention program by Diana Wilcoxon.

#### Special education classes for 12 years for one child can cost \$100,000 more than regular schooling:

Eddy, M. J., Reid, J.B., Fetrow, R.A., Lathrop, M., & Dickey, C. (in press). The Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT) prevention program for youth antisocial behavior: description, outcomes, and feasibility in the community. In *Outcomes for children and youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities and their families: Program and evaluation best practices* (second edition).

#### Preventing crime saves \$1.7 million:

Cohen, M. A. (1998). The monetary value of saving a high-risk youth. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 14(1), 5-33.