

Webinar: Bullying Prevention & Response When Supporting Refugee Students

Led by: Madina Masumi, Training Officer, Switchboard

March 20, 2024

Transcript

Introduction

Madina Masumi: Welcome everyone to Switchboard's, webinar today on Bullying Prevention and Response When Supporting Refugee Students. We're just going to get started momentarily. Just going to allow for more participants to come in and join us.

Alright, we're going to go ahead and begin because we just have some logistics to cover and a lot of content. So I want to go ahead and get started. Welcome to our webinar on Bullying Prevention and Response When Supporting Refugee Students. Today's webinar is going to run for 60 minutes. It is being recorded and it's brought to you by Switchboard. We are a one-stop resource hub for refugee service providers.

Zoom Orientation

MM: Alright, we're going to go through some quick, Zoom webinar tips for you guys. You guys are joining in on listen only mode today. So we've disabled the chat because the large number of participants that we have joining us, however, you do have the option to send us messages via the Q&A feature. And again, the webinar is going to be for 60 minutes today. It is being recorded. You guys are going to receive an email with this recording, all the slides that we have for today, and of course, our recommended resource list, within 24 hours, hopefully. The webinar transcript, along with the recording will also be posted on Switchboard's website in a few days. And lastly, we kindly ask you guys to complete our webinar satisfaction survey at the end of today's session. It's a really short survey that we have here at Switchboard, and it helps us continue to improve our training and technical assistance offerings to you all.

Today's Speaker

MM: My name is Madina Masumi. I am a training officer with Switchboard. My focus area is on supporting youth and education related training and technical assistance. Prior to joining Switchboard, I worked as a licensed K-12 school counselor, for Fairfax County Public Schools in Northern Virginia. I also bring my unique set of, lived experiences that I've had, as the daughter of Afghan refugees. And in my current role, I often share a lot about what that's been like for me through my own experiences, through the lens of being raised, with a third culture identity. And by third culture, I mean my eastern and western identities. So I'm happy to be here with you all today.

Learning Objectives

MM: Okay. We'll go ahead and jump into our learning objectives. We have a lot of content to cover today. We have three objectives for you guys. So hopefully, by the end of today's session, you will be able to [firstly] discuss the link between core stressors that refugee students may face and bullying. And secondly, describe the rules in bullying and the risk factors to refugee students. And last, we're going to discuss vital strategies and considerations that may help prevent and respond to the bullying of refugee students.



We're going to use an interactive, engagement tool called Slido today. If you guys can just take your phone out and scan that QR code, or you can go to slido.com and enter the number that you see on the screen. And then the question that we have for you guys is, in which setting are you currently employed? Let's get an idea of who is in the space with us today. Okay. I see you guys are already responding. So far, we have a lot of resettlement staff, welcome, welcome. Followed by school-based staff, community-based organizations, and other, I see many people are still responding. Let's just give that a few more seconds.

[pause]

MM: All right. I'll let you guys continue to respond. It looks like we have a lot of resettlement stuff with us today. So we're going to go into our first section. Core stressors for newcomer youth.

What are some core stressors for newcomer youth?

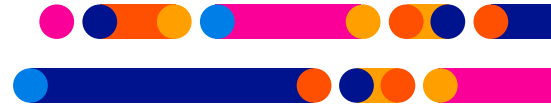
MM: We all know that bullying is a serious issue that affects so many children and youth, but refugee students in particular face a heightened risk of bullying. And this section is going to kind of explain why, we're going to talk about core stressors and the link, it has with bullying. Okay. So when refugee students and their families make the difficult decision to leave their home countries, they potentially face trauma, through various times in their journey. They face it before they even leave their country, potentially during the migration journey. And then, of course, as they begin to resettle in their destination countries.

So as a refugee student begins to resettle into your communities and schools, they're likely going to be experiencing some or possibly all of the stressors that you see on this graphic. And they're broken down into four separate areas. We have trauma, acculturative stress, isolation, and resettlement stressors. It's important to recognize, that every student's experience is going to be different, but when we're working with refugee youth, we have to understand the various stressors and how they might appear if you should see them. All the research tells us that exposure to trauma, which affects refugee children and youth at higher rates than the general population, makes a student more likely to bully others or to be bullied. So if you have a student in a school who's coming in with potential exposure to trauma, this is going to affect their emotional regulation and their ability to interact with other peers. They might start to feel isolated because they're in a new environment with people that don't look like them or understand their language or their culture. And then you mix that with the fact that they might not have access to basic needs or proper healthcare. So these various stressors can potentially create almost like a perfect storm for a student to become the target of bullying or even the one who bullies others.

So in this slide, we see some of the more specific stressors that refugee students potentially experience. These stressors fall into the umbrella of one of the four that I just talked about on the previous slide. We know that the targets of bullying are often students who are perceived to be different in some way. So this is especially the case for refugee students coming into a brand new environment. Again, they've lost their social support. They might not speak English effectively. Their appearance or their behavior might be different than others. And of course, again, we know economic hardship is a sad reality for so many newcomers. So students who have just one of these challenges or stressors I mentioned are going to be vulnerable, right? But imagine having many of these stressors, and this is the case for many newcomers that are entering, our schools.

Also, if students are entering schools in areas where staff members or students are not familiar with refugee students or the experiences that they've been through, or are not ethnically representative for them, it creates an added layer of stress. This was my own personal experience growing up. I was literally the only Afghan and the only Muslim in my entire elementary school. It changed when I went to middle school, but elementary school was rough, right? So teachers and students didn't have understanding of my culture or my beliefs, which obviously made me feel more isolated and unsupported at times. So all these stressors will make refugee, youth and children more vulnerable to face a bullying situation.

Case scenario: what might Amina be experiencing?



MM: All right. I have a case scenario for you guys. I'm going to go ahead and read it. And then in the follow up, we're going to have a Slido to kind of get your feedback on this case scenario. It's about Amina. Amina is a 10-year-old girl from a rural area of Afghanistan, who speaks Pashto and has limited educational background. She has resettled in the US with her family about three months ago, and has been a student at your school ever since. Amina wears a hijab and appears to be quiet. She plays by herself at recess and sits alone at lunch.

Poll Question

So the Slido, we have, again, if you guys can scan the QR code or go to slido.com, what might be some potential stressors Amina could be experiencing?

[pause]

MM: Isolation, right? A lot of you are saying isolation. Obviously, there's language barriers, a new culture. She wears a hijab, right? Her appearance is different. If it's a school where no other students wear hijab or practice Islam, it can be very difficult for her as well. Lack of some emotional support, gap in education history. Yes, these are all wonderful. Trauma, cultural differences. Keep them coming guys. Alienation. Yeah, lots of you guys mentioned isolation. It's really important to be able to recognize the stressors that students are coming in with. We begin to know that as we get to know them individually, and then we can sort of support and find ways to address that, that we can make sure that they are feeling safe. We're going to talk about that obviously in section three. Okay. We can go on to our next slide. And this kind of gets us into bullying nuts and bolts, recognizing rules and risk factors for students.

What is bullying?

MM: So what is bullying? I have done lessons on bullying for both adults, whether it's school staff or parents and children for many years. And it's always baffled me how often, loosely the word bullying is used, right? It's not a word that we can easily throw around, but it happens quite often. People often confuse teasing or even inappropriate behavior with bullying. But three things need to be present for it to constitute bullying. So that's, we're going to talk about that a little bit today. Bullying is unwanted or aggressive behavior towards another person that is, number one, repeated or has the potential to be repeated. Number two, it's intentional. So it's happening on purpose. And number three, it creates a real or a perceived imbalance of power. So all three of these things have to be present for an incident to be considered bullying.

I just really want to make note of that because, sometimes, that's not the case. About 22% of students ages 12 to 18 will experience bullying at some point. It does tend to increase, when students are in middle school, and it tends to decrease in high school. There are several types of bullying. The most common is verbal bullying. It involves saying mean things or writing mean things about someone. Things like teasing, name calling or threatening to cause harm all fit into this category. There's also social bullying. Sometimes it's referred to as relational bullying or relational aggression. And this involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes leaving someone out on purpose, telling others not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors or even publicly embarrassing a person.

And then, the type of bullying that happens, less often, but it's probably the one that children fear the most, is physical bullying. This involves hurting a person's body or their possessions, kicking, spitting, hitting, punching, all fall under physical bullying obviously, or taking or breaking someone's things. And then last, there's cyber bullying, right? This is when it occurs through online or through digital devices. Some examples include sharing a person's private or personal information, or talking about someone through text or social media. That's become a huge issue, obviously posting things about people or their private images. And the dangerous thing about cyber bullying is that it can be harder to notice. Sometimes we don't know it's happening because it tends to happen outside of the school. It's sometimes harder for families to pick up on. And it's difficult to manage because it's online. Unfortunately, 37% of children between the ages of 12 to 17 have experienced some type of online bullying. And that number does, look like it's been increasing, every year. So it's something important for us to know.

What roles do children play in a bullying incident?



MM: All right. The roles in bullying. Most often when bullying happens, people tend to focus on the person who is bullying or the person who's being bullied. But there are so many other roles to consider in a bullying case. Even if a child is not directly involved in bullying, they might be contributing to the behavior. Children who bully, they want and they need an audience. This is where they're getting their power from. This is why it's so important to focus on all the other roles, associated on the child who assists the child, who reinforces. And, children who defend when bullying occurs. When I say child guys, I also mean youth. So it's interchangeable. So children who assist. These children may not start the bullying, but they may encourage the bullying behavior, and sometimes they might even decide to join in. Okay?

Then there's the children who reinforce. These children are not directly involved in the bullying behavior, but they give the bully an audience. They're going to be the ones who are laughing, and sort of cheering on the behavior. And so this also can help the bullying continue, right? Most often, unfortunately, it's very sad and disheartening to see, but when we see recordings of bullying happen that are recorded and that are online, these are the reinforcers who are doing it, right? So then you also have the children who defend these children, actively comfort the child who's being bullied. They may even come to the child's defense when a bullying incident occurs. Less children defend because they don't know how to, they're worried about themselves becoming the next target of bullying. But there are some who defend.

And then last, we have children who fit into the category of outsiders. These children remain separate from the bullying situation. They don't reinforce the bullying behavior, and they don't defend the bullying behavior. Some of them just might watch what's going on, but they don't necessarily, egg on the situation. They don't necessarily provide feedback, about the situation or show that they're on anyone's side. But even so, providing an audience is going to still continue to engage the bullying behavior. Now, outsiders are important because these are the kids that often they do want to help. They do want to do something. This group is often referred to as bystanders. We're going to talk about bystander intervention later. Sometimes, again, they want to help, but they're fearful. They don't know what to do. In all my time as a school counselor, I placed a high emphasis on empowering bystanders, because I think that they hold a lot of power. And most children also fall into this category of being bystanders when a bullying incident occurs.

What are the risk factors for experiencing bullying?

MM: All right, we can move on to the next slide. We're not going to spend too much time on this slide, but providing it to you guys again, and it's going to be in our slide deck, as a basic context on who's more likely to get bullied. We've already reviewed the risk factors for refugee students, right? And that's our focus for today. But the takeaway here, is that students who are bullied are generally perceived as being different. They're perceived as being weaker. They may be struggling socially to make friends and potentially have anxiety or even depression. So makes sense as to why so many of our newcomer populations might be targeted again, right? So they're dealing with this uphill battle. And bullying, obviously, just creates an added layer of stress for these students.

What are the risk factors for bullying others?

MM: Okay. Children or youth, more likely to bully others. There's generally two categories for students who bully in terms of social status, you either have children or youth who are—one, well connected to their peers, they have a lot of social power, popularity and they like to dominate others; or, on the other side of the spectrum, you have students who might be more isolated from their peers, they're less involved in school, they're more likely to be easily pressured by their peers, they might have trouble also identifying people's emotions or feelings. So we also have a list here for you of some factors that are more likely to lead to bullying. Remember, those who bully others, they don't necessarily need to be bigger or stronger as sometimes is stereotyped, it's that power imbalance that can really come from a number of different sources, it can come from their popularity, it can come from their influence, even their economic status, or even sometimes their cognitive ability. So it's often a myth that just because someone is bigger or stronger, that they're going to be the bully.

What are the effects of bullying?



MM: Alright, effects of bullying. It's important to recognize that bullying affects everyone that's involved in a situation, whether it's the student who was bullied, the one who's doing the bullying, or the bystanders. The effects of bullying can unfortunately be life-long, and it can really damage a person's self-esteem, it can cause long-term mental health challenges like anxiety and depression.

I think for most of us, when we go back into a time in our childhood where either maybe we were bullied or maybe we saw someone being bullied, it's one of those things that really gets etched in your mind, and you may even think back to something that you wish you could have done differently because it truly does have lasting effects. One of the immediate effects for students if they're being bullied is going to be decreased academic achievement, and also an increase in absences from school. I would play specifically very close attention to attendance. When I was a counselor, I had a—we were a part of an attendance intervention team and we'd really monitor student attendance on a quarterly basis, and so it's something to consider for you guys if you do work in a school-based setting, because sometimes it's a great way to catch students who might fall through the cracks, if they haven't shared that the reason they're missing school is because they're being bullied or because they're feeling anxious about coming to school. So it's a great way to just sort of catch that or any other issues that they might be going through.

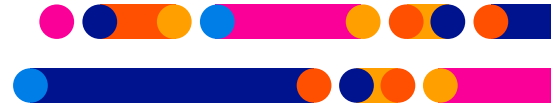
Although it's not as common thankfully, kids who are bullied are at risk of suicide, but I want to point out one thing with this, normally, it's not the bullying alone that would be the cause of students to be more at risk for suicide, there are so many different issues that contribute to a suicide risk. Of course, we know depression, there's a problem at home or with their families, and obviously a history of trauma, but I think it's important to remember that when we think of refugee students, we know that they have so many of these risk factors, so that's really important to know. Specific groups also have an increased risk of suicide, including American Indians, Asian-Americans and LGBTQ+ youth. This risk can be further increased for students who aren't supported by their families, by their peers, by their communities, and obviously their school systems.

How can we support refugee youth and mitigate bullying?

MM: Alright, so we're going to go in now to talk about strategies and considerations, so this is our sort of our final section, and a little bit of our bread and butter, we're going to spend quite some time here, so we're going to think about what can we do to support refugee youth and to effectively prevent and respond to bullying. Many schools and youth serving organizations have policies and guidelines for bullying prevention and for bullying response, but you all as individuals that are here and who have joined today, who—all of you have in common that you work to support refugee youth in some capacity, so you each play an active role in strengthening institutions approach and hopefully the one that you are working for. Alright, so the school-wide initiatives, safe and inclusive school environments. So as a preventative measure, because that's what we're going to talk about first.

Let's begin with the school environment, or if you guys are working in a community-based setting that supports refugee students and youth, you can also examine the initiatives from that lens as well. A climate that is going to be welcoming and thoughtful and creating spaces that promotes safety, that promote trustworthiness and empowerment will help students feel valued and it's going to help them feel like they're in control, that's something that we need our refugee students to feel because there are so many elements for them that are outside of their control, but we need to give them back some of that control. So the important thing here is that it needs to be an entire system-wide approach, whether it's a school, whether it's a community-based environment, you can't create safe and healing spaces in just one classroom, the programs that you put in place, the initiatives, the engagement opportunities that you create have to be implemented with fidelity across the board. So you really have to have buy-in from all staff, from all students and from your community. When establishments have safe and inclusive learning spaces, they really help students in so many ways, as you guys can kind of see from this infographic that we have, so we're going to talk about each of these for a little bit. The first is they create positive relationships.

So building trust with educators, with staff and other students through initiatives like mentoring programs, lunch bunches, after school programs, just different opportunities to be able to reach students who are newcomers, so that you can get to know them, they can get to know you and you can build that rapport and trust. We know that relationships for children, for all children are everything, so if we're with refugee youth and



newcomers, it's even more important, they have to know that you care, they have to know that you want to take time to get to know them.

A sense of self-worth, healing spaces help students become more confident, they become more hopeful about their future, these are all things that we want to provide refugee students with that hope that—because that's what they're here for, that's what they're looking for. So when schools or community-based organizations have initiatives that maybe highlight a student's achievement or allow them to celebrate who they are is very helpful in this regard, it also brings a sense of control, healing spaces and initiatives bring the sense of control, so feeling safe and secure that their day is predictable, they know what to expect, they know what's expected from you and from them, things like visuals, schedules, routine, structure, these are all things that they might be coming from environments that didn't have—that they are likely coming from environments that didn't have that, so providing that sense of control is really going to help them feel safe and secure, and very important for that too.

Sense of belonging, so feeling included, feeling accepted, things like school clubs that highlight a student-specific interest or sports can really enhance the sense of belonging, I think establishments really need to take time to think of different ways to be creative, think of ways to represent a student's culture or their traditions. I want to give you guys a personal example for my own life on this. There's often times when I do webinars where I talk about the concept of a cultural iceberg. So on a cultural iceberg, we have the things at the tip of the iceberg that are surface culture, they're things that we can easily see about someone, like their appearance, maybe if we know what country they're from, we might know some of the foods from that country, or you might know what language they speak, we might know what the flag looks like, but then as we get to know them more, it's the deeper culture, and that's like when you really get into the heart of that person's identity. What are their views towards certain things, what are their attitudes and their perceptions and their values?

And so as an example of that easy surface culture, when I was in elementary school, we had a hall of nations, it was like a hall of flags. And I would walk through this hall daily, many, many, many times, and Afghanistan's flag was never there. I went to the school from K through fifth grade, and every single time I walked through this hall, it's like I would look up hoping to see it, and obviously it wasn't there. I never said anything to anyone. I just felt like, why isn't my country being represented? And a flag is something, like I said, it's that surface level culture, it's something very easy to make somebody feel a sense of belonging, but it wasn't there in my environment. And recently, I was attending a high school orientation for my son, and his school had a display of flags and Afghanistan was there, and he ran up and pointed it out, so I was like, okay, we've come a long way in all these years, I won't tell you guys how many years, but just very simple implementable things where you can incorporate parts of a child's identity, and if you can get to that deep surface culture that's even better. It takes time, obviously to do that.

Safe and inclusive environments help to create intellectual stimulation for students as well. This involves understanding and seeing the value in learning and that you are progressing. For refugee students and newcomers, you have to ensure that you're really being strategic on your instructional design, that you're meeting them where they're at, those are going to be key. We know with refugee students and newcomers that there's often been some type of a disruption to their education and to their learning, so they might be coming in already in a disadvantage or possibly behind academically, so making sure that they feel successful with what they're learning and that they value and own their learning is going to be empowering for them.

And then lastly, there's the concept of windows and mirrors, this helps students really identify with one another through literature. The goal here is that safe and inclusive environments include learning opportunities through books, through stories, where you can read them and learn about individuals who are like you, the characters might represent your culture or your country or your language or something about you, and you can sort of see yourself through the characters, that is like looking in a mirror. But then also equally as empowering is to be able to have the concept of windows, where you read about a person who is not like you, they're completely different than you, and what that does is it helps broaden your knowledge and your horizon about other cultures, about other types of people, and it helps for students to build empathy and understanding. So they're both very important and they really help to create the safe and inclusive environments.

What are six strategies to prevent and respond to bullying?



MM: Alright, we're moving on. This slide talks about six specific strategies which are culturally responsive and trauma-informed to prevent bullying.

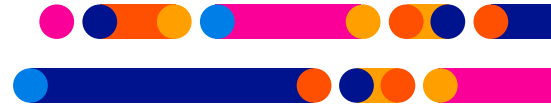
So the first is making sure that your establishment uses an evidence-based bullying prevention program. These programs look different across the country, but I want to focus on three that are widely used. There's the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Second Step Bullying Prevention Program, and then Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, and what these three programs or any program that is effective, in my opinion, is going to have—is that they're going to have interventions at multiple levels. They're going to have individual interventions to prevent and respond to bullying, they're going to have classroom and then school-wide initiatives. And the different components of these three programs in particular, and anyone that is an effective one, is that they're going to focus on social-emotional learning. They're going to help students build empathy, that is very important when you want to prevent bullying, students have to have an understanding of other people and their views and what it's like to be in their shoes. They also help with emotional regulation, they have the capacity to teach conflict resolution, and these are all really key life skills, and they also help to prevent and respond to bullying. It's really important for schools or any type of community-based organizations to continue to monitor and evaluate these programs that they use so that they understand their effectiveness. Is it working? Is it not? And this is usually done through data collection methods and through tracking incidents that occur. And the other piece of these programs is that they are widely used through the whole school, so everyone is familiar with them, it's not like there's just one classroom using a program, it needs to sort of be a school-wide thing or an establishment-wide thing for it to really work with fidelity.

The second culturally responsive and trauma-informed strategy is that there needs to be clear policies related to bullying, so this includes guidelines and even definitions of bullying behavior, I know that sometimes school districts have different little tweaks in their definitions of bullying behavior, there needs to be guidelines on how to report bullying, what are the reporting mechanisms that they have, and obviously what are the consequences that are going to be there for students who choose to bully. Consistently enforcing these policies is going to strand a very strong message that bullying is not going to be tolerated and it really helps create that culture of respect and of accountability, which is going to be important.

The third is that collaborating with school staff and specialists is going to be very important, so schools all have designated staff members who are trained and they're well-positioned to provide social, behavioral and mental health support to all students. School counselors, social workers, psychologists and even within communities, you have youth specialists and mentors who also provide various levels of support to newcomer students. Refugee students, who are able to connect with these individuals who are able to get to know them and build that trusting relationship, are going to be more likely to advocate for themselves if a situation of bullying should arise. And the other thing I want to point out is for so many refugees and newcomers coming in, these school-based specialists and staff are completely new rules that they're not familiar with, I'll talk to you guys about the example of Afghanistan, we just had the classroom teacher and the administrator maybe, there wasn't like special education support, there wasn't English language learner support, there weren't counselors, so all of these adults in the building are really going to be a new concept to newcomer, so if they really need to spend extra time to become familiar with how these individuals can provide them with support. Some of the support that these individuals can provide include things and programs like running small groups, they can do psycho-educational activities, they can help students be part of peer mediation programs, they can even create behavior intervention plans for students. And often schools can create what's called Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or MTSS, and that helps students who are at higher risk of bullying or being bullied to prevent them from engaging in these types of behaviors.

The fourth strategy is parent and community involvement, it takes a village, you have to have parent and community support to really prevent and to address bullying situations, schools can provide resources and workshops for parents so that they can recognize and they can respond to bullying as well as it's important to involve community organizations and these initiatives as well. And again, this is going to be so essential for newcomer families to—because this whole concept of bullying prevention might be new to them, and it's important to provide it in their home language so that it's accessible to them.

And then the last—no, second to last is bystander intervention training. These programs have to place, should place emphasis on all the roles that are involved in bullying, not just the student who bullies and the student



getting bullied. Many studies over and over have highlighted again the importance of the power of the rule of the bystander, and as you guys heard earlier, it's something I'm very passionate about, there has to be more emphasis on bystander intervention to really create an effective prevention strategy for bullying.

And lastly, there's culturally responsive training, taking time to know your students and your families and becoming familiar with their cultural views and ideas about bullying are essential. I really can't emphasize this enough when it comes to working with newcomers. Depending on a student's personal values, their experiences, or their background, what we may define as bullying in a school setting might be completely different than what was accepted in their home country or their culture. Or for example, what we maybe consider as a reportable offense, maybe they or their family think that it's not something to report, so they don't. There's so many different cultural views on conflict and what bullying could mean. So really take time to know and understand where your families and your students are coming with that knowledge base.

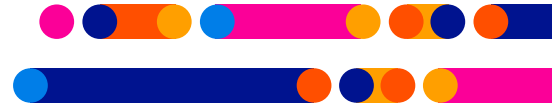
Just as an example for you guys. In individualistic cultures, like the U.S., we can view bullying as happening between one on one, between just two students, or even maybe one student versus a group. But in a collectivist [culture], they're going to more likely emphasize leaving a person out of a larger group. That could potentially be seen as bullying. Or even two groups might go against each other, and so that could be seen, maybe, more as a bullying situation. So there might also be differences, for example, on gender when it comes to bullying. You might have a family that might not take it as seriously if their son, for example, is being bullied because of maybe a culture's perception on masculinity or just gender norms being different. I know this is especially the case for Afghan culture, where it's patriarchal and there's so much emphasis and importance on masculinity and boys being tough. So parents might not think of something as a bullying incident when their child is really feeling bullied. And then the opposite could be true if it was their daughter. So they might then think like, "No, this is a bullying situation." So it's really important to get an understanding on what the ideas are about bullying in a culture.

What are some bullying prevention considerations for schools with refugee students?

MM: So on this slide, we're going to get into some more specific bullying prevention considerations for refugee students. It's important in a setting when you're working with refugee youth to really take lots of time to examine the attitudes towards refugees. And this isn't just—I don't mean with students. You have to also get an idea on, "What are the staff members' ideas of refugees? How much do they know about their refugee experience? What's the community perception on refugees?" If it's an area that's not as diverse, there is more likely to be bullying incidents towards refugees, because there's a lack of understanding and there is more potential for bias and discrimination.

In cases like this, it's even more important to place emphasis on providing cultural humility training, because sometimes people judge things that they don't understand. So building that empathy, that understanding of the culture that's being represented in the schools can really prevent instances of bullying. These types of trainings, again, would be for adults and for children, all the same. Gathering data to examine bullying instances in schools. It's really important that students with limited English proficiency can also provide feedback and can participate in these surveys or these bullying reporting mechanisms. So it's important to make sure that the information you're collecting is accessible to them. So either it needs to be in their native language or it needs to be interpreted for them, but you have to make sure that their voice is being heard in this data collection method, or else it's not going to be accurate.

Ensure that students and staff also have opportunities for leadership. This will help empower newcomers and build self-esteem, it's going to help build resilience and also potentially decrease bullying as well. And then also when creating bullying lessons or programs, make sure you include your ELL staff, the English Language Learner staff. They really tend to have the—from my experience, they tend to have the most insight on what's happening with their students, and also they're just really powerful partners, and so it's really important to make sure that they are part of that curriculum development, either with bullying lessons or either with instructional design that's happening for students.



And students who don't have a sense of belonging in school are also more likely to obviously get targeted, so really find ways, again, to help refugee students participate in those after-school activities, and whether it's sports, whether it's clubs, whether it's events. And I think it's really important to place the emphasis on this for families, because often, families think of school with a specific schedule. They might not understand the relevance or the importance of after-school programming. I know that was the case with my own experience with my own family, and so many migrant students that I've worked with through the years, their families don't have that understanding. Sometimes they think there's a charge associated. But if you really amp up those opportunities and make sure that parents are your partners, it's really going to help foster that sense of belonging for students. It's going to help them build friendships, and it's going to create barriers to possibly being bullied.

What is a strengths-based approach?

MM: All right, A Strengths-Based Approach Using Protective Factors. So we know that when we work with refugee populations, they are so resilient. They've overcome so many challenges, they've overcome so many barriers to get to where they are. So it's very important to use a strengths-based approach when you're supporting them. And it's also important—when you're using a strengths-based approach, you basically are recognizing that every person has their own unique strengths, their own unique characteristics, which is going to help them overcome adversity. And we also know that when children and youth have protective factors that outweigh risk factors in their lives, they're more likely to not be as vulnerable, especially to bullying. So protective factors are very important. Leaning in on these protective factors for students is going to help them recognize their strengths, recognize their assets, so that they can build positive relationships and experiences. Not all students, though, have these protective factors. But as we do get to know them better, we can start to help them, recognize their assets and understand ways to build supportive networks to help them.

When bullying does occur, how should we respond?

MM: All right, so we know that prevention initiatives are key to preventing instances of bullying. That's really so important to have, strong foundations in place, as we've just talked about, all these different strategies to really prevent bullying. But even when you have these initiatives in place, even when you implement them with fidelity, you are going to have, unfortunately, bullying incidents occur. So what do you do when bullying incidents occur? How do we respond to them?

The first is targeted interventions. It's really important to provide targeted interventions to everyone involved. To everyone involved—when we talked about those rules of bullying, the first thing that I've always done and that I recommend is to address the student who's being bullied. For some people, this might seem counter-productive, but it is important to preserve the power and the safety of the student who's being bullied first. Take the opportunity to understand what students can do differently next time. Create support plans for them. And remember to ensure that parents and family members are also part of these conversations. They need to also help their students be able to work through these, whether they were the one getting bullied or whether they were the one bullying. And so parents are going to really need some guidance, maybe on how to talk to their child, especially if they're newcomers, or how to respond to this appropriately. They're also going to need understanding on how schools handle these types of instances. Some specific examples of targeted interventions might include a behavior plan for a student, for example, who bullies, maybe providing counseling for either of the student who bullies or who is a bystander, or the one who was bullied, social skills training, psycho educational classes. So there's tons that you can do in terms of targeted interventions.

The second is restorative practices. Utilize restorative practices when you can. Make sure that the student who was bullied feels comfortable to do so. There's a specific training that needs to be done in order to properly utilize restorative practices. But children do need to have that opportunity to learn from their mistakes. They shouldn't just be labeled as a bully. More often now, schools talk about bullying behaviors, rather than saying, "That child is a bully and that child is a victim." We don't want to create a label for them, because it doesn't allow children to grow and to learn from their mistakes. If given the opportunity, allow the child who bully to be able to sit down with the other student, again, if they feel safe to do so. And understand how they make that child feel. That's so important. Restorative practices, focus on building and repairing relationships, they address harm that was caused by the bullying behavior, and it really helps create a healthy dialogue between



individuals that are involved in a bullying incident. It also encourages empathy and understanding, and they together come up with solutions on how to repair the relationship, if possible, and prevent harm for the future. But again, with restorative practices, it's very important to recognize that it doesn't always work, and the student who was bullied has to be feeling safe to be part of that conversation and that dialogue.

All right, the third strategy is to collect data and ensure that you have an anonymous reporting system. This is a very important part of responding to bullying. If a school tracks bullying incidents properly, they're going to have lots of ideas on how to address it. For example, consider where it's happening the most often. Is there a certain pattern with the location, or is it happening in a certain classroom? Is it happening in a certain time of day? Is it the same students that are involved? Is it the same teacher's class that it keeps happening to? So data is so powerful because it really helps us understand next steps and where we target our interventions. And of course, when you have an anonymous reporting system, it allows students to report instances of bullying or concerns about safety without fearing retaliation. A lot of times, the reason that students don't report it is because they are fearful that someone's going to find out they were the one who told. So anonymous reporting systems are very important. But coupled with that, I would also create a system where students can come directly to maybe a school-based staff, like a counselor or even one of their teachers, and share of incidents that have happened. You can encourage that, but also have an anonymous reporting system to complement that as well.

And then lastly, Reassess School Climate and Prevention Programs. Again, there's so much emphasis nowadays on school climate, because it's so important to build that system-wide environment of making sure it's inclusive, making sure that it's trustworthy for students, which was what we focused on a few slides back. But if bullying is a recurring issue in a school or a community-based organization, it's really time to step back and then examine the practices that are in place and the programs that you have in place, because maybe they're not working. This goes back again to why data collection is so important. You use that data on the bullying incidents, you use the data that you get that tells you about what students perceptions of safety are. Are they feeling safe in school or are they feeling safe in their cafeteria or on their bus? And then it also really helps you understand the effectiveness of the prevention efforts that schools have. And you can also use the data to identify trends, to evaluate the success of the interventions that you've put in place and really make informed decisions about how to allocate resources for bullying prevention and response efforts. So taking time—sometimes we spend so much time on data collection, but not as much time on sitting down and making sense of the data, because that can be very overwhelming. But that is just one of the most important key pieces here. Like, what is the data telling us? So those are the four to effectively respond to bullying.

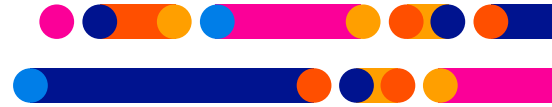
Case scenario: how can school personnel support Ali?

MM: All right. We have one more case scenario for you guys. And this is an interesting case scenario that I added on here, because these two fellows are both from Afghanistan. And I've put this in here because bullying can happen between people of similar cultures too. And let's go ahead and read it. "The case scenario is about Ali and Waleed. Waleed is a 15-year-old boy from Afghanistan, who has been in your school for a year. He was raised in Kabul in a privileged Pashtun, which is a dominant ethnic group of Afghanistan. In a privileged Pashtun family because his father held a government position. Waleed has gotten in trouble on several occasions for teasing and name-calling another Afghan student named Ali, who is Hazara, that's a minority group, and fairly new to the school. Other students are also beginning to join in on teasing Ali when they're at lunch. The school counselor tracks attendance and has noticed that Ali has been absent for more than 10% of the quarter. His parents state that he does not feel safe at school, and they keep him home when he doesn't want to go.

Poll Question

So I have a Slido for you guys on the next slide, and there it is. So please scan your QR code or go to Slido.com. What do you guys think school personnel can do to resolve this problem and to ensure that Ali feels safe and welcome in his new school environment?

[pause]



MM: Counseling. Have families meet. Meet with Ali first. Create the support plan. Intervention training. Meet with the bystanders. Mediation. Have Ali attend a friendship group. School-wide assembly. Wonderful. So there's—I'm seeing some responses that are school-wide and then some that are maybe more tailored to the individual, and then some that are even classroom initiatives. So these are all very helpful. I wouldn't say there's one specific right answer, I think a multi-tiered approach is really the best thing to do. But really wanting to note here that, of course, sharing with his family here is going to be so important to do. Thank you guys so much for your participation in the Slido.

Q&A

MM: All right, we have just a couple of minutes left maybe to answer one or two questions. And I see there are some questions in our Q&A chat, so I'm going to go ahead and take a look at these. Just give me one moment to read through and respond to some of these questions. Yeah. So one of the questions say, "I run a refugee youth mentoring program and was wondering about appropriate ways that a mentor could check in with their mentee to see if they are experiencing bullying in school."

That's a great question. And I did talk earlier about the important role of mentors and how powerful that role can be to really help prevent and respond to bullying. I think there's a lot of things you can do here. I think it's completely appropriate if you build a trusting relationship with that student, with that child, to ask ways of how school is going for them. If you're working with a child that is feeling comfortable with you, that you have a trusting relationship, they might come out and tell you if there's a bullying incident. And a lot of times, that's what we're hoping to—that comes out of a mentoring situation. I also had a tool, a specific tool, that I used to use called Talk Blocks. And I think anyone can use them. Parents, teachers, mentors, really anyone. And it would say, it had "I feel," "I want," "I need," and then it had different feelings, and then it had things that might help that person. So if you're working with a student that might have a language barrier, obviously, or trouble articulating that, maybe even using some type of ice breaker as a mentor, like, a Talk Block piece, might be helpful. Also, a lot of times, I would—mentors would sign disclosure agreements with schools where we could communicate with each other, obviously with the permission of the family, so that we could tell and share if something was happening with that student. And having, really, those fostering relationships where schools and communities work together really helps tremendously in bullying prevention and response.

All right. "How do we respond to bullying when parents and their children extend the bullying outside of the school setting and into the neighborhood?"

This is a great question. I think that this is really done through a lot of those workshops or psycho-educational opportunities that I talked about. I actually worked in a school where this was a common issue. So what we did, as a school-based organization, is that we partnered with the community center that was in the school, because one of the issues that we had in this particular school was that parents didn't have transportation capability to drive over for conferences or workshops or events that we had at school, so we just found ways to get to them. So we rented this community space. Having food or snacks or things like that available to families really brings them in, and then we would talk to them about the importance of bullying prevention and response, and then the effects that bullying has. We have to remember with bullying that just because a student is bullying someone today doesn't mean that tomorrow, they're not going to be the ones that are bullied. And I think that's really important for parents to understand who might not necessarily have that buy-in and talking to their children about some of those behaviors. So find ways to connect with communities, community centers, and to really collaborate together to get that wider reach into the community.

Conclusion

MM: All right, I think that's all the time we have for questions. So we're going to go ahead and review. That was a lot of content. But I am also pleased to say that we are in the process of creating a guide that I think is going to be helpful. It's a downloadable resource that you guys are—it's going to be up on our website probably in the next month to come. And if you are subscribed to Switchboard's newsletter, I encourage you guys to take a look at that as an extension to this webinar.



Feedback Survey

MM: And again, we really would appreciate if you guys just took less than 60 seconds to scan this QR code and take this survey. It really helps us improve our training and technical assistance. We are here for you guys, and so that feedback is always very important to us, because we can improve our trainings and learning resources. We're also going to email you guys the survey as well. And then here is a recommended resource list that we have for you guys of both Switchboard and other external resources that we recommend. If you want to advance your learning around this topic, and to tell you that feel free to check these out.

Stay Connected

MM: And also, we will email you guys these. And as always, please stay connected with us. We'd love to hear from you. We have different ways you guys can reach us. Thank you so much for your time today, and have a wonderful day.

The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0052 and Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.