

Bullying Prevention and Response When Supporting Refugee Students

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Claire Hopkins (CH): Hello and welcome, everyone. Thank you so much for attending Bullying Prevention and Response When Supporting Refugee Students. My name is Claire Hopkins and I'm a training officer with Switchboard. Prior to joining Switchboard, I worked in refugee resettlement leading recruitment and retention of foster parents for unaccompanied refugee minors and unaccompanied children at Bethany Christian Services in Michigan. Before that, I led volunteer and community outreach efforts while providing short-term crisis support and advocacy for survivors of teen dating, domestic, and sexual violence at Relief After Violent Encounter. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Grand Valley State University.

I'm gratefully joined by my colleague Jasmine Griffin. Jasmine is a licensed professional counselor with over a decade of experience in mental health, program management, and trauma-informed care in both nonprofit and government settings. She previously was the Health and Wellness Senior Program Manager at the IRC Dallas, where she also served as Interim Deputy Director. Jasmine holds a BA in Sociology and Criminology and a Master of Professional Counseling. Thank you, Jasmine. You'll hear more from her later.

By the end of our session today, we hope that you'll be able to describe the roles in bullying and the risk factors specific to refugee students, explain the link between core stressors that refugee students may face and bullying, and finally, apply vital strategies and considerations that may help prevent and respond to the bullying of refugee students. We'll start our time today by describing the roles in bullying and the risk factors specific to refugee students, but before we begin, a quick note for you all on terminology.

You'll hear Jasmine and I use the word "youth" versus "students" throughout this training. We made this shift intentionally after listening to previous feedback for this content to reach more than just educators. We recognize that supporting youth, 18 and under, is a shared responsibility among educators, caregivers, case managers, youth program staff, and more, both in and outside of school settings. Using the term "youth" helps ensure that everyone attending can see how this information applies directly to their own role, even if you're not in a school setting or typically don't use the term "student."

1. What is Bullying

Thank you again for being here, and let's go ahead and get started by looking at what is bullying. Bullying is a common term, and it's used broadly often. Sometimes behaviors such as teasing or other inappropriate actions are mistakenly labeled as bullying. While those behaviors can still be harmful, for behavior to actually be considered bullying, there's three key elements that have to be present. The first is that the behavior must be unwanted and aggressive. There must also be a real or perceived imbalance of power. Finally, the behavior must be repeated or likely to be repeated over time.

There are also several types of bullying that you might be familiar with. Verbal bullying is the most common type and involves saying or writing mean things. You might hear teasing, name-calling, someone threatening to cause harm to another person. Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. This could look like a student or a youth leaving someone out on purpose. Telling other youth not to be friends with somebody, I can remember experiencing that myself, and spreading rumors or publicly embarrassing someone. Finally, physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or their possessions. It could be hitting, kicking, spitting, or harming someone's possessions by taking or breaking someone else's things.

Cyber bullying occurs through digital or online devices. Some examples include sharing personal or private information about someone through text or on a different social media platform, or it could be posting someone's private images without consent. It can also be harder to notice, and it's difficult to manage since it is online. With this knowledge of what bullying is and how it shows up, we want to hear from you to learn who is actually involved in bullying. Please pull out your smartphones or you can go ahead and head to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com), and we're going to use this as a learning opportunity together.

By scanning the QR code and plugging in the code number 148-5899 or going to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com), we'd love to hear from you what roles do you commonly see youth playing when bullying occurs. Because we have different audiences on the call, you might see different roles showing up here. Victim and bystander, someone who's laughing on the sidelines, a spectator, perpetrators. Victim coming up a lot here.

Recording, laughing, victim, victim, bystander, comforter of their colleagues, bully, silent observer, laughing or nothing at all, so that observer again. Instigator we're seeing coming up as a theme here. Enabler, another really important word in describing. Witness, coming through a lot. Blackmailing between youth and youth. Gossiping, avoiding. Someone who is unsure how to support, wanting to help but not sure how and don't want to make it worse. Yes, you're going to see that come up here a lot as we talk through the different roles. Laughing and avoidant. Confused.

These make a lot of sense, and you've identified many important roles. I really appreciate hearing directly from your experience because the perspectives that you bring from your own work with youth help paint more of a complete picture of what bullying can look like in different settings based on your roles. I think we're seeing that come through here. Thank you so much for sharing.

Many people might first think about the youth who bullies and the youth who is being bullied when discussing these situations, which you identified not only just the roles, but actually what you're seeing done in those roles, which was really interesting to see. While these roles are certainly important, meaning the youth who bully and the youth who are bullied, bullying is actually really a two-person situation. There are often several other youth involved, and each of them can influence whether the bullying continues or stops.

Let's look at other roles that commonly appear in bullying situations. Youth who assist may not initiate the bullying, but they may actively contribute to it. They may encourage the behavior or join in once it has started. Youth who reinforce are not

directly involved in the bullying, but they provide an audience. They may laugh, cheer, record the incident, or otherwise give some kind of attention to continuing the behavior. That attention can allow that bullying to continue by the person who is bullying. We also see how social media has really given a platform for youth to post bullying incidents, which are examples of reinforcing behavior as well.

Youth who defend help support the youth who is being bullied. They may speak up, check in on the youth afterwards, or they may seek help from a trusted adult. Research has told us that this kind of peer support by defending can actually reduce anxiety and depression among the youth who are being bullied. Finally, we have outsiders. Outsiders witness the situation but remain separate from it. I think that came up a lot in the Slido about witnessing being a bystander. They neither encourage the bullying nor actively support the youth being targeted. While they may not be directly involved, that silence can unintentionally allow the bullying to continue.

This leads us to recognizing that many of these roles are considered bystanders or individuals who witness either bullying in person or online. Bystanders present in approximately 80% of bullying situations, yet many do not intervene, which some of you stated, because they're unsure what to do or they're fearful that they might be the next target. Our previous colleague at Switchboard when she was delivering this webinar emphasized that during her time as a school counselor, she placed significant focus on empowering bystanders because of the influence that they can have in bullying situations. Studies have found that when bystanders intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds nearly 60% of the time.

We'll talk more about that in LO3 with Jasmine. Before we move on, I just wanted to emphasize a practical takeaway here for you. It's that being able to describe these roles and understand them helps us identify where prevention and response opportunities exist. Rather than focusing only on the youth engaging in bullying or the youth being targeted, you can support defenders, redirect enforcers, and empower bystanders. With this understanding of these roles, let's take a closer look at the factors that can increase a youth's risk of being bullied.

As we look at these factors, it's important to remember that these are just risk factors. They're not causes. It's important to remember that no youth is responsible for being bullied. Risk factors include being perceived as different from peers, either physically, behaviorally, or culturally, being perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves, feeling depressed or anxious, or having low self-esteem, having few friends or trouble making friends are all risk factors to be mindful of.

Many of you submitted really great questions when you registered for this about where to start with prevention work. This is really where it begins, recognizing potential vulnerabilities or risk factors early, because when we understand which students might be at greater risk, we can understand how to support them from the start. In practice, this might look like if you're a youth enrollment specialist, enrolling a youth who's new to the area, new to the school, you might notice ahead of time that they are more at risk for having limited social connections. This enrollment specialist might share information about after-school activities, clubs, or community programs that could help the youth build friendships and create a sense of belonging proactively.

Jasmine's going to help us out by dropping in the chat two different client-facing resources that can be shared with families to help them learn about school enrollment, as well as after-school programming. As we continue through the webinar, keep these risk factors in mind. We'll come back to them later when we explore the experiences of refugee youth and discuss where that overlap may exist.

We just talked about the factors that may increase a youth's risk of being bullied. It's equally important to understand that there are also factors associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in bullying behavior. Just as before, these are risk factors, they're not causes, and there's no single factor that's going to predict a youth will bully others. These are patterns that can help us identify opportunities for prevention and response.

Some youth may be more likely to engage in bullying if they are frequently aggressive or become easily frustrated. Others may experience challenges at home, including less parental involvement, difficulty following rules, negative views of others, or seeing violence as acceptable can also increase risk. We know that exposure to violence or trauma can influence behavior and that peer groups matter. Youth who spend time with friends who bully others may be more likely to engage in similar behaviors themselves.

Now we can see that the risk factors not only help us understand vulnerability to being bullied, they can also help us recognize when a youth may need additional support, guidance, or positive connections to reduce the likelihood of bullying behavior, which is another point under prevention. The more we understand the factors that place youth at risk, whether experiencing bullying or engaging in it, the better positioned we are to provide support before the problems escalate.

To wrap up this learning objective, we'll transition into understanding the effects and the impact of these risk factors, not only to the youth who are bullied, but also the youth who bully and those who witness it. We're trying to really tie in those roles we talked about previously to expand how we're thinking about prevention and response. For youth who are bullied, common impacts include increased anxiety and depression, physical health complaints, decreased academic achievement. These effects can make it more difficult for youth to engage in school and feel connected to that learning environment. Youth who bully may also experience negative outcomes. They may be more likely to be involved in fights, vandalism, or other disciplinary concerns. They also might be at greater risk for future substance use.

Finally, we can't overlook the impact on bystanders. Students who witness bullying can experience increased anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns. They may also avoid school or have higher rates of absenteeism because they no longer feel safe or comfortable in the school environment. The key takeaway here is that bullying has far-reaching effects and can impact well-being, acclimation, youth development, their relationship building, and educational outcomes.

2. Link Between Core Stressors

This learning objective really set us up to understand the foundations, and now we can apply refugee youth experience with this knowledge. Which takes us to learning

objective two, explaining the link between core stressors that refugee students may face in bullying. Looking at those core stressors first, as we shift our focus to refugee youth, it's important to recognize that experiences vary widely from youth to youth, right? Just like they do for ourselves. This graphic highlights several stressors that some refugee youth and families may encounter before, during, or after resettlement. These stressors fall into four broad areas, trauma, acculturative stress, resettlement, and isolation.

If we look at trauma, we can think where this might show up in our practice. For example, a school staff member may notice that a student with a trauma history has difficulty regulating emotions or has a heightened response to conflict in the classroom. A case manager may observe acculturative stress when a family is learning how to navigate unfamiliar school systems, community expectations, or communication barriers. A teacher may observe resettlement challenges like access to transportation, accessing healthcare outside of the classroom settings, or other basic needs that can affect a student's ability to fully engage at school.

Isolation can look different as well. A recess aide may notice a youth struggling to make connections with peers, while a case manager may learn that a family actually has limited social supports in their new community. This is where I talked about at the very beginning where it's the responsibility of all of us to be involved in this prevention and response. We all have different roles, and we all learn different information based on those roles that we can communicate with each other.

While not every refugee youth may experience all of the challenges on this slide, understanding the potential stressors helps us approach youth and families with greater awareness and avoids making assumptions about behavior or their engagement in school or programming. Several attendees asked during registration if bullying looks different for refugee youth. Through the learning we've done so far, describing common risk factors for bullying and looking at these core stressors, we've built a foundation to explore that question.

This next slide highlights some of the ways those experiences can overlap, helping to explain why bullying itself is not unique to refugee youth. Some of the experiences they navigate may increase their vulnerability to be targeted or shape how they experience bullying situations. For example, some youth may experience unfair treatment based on their appearance, their religion, or ethnicity. Language barriers can make it more difficult to communicate with peers, participate in class, or report concerns when problems arise, which could put them at risk of being bullied, or it could put them at risk of being the role of being an outsider, specifically if they don't have that language to report or to step in when bullying occurs.

Some youth may understandably experience a lack of social and emotional support as they adjust to many new environments, making it hard to build friendships and that sense of belonging that's so important. Without safe and healthy opportunities to belong, youth will look for that sense of belonging in other places. Sometimes that can lead to forming connections with the youth who is bullying and taking on a role that assists the bullying just to meet that feeling of belonging. Jasmine's going to help us out again by dropping in the chat resources that you can share on how to make friends and connect with your community.

Next, some youth's family may be navigating poverty or financial stress, which can create additional challenges and increase the risk of bullying as well. For example, a young person may be targeted if they're unable to afford the clothing that is considered trendy or in, or maybe peers are aware of their housing situation. When I used to meet with youth in schools, the community and the students were often pretty aware that my presence meant a youth was residing at the local shelter in the community. Because of that, I tried to meet with youth at times that they identified as feeling safest and most comfortable so that I could work with them and partner with them to try and remove some of this link between stressors and bullying.

An unfamiliar environment like school can make youth feel isolated as they learn new systems, expectations, and community norms. Another resource in the chat for you is to share with families how to help them understand education in the US. Giving them tools, giving them the understanding of these systems proactively, again, this is prevention work. Finally, cultural differences may cause a youth to stand out from peers. This could look like fasting during Ramadan, or maybe the food that they bring for lunch is different than what is traditionally served in a US cafeteria. For here, this key takeaway is that these experiences, again, don't cause bullying, and they don't tell us exactly what a refugee youth is experiencing. Instead, understanding both bullying risk factors and the core stressors refugee youth may face is going to give us that stronger foundation for recognizing potential challenges and tailoring support to the individual youth and family, which we'll go into more detail about in Learning Objective 3.

With what we've learned so far, let's take a pause here and put it into practice through a case study. We've got the case study in the chat for you. I'm going to go ahead and read it aloud here as it appears on screen. Amina is a 10-year-old girl from a rural area of Afghanistan who speaks Pashto and has a limited educational background. She was resettled in the US with her family about three months ago and immediately started attending school. Amina wears a hijab and appears to be quiet. She plays by herself at recess and sits alone at lunch.

I'm going to ask you to pull that smartphone back out or head to your browser of [slido.com](https://www.slido.com), and that's going to help us answer this next question where I want to hear from you, what are some stressors Amina could be experiencing? If you're a teacher in the room, you might consider what stressors happen during the school day that you witness. For those working with Amina outside of school hours, maybe you're a caregiver or a case manager, what do you think could be contributing to the behaviors reported at school?

Loneliness, isolation, language barrier, lack of empathy, yes, from those around. Not only do newcomer youth and families have lack of experience and knowledge on the communities that they're acclimating to, but it's important to notice that the students here also need that education as well. Judgment from others, isolation, language barrier, financial stress, feeling alone, cultural differences. You all are nailing it. You're giving great responses. It's cool to see the themes that you all are in alignment with each other. Language differences, culture, isolation, customs. Thank you so much for all of these. You've done a great job at connecting Amina's experience to the core stressors.

Let's just quick take a moment to connect that and see how they align with what we've discussed earlier. Several of you identified her primary language. We can see how that connects to the language component of acculturative stress since language can create challenges with community and connection. Amina also had only been in the United States for a few months, which connects to resettlement and the many adjustments that come with navigating that new environment. We know she wears a hijab, which makes cultural differences more visible and can increase the risk of unfair treatment from peers. Finally, Amina appears quiet, spends recess alone, and sits by herself at lunch. That may point to isolation and limited social support as she adjusts to a new community.

Again, this connects us to something many of you talked about in your questions. How is bullying prevention different for refugee youth? What we see here is that the foundations of bullying prevention are actually the same. The difference is that refugee youth may be navigating those additional stressors that can overlap, and having all of this knowledge is setting you up for great prevention.

We'll check in with Amina one more time before we head into those strategies with Jasmine. We'll put back in the chat for you the original part, the first part of the case study here. The second is going to be-- Excuse me, Amina shared with her teacher that some students ask her questions about her hijab almost every day. While she said the questions did not bother her at first, they have become more frequent and increasingly uncomfortable. Recently, one student told her, "Go back to your own country."

This is just going to be a reflection moment. It's not a Slido activity. There's no need to put anything in the chat. Instead, I just wanted to take a moment with you all to reflect on the questions on the screen that are going to appear here. Think about the information that you might have, what additional information you may need, and how you could support Amina moving forward. In no right order, think about what might be your first step in responding. Who might you involve? What information might you want to gather before taking action? I'm going to pause for a moment here just for you to reflect on these questions.

All right. Hopefully, you were able to connect some of the experiences on the screen and questions and be able to apply them into scenarios that you may be involved in with other youth or may come across. With that, I'm going to go ahead and pass it over to Jasmine to take us through our last learning objective. Over to you.

3. Vial Strategies

Jasmine Griffin (JG): Thanks so much, Claire. For our final learning objective, we'll focus on strategies to help prevent and respond to bullying of refugee and newcomer youth. Many of you asked during registration, "What can I do as a service provider? How do I encourage youth to speak up?" As we go through this section, remember that schools and youth-serving organizations often have established bullying policies and procedures. Your role isn't to replace those systems. It's to strengthen them by partnering with the schools, supporting youth and families, and helping create a safe and welcoming environment.

Before we discuss those specific prevention and response strategies, let's draw from the expertise in this room. Many of you, as I've seen, already work directly with

newcomer youth and families who have likely encountered bullying firsthand. Think about a strategy or an approach or a relationship-building effort that has helped address bullying or created a safer environment for your youth and share with us on Slido. If you close Slido, we're at slido.com, and the number is 14-85-899. Let's wait for those answers to begin popping in.

Awareness training. That's very important, having those different bullying prevention trainings accessible. Assigning a youth and buddy support system. I love that. Providing information about different cultures. Cultural awareness is very important. Teaching them to advocate and speak up for themselves. Educating the families. We're going to talk about all of this, and it sounds like you all are already 10 steps ahead. Educating families. Information schoolwide and cultural awareness. Newcomer groups on building connections and communities. Amazing. Providing a safe space. Mediating. Making friends with the school counselor. Yes. I'm going to talk through a lot of this.

Educating the school personnel. Yes, if you're not in the schools, you are more than capable of advocating for those resources be put in the school so that the school staff are educated. Interpreting. Connecting with youth and mentors. Advising them to raise their voice, use their voice. Yes, awesome. You all are hitting it right on the head. We're going to go ahead and move on.

When we think about bullying prevention, we often think about the rules or the consequences. Those matter, but prevention starts with creating environments where you feel safe. For newcomer youth, that means physical, emotional, psychological, and community safety. Although this slide does reference schools, these ideas apply anywhere that youth gather. That's community centers, libraries, faith communities, or even after-school programs. These protective factors align with trauma-informed care principles like safety, trust, empowerment, voice, and choice, and peer support.

Let's look at what helps you thrive. Positive relationships with trusted adults and peers are one of the strongest protective factors against bullying. Whether that's a teacher, mentor, case manager, a coach, or another student, those relationships help youth feel valued, supported, and more likely to seek help. When a youth has positive relationships, they feel a sense of self-worth, which helps counteract the shame and rejection that bullying can create. The youth feel confident and hopeful about their futures. Some initiatives that highlight youth or student achievements or allow them to celebrate who they are can really be beneficial here. Some ideas include mentoring programs, clubs, teacher-student lunches, and after-school programs or activities.

Then we have intellectual stimulation, which means helping youth stay engaged in learning and experience success. Youth thrive when they can connect the dots and they see their own progression. Many newcomer youth have experienced interrupted education. Meeting them where they're at academically when they arrive and helping them experience and see progress builds confidence and a sense of control. Finally, we have windows and mirrors, which gives youth the opportunity to see both themselves and others represented and valued. This idea helps students identify with one another through literature.

The goal here is that the environment is safe and welcoming and allows for learning opportunities through books and stories where they can read and learn about individuals who are like them, that's looking at the mirror, and also learning about others who are not like them, which is the window that helps build a wider understanding and empathy. When youth are given the opportunity to do this, they develop a sense of belonging, which helps youth feel accepted rather than isolated. This also helps counteract the shame and rejection that bullying can create.

Some examples of this are encouraging youth to get involved with school clubs or sports that are of interest to them. Also, think of ways to represent a refugee student's culture or traditions in the classroom. I've heard of teachers putting something as simple as a flag to represent the youth's home country up in their classroom. We're now going to look at cultural considerations and trauma-informed bullying prevention strategies. Effective bullying prevention requires more than asking youth to be kind or nice to one another. It requires intentional systems and culturally responsive practices. We'll walk through these strategies briefly.

First, we have bullying prevention programs. Prevention programs should build empathy, respect for differences, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution. We're going to drop several evidence-based resources in the chat that can be adapted for both schools and community settings. Thanks for dropping those, Claire. Second, we have policy development and enforcement. Policies should be clearly communicated and consistently enforced. Refugee families may be unfamiliar with school policies or reporting procedures, so accessibility is important. Provide these policies in the client language. Offer interpretation.

The policy should include guidelines and definitions of bullying behavior, reporting mechanisms, and the consequences of bullying. Third is collaboration with school staff and specialists. It's vital to connect and collaborate, so getting that informed consent will allow you to have joint meetings to get on the same page for the youth's best interest. No matter what your role is, whether you work in the school or the community, you provide various levels of support and bring a different piece of the youth's experience to the table. When refugee students are encouraged to connect with these individuals, it helps build rapport and trust, and the youth is likely to advocate for themselves if they are bullied.

Also, school-based mental health staff and community-based mental health staff should provide a variety of programming, such as small groups, psychoeducational activities, peer mediation programs, and behavior intervention plans. Fourth is parent and community involvement. It really takes a village. Families provide valuable context but may not recognize bullying or know available resources, so providing workshops, translated materials, and interpretation helps families become active partners in prevention. Fifth, bystander intervention training.

Many youth, as you heard earlier, witnessed bullying, as Claire mentioned, and so this is known as the bystander or the outsider. Teaching bystanders how to safely intervene can shift school culture or a youth program. We're going to drop another helpful resource. We are overloading y'all today with resources, but this resource will help you address educating those bystanders and how to successfully teach someone to intervene. Lastly, we have cross-cultural training. Take the time to get to

know the youth and the families you serve and understand their perspectives on conflict and bullying.

I can't emphasize this enough. When working with newcomer communities, a youth's experience, their cultural background, previous environments can shape how they define bullying. What we recognize as bullying or even as a reportable incident may not be viewed the same way by the youth or their family. For example, in many individualistic cultures, bullying is often viewed as one person targeting another. Then, in more collectivist cultures, it may be understood more as exclusion from a group or conflict between groups. A trauma-informed approach reminds us to ask what experiences might be shaping this person's perspective rather than making those assumptions.

This is why cross-cultural training is so important because it helps us build trust with youth and families while creating a shared understanding of youth safety. These next few strategies ask us to look a little bit deeper at the system surrounding newcomer youth. Take the time to understand the attitudes and perceptions towards refugees within your school or program. In communities with less exposure to different cultures, misunderstandings or bias can sometimes increase the risk of bullying. Again, we want to approach those situations with curiosity and education.

A trauma-informed approach reminds us to ask what happened to this person or what experiences might be shaping this person's perspective right now. This curiosity helps us move away from judgment and move towards understanding. We're not asking what's wrong with them. We're asking what are some of those barriers that exist, and how can we create more opportunities for connection and success. It's important to identify those barriers that may prevent students from fully participating. Language differences, unfamiliar school systems, transportation, or simply not knowing about extracurricular activities can all contribute to isolation.

When we remove those barriers, we're strengthening the youth's sense of belonging, which is one of the strongest protective factors against bullying that we spoke about earlier. You want to also include English language learner staff in bullying prevention efforts. They often have valuable insight into the experiences of newcomer students and can help identify concerns that others may miss. You want to provide training and professional development on crossing cultures. These opportunities help staff better understand cultural differences, reduce unconscious bias, and build the skills needed to create a welcoming environment.

You want to translate surveys and other feedback tools so students and families with limited English proficiency can share their experiences. If we aren't hearing from everyone, then we're missing important information about what's actually happening. Finally, you want to create opportunities for newcomer youth to take on leadership roles. As many of you know, leadership builds confidence, strengthens our sense of belonging, and reminds us that we are valued contributors to the environment. Whether that is at school or in the community, we want to encourage youth to take on those roles.

When youth feel heard and included, they feel connected and empowered; we're responding to bullying, and we're creating conditions that help prevent it in the first place. It's helpful to utilize a strength-based approach when supporting them. It's

always important to recognize that each person has their own unique strengths and characteristics. Bullying prevention should not only focus on risk. We should also identify the strengths. Many refugee youth demonstrate remarkable resilience, adaptability, perseverance, multilingual skills, leadership abilities, and problem-solving skills.

A strengths-based approach asks, what is already helping this youth cope, succeed, and show up? Families are often the strongest protective factors for youth. When bullying occurs, supportive caregivers can help youth process those experiences, advocate for services, and reinforce a sense of worth and belonging. A strengths-based approach will ask, what emotional support does the youth have at home? If they don't have emotional support at home, what can I do as a service provider to connect them to those resources? One trusted adult, as we discussed, can make a significant difference in a youth's life.

Strong peer relationships and positive adult connections increase belonging, reduce isolation. When youth feel connected to supported peers and adults, they are more likely to seek help when bullying occurs. Community belonging is particularly important for newcomer youth. Community organizations, cultural groups, faith communities, sports teams, and youth programs can provide spaces where youth feel valued. A strong sense of belonging helps buffer that negative effect of bullying and supports resilience. We've gone through the protective factors that help prevent harm. We also need strategies for responding when bullying does occur.

Even with strong prevention efforts in place, bullying can still occur. When it does, our response should focus on safety, accountability, healing, and preventing future harm. You want to start with targeted interventions. Every bullying situation is different. Our response should be based on the unique needs of those involved. That may include safety planning, counseling, skill building, or connecting families with additional supports. We are sharing some resources in the chat around informed consent, including ways to be more intentional around the use of those.

Remember to include caregivers when possible because they are important partners in supporting their child's well-being. Before jumping to consequences, take the time to understand what happened, who was impacted, and what each young person needs in order to move forward. When appropriate, consider using restorative practices. These help youth understand the impact of their behavior, repair harm when appropriate, and rebuild trust. These approaches should always prioritize the safety and choice of the youth who experienced the bullying. You also want to collect data. It's an important part of prevention and response.

You want to track the incidents and look for patterns. This can include where the bullying occurred, when it happened, who was involved. This will help schools and programs make informed decisions and identify areas where additional support is needed. Check out the resources Claire is dropping in the chat. One is a data collection planning worksheet tool that you can download today and start using today. Finally, regularly assess your prevention efforts. Use the data you collect along with feedback from students and families to determine whether your policies, practices, and programs are creating a safe and supportive environment.

A trauma-informed approach reminds us that accountability and compassion can exist together. We can address harmful behavior, set clear expectations, and help youth learn from their actions while preserving their dignity and supporting healing for everyone that's involved. We're now going to move to a case scenario, and we're going to meet Amani. Please consider your individual role as we learn about Amani. Claire is dropping that in the chat. Amani is a 14-year-old girl from DRC who has been in the United States for 8 months. She recently began attending a youth leadership program at a local community center that you recommended for her.

Over the past month, a youth program coordinator has noticed that Amani has become increasingly withdrawn during group activities. During a one-on-one check-in, Amani shares that several youth have been making fun of her accent and the way that she pronounces certain English words. They often imitate her speech and laugh when she speaks during group discussions. Amani reports that she now avoids participating in activities and asks her mother if she can stay home on program days. She tells the coordinator, "I don't want people looking at me and laughing at me anymore."

Amani's mother has also noticed that her daughter seems more anxious before attending the program and has begun complaining of stomach aches on those days. Notice here that the bullying is not always physical. Here, it's targeting language and cultural differences. We see several warning signs: withdrawal, anxiety, reduced participation, the desire to avoid the program altogether. These are important indicators that the youth may no longer feel emotionally safe. Let's think about what her protective factors are, and let's drop those on Slido on the next slide. What are some of those protective factors that you notice in Amani's case?

Attending the program. She has parents who are involved. She spoke up, yes. She is expressing herself and advocating for herself. She has family leadership opportunities in the group. Yes, involved parents is coming through really big. That's what's important here. Leadership opportunities. She was brave. Awareness. Yes. She acknowledges the issue. She's speaking up. This is great. This is really great. Even though Amani is experiencing bullying, she isn't alone, and y'all are identifying that here. She has that caring parent, a trusted adult who noticed something was wrong, and a community program that can respond.

Those are all protective factors that we can build on. Keep Slido open. I want you to think about your role. How can you respond in a way-- It looks like we might have skipped that Slido, so we'll go ahead and move on from that Slido. Just kidding. We have another case scenario. It looks like we were able to pull the Slido back up. I'm going to go ahead and move forward with this case scenario. We can stay on this slide. Let's meet Naw Mu. Naw Mu is a 10-year-old girl from Karen refugee family from Myanmar. She attends a youth support group at a local refugee services agency.

During a group activity, the facilitator notices that Naw Mu rarely speaks and often sits by herself. After building rapport over several weeks of group, Naw Mu shares that another peer has been making comments about her clothing and her lunch, saying they're weird and different. Several other youth have begun laughing along with these comments that are being made. Naw Mu says she feels ashamed and worries that they will judge her family. Her family is also reporting that she has

started acting out at home, exhibiting aggressive behaviors that include throwing toys, yelling at her parents, and stating that she hates them and the group.

The facilitator of the group is concerned because the program has been an important source of social connection for Naw Mu since arriving in the United States. Thanks for dropping that in the chat. Let's head back over to Slido. What might be your first trauma-informed response to support Naw Mu? Think about what you might say in your role. Consider your role, whether you're a teacher or a frontline staff.

You would acknowledge her feelings, speak with the teachers and inform them, advocate. Validate her experience.

Schedule a meeting with the teachers, speak with parents. I'm seeing a lot of validation. It's so important to validate the feelings and the experience that the youth is experiencing. Provide cultural awareness and sensitivity training. Such a great idea. Meet her where she's at. Awesome. Acknowledge that her feelings are valid. I love that a lot of you are leaning towards validate her first. That's so important. We want her to feel seen and heard. Offer some clinical support. Ask the family if they're interested in therapy. She needs to talk to someone. Yes, absolutely.

On the next slide, we're going to dig a little bit deeper to this. Y'all are doing great. With her scenario, a trauma-informed response would include many of the things that y'all have already identified. First, we want to restore safety. Before anything else, we want to ensure that Naw Mu feels physically and emotionally safe by addressing the bullying promptly and reinforcing that everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Reinforce belonging. Naw Mu has started withdrawing because she no longer feels like she belongs. Our goal is to intentionally reconnect her with trusted adults and supportive peers.

As you all said, validate her emotions. Rather than telling her to ignore it, acknowledge that being laughed at and singled out is hurtful. Her feelings of shame and anxiety are understandable. You also want to build on her strengths. Even in this situation, Naw Mu has an important protective factor, a caring family, a trusted facilitator, and a community program that has already been a source of connection. You want to address the harmful behavior. Trauma-informed care doesn't mean avoiding accountability. It does mean helping you understand the impact of their actions while preserving everyone's dignity.

Finally, you want to create opportunities for positive peer interactions. Positive relationships can help restore Naw Mu's confidence, strengthen her sense of belonging, and reduce future isolation. This is what trauma-informed responses is all about and what it looks like in practice. You want to support the safety. You want to model healing and accountability and model connection as well. As we wrap up, we hope you leave with these three key ideas. First, newcomer youth may face additional stressors that could increase their vulnerability to bullying.

Second, bullying affects everyone involved, and understanding culture and available supports helps us respond more effectively. Finally, preventing and responding to bullying isn't just about addressing harmful behavior. It's about creating safe environments where young people can heal, build on their strengths, and thrive. Now we are headed over to our Q&A. You all asked so many questions in the registration.

We really hope that we were able to answer those questions throughout today's webinar.

Bringing my colleague Claire back on the screen with me. It looks like we do have a few minutes for some questions, Claire. If you all do have further questions and want to dig into specifics related to a case you're working on or any support you may need, we encourage you to submit a technical assistance request or come to our monthly office hours. We'll get that link for you as well. Claire, we do have a question that popped in. How do we approach bullying topics with youth and equip them to respond?

CH: Thanks, Jasmine. Thanks for this question, y'all. I think we talked a lot about-- Jasmine just ended with this, and you all stated in your Slido, like, validating before jumping into that problem-solving. I think another piece I would add to that is leading with curiosity. Before we go to the questions, as adults, we want to immediately figure it out. We don't want to cause harm, but we first need to understand not only what the youth wants done, but also their experience through their lens. Jasmine mentioned some of these things, like asking questions, "Can you tell me more about what happened?" or "How did it make you feel?"

Because if we jump to a solution we think might work, we might be missing either steps they've already taken. We might be responding to a part of it that actually wasn't the concern for the youth. By asking things like, "What have you already tried? Who have you already talked to about this?" This can help us understand where the youth is at in the process and how we want to respond together. If I'm a case manager, would you like me to be involved in conversations? Have you talked with this? If this happened at school, have you talked with your teacher?

If you haven't, you might equip youth in that space by practicing talking about what they experienced. How are they going to relay this information of how they're feeling and how it's affected them, and what, hopefully, they want done if they don't have that practice and that language? Really making sure they're set up for success by giving them those tools, gathering the information, being curious. The other point that I think is really important to mention, we have this in our recommended resources in the following slides, but USCRI has a resource that gives some of those practical tips for youth.

It's telling them to stay calm, using confident body language, avoiding any physical confrontation, walking away when possible, and then reporting and documenting bullying incidents. There's also support if you're looking for more of an immediate crisis support to offer to youth and equip them to respond through the Crisis Text Line. Jasmine's going to drop in the chat that information. I think my main takeaway for this question is before deciding what to do, understand the youth's experience, identify what they've already tried, and lead with curiosity to be able to partner with them to determine the next step.

JG: Awesome, Claire. Thank you so much. It looks like we have a little bit more time. There's another question that came through. How do we support caregivers, and how do we help youth and families advocate for themselves? A lot of people talked about advocacy today through the Slido.

CH: Yes, that definitely came up a lot. I immediately go to one thing to really center is that when we're working with families, we have to be thinking about what is their own experience. Do they fall into some of those core stressors that we talked about? If it's a family who's resettled here, some of their core stressors might be not understanding the US school system, maybe their own youth are learning quicker than they are about norms in the community, norms at school, and that can build this tension of the-- What is the word I'm looking for? Hierarchy or a parent feeling like they should have that knowledge before youth.

Identifying those spaces and those opportunities where you can provide learning for families to see-- Because if we give them more information, they're going to feel more equipped to advocate for themselves. That might look by having conversations similarly to how I answered the last question, starting with questions, leading with curiosity, gathering information. What do you know about the school system?

What concerns do you have with contacting the school system? Is there language barriers that are making communication difficult? Once we have that, then we can know what our responsibility is, what we need to involve in the school, and how we can give them enough information and confidence to be able to start advocating themselves while doing some of that modeling first off by being curious.

JG: Awesome. Thank you so much for that. We have one more question, and then we'll go ahead and move forward. I think this question is important. How do we help students who are avoiding school or losing confidence after being bullied?

CH: That is a really important question. Thanks for submitting this. I think it came up a lot, like you said. I think one thing to consider is really, if we're looking for one practical takeaway that you can leave from this, is really leaning into that youth sense of belonging. How is that being impacted? Do they need to have other resources or communities where they can find belonging? Because, like I said, youth are going to be able to, if they don't have that sense of belonging, it could lead to being involved in some of the bullying behavior. Youth are not going to necessarily have that language to come to you and say, "I don't have a sense of belonging. That's why I did this."

Being able to interpret what the situation actually is, as the adult or the caregiver, or the educator, we can help understand the different behaviors that are taking place. If students are avoiding school or losing confidence, instead of leaning into the reactions that we might have right off of fear or-- This is a part of the next steps. You have to go to school to be able to move forward in your education, to move to working, whatever it may be. Taking that moment to pause, and I know I'm repeating myself here, but leaning into the situation, learning from the youth themselves, and seeing what's contributing to that avoidance, seeing what's contributing to that loss of confidence, and finding places for belonging.

Jasmine, you mentioned so many different places. That could be sports, after-school activities. It doesn't even need to necessarily be connected to something that the school offers, although great way to partner with the different roles of audience members we have here. See what's going on in the community. See what neighbors are doing. Use those connections that you have around you.

JG: Awesome. Thank you. It's all about safety. [chuckles] It truly is. Thank you for answering those questions, Claire. I'll go ahead and pass it back over to you to close this out.

CH: Great. Thanks, Jasmine, and thank you all so much for submitting the questions. This brings us to wrapping up our learning objectives. We hope that you are now able to describe the roles in bullying and the risk factors specific to refugee students. Explain the link between core stressors that refugee students may face and bullying, and apply vital strategies and considerations that may help prevent and respond to the bullying of refugee students. We've talked at you a lot, talked with you. You participated in those Slidos, so we did this together.

We're going to ask you to help us so that we can help you and continue to do so in the future. If you could take a moment to please scan the QR code, or you can access the link in the chat to quickly fill out our feedback survey. It's 5 questions, 60 seconds, and it really makes sure that we're giving you trainings and technical assistance that are relevant to what's taking place for you in the field or at home, any way that you're supporting newcomer youth or families, or adults. Pause here for you to check that off your list. Fill it out right now, then you don't have to worry about it.

Thank you so much to those that were able to get that completed or wrapping it up right now. If you missed it, it will be in the follow-up email that you get with our links in the slide deck. We have our recommended resources here for you. We dropped a lot in the chat as we went through, but these are some that will be included in the slide deck afterwards, that will be clickable through that PDF version. We have some from Switchboard ourselves, including scripts. It's a practical tool. When we talked about how you can incorporate that into being how you're going to equip youth with prevention and response, if you're looking where to start, you might start with these scripts.

We also have some really great resources by USCRI as well. Thank you again so much for attending, for registering, and watching this recording if that's the way that you're learning today. We really hope that you stay connected with us, whether that's through email, visiting our website, and following us on social media at Switchboard TA. On behalf of all of us at Switchboard, thank you so much for learning with us. We hope to see you again soon. Think we're giving you a couple minutes back to your day before you jump to the next responsibility you have. Thank you again. Thanks, Jasmine. Thanks, Vincent, on the back end, and thank you to you all. We'll be in more touch soon.

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