Cyberbullying: Tools and Tips for Prevention and Intervention

April 22, 2009

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Welcome!

- CAPT Stephanie Bryn, MPH
- Patricia Agatston, PhD
- Susan Limber, PhD
- Mike Tully, JD

Bullying and Cyberbullying as Issues for Public Health and Safety

- "Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth" – Dr. Mary Overpeck, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2001
  - First major article to examine the prevalence and consequences of bullying among US youth
- Early attention by HRSA to bullying and cyberbullying
- Special 2007 issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health*
  - www.jahonline.org/content/suppl07
  - "The articles in the *Journal* support the argument that electronic aggression is an emerging public health problem in need of additional prevalence and etiological research…" (David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2007).

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Webinar Overview

- What Is Cyberbullying and What Do We Know About It?
- Best Practices for Prevention
- Tips for Educators
- Cyberbullying Resources From *Stop Bullying Now!*
- Cyberbullying Resources Offered by Campaign Partners
- Legal Issues for Educators

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What Is Bullying?

- Aggressive behavior that intends to cause harm or distress
- Repeated over time
- Occurs in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power or strength

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What Is Cyberbullying?

"An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself."

Smith et al., 2008

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Examples of Cyberbullying

- Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages

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Examples of Cyberbullying

- Distributing or posting derogatory information about another

Excerpts from middle school girl's Xanga site:

"I wish you would get in a car accident and split your head in two!...How does it feel to be so hated?"

"I'll see you tomorrow because I'll be beating the ___ out of you. Enjoy living while you can...I'll make you die slowly."

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Examples of Cyberbullying

- Posting or sending digitally altered photos
- Impersonating another and sending offensive messages
- "Happy slapping"

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Examples of Cyberbullying

- Tricking someone into revealing embarrassing information and forwarding to others.

"My son was an early casualty and his death an early warning to our society that we'd better pay attention to how our children use technology. We need to study this new societal problem with a sense of urgency and great diligence."

John Halligan

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Communication Modalities for Cyberbullying

- Instant messaging
- E-mail
- Text messaging
- Social network sites
- Chat rooms
- Blogs
- Web sites
- Bash boards
- Internet gaming

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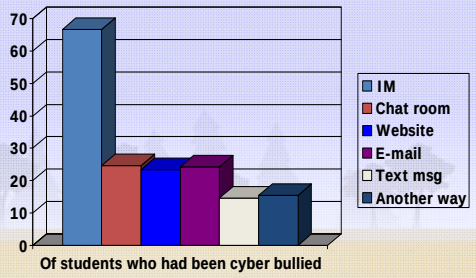
Method of Cyberbully Victimization

(Kowalski & Limber, 2007)



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How Prevalent is Cyberbullying?

- **Fight Crime telephone surveys**
  - 17% of 6-11 year-olds had been cyberbullied within previous year
  - 36% of 12-17 year-olds had been cyberbullied within the previous year
- **Williams & Guerra (2007)** study of students in grades 5, 8, and 11
  - 9.4% had told lies about students through e-mail or IM since the school year began
- **Hinduja & Patchin (2009)** survey of middle school students
  - 9.4% had been cyberbullied in the last 30 days, 17.3% in lifetime
  - 8.2% had cyberbullied others in the last 30 days, 17.6% in lifetime

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How Prevalent Is Cyberbullying?

Kowalski & Limber (2007) survey of 3,767 middle school students:

- 18% had been cyberbullied at least once in the last 2 months
  - 6% at least 2-3 times/month
- 11% had cyberbullied others at least once
  - 2% at least 2-3 times/month

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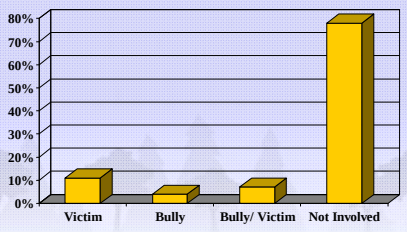
Cyberbullying Status

(Kowalski & Limber, 2007)



- Most middle school students had been uninvolved in cyberbullying in the last couple of months.

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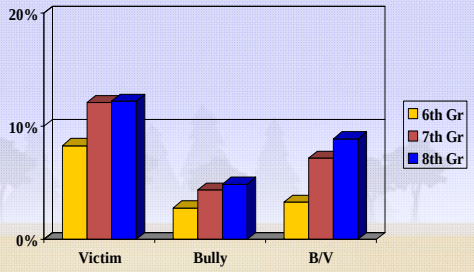
Students' Involvement In Cyberbullying Across Grades

(Kowalski & Limber, 2008)



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Children Involved in Cyberbullying and "Traditional" Bullying

(Kowalski & Limber, 2008)

- Children involved in cyberbullying are also very likely to be involved in "traditional" bullying
  - 60% of *victims* of cyberbullying had also been bullied in "traditional" ways.
  - 55% of *perpetrators* of cyberbulling had also bullied others in "traditional" ways.

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Children Involved in Cyberbullying and "Traditional" Bullying

(Kowalski & Limber, 2008)

- BUT, a substantial minority of children not involved in cyberbullying have been involved in "traditional" bullying.
  - 33% who weren't involved in CB had been bullied in "traditional" ways
  - 25% had bullied others in "traditional" ways

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Cyberbullying and "Traditional" Bullying

***Similar* characteristics:**

- Aggressiveness
- Power imbalance
- Repetitiveness

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Cyberbullying and "Traditional" Bullying

***Different* characteristics:**

- Anonymity

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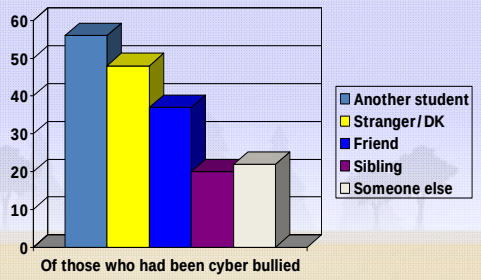
Identity of "Cyberbully"

(Kowalski & Limber, 2008)



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Cyberbullying and "Traditional" Bullying

Different characteristics:

- Anonymity
- Disinhibition
- Accessibility
- Punitive fears
- Bystanders

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Possible Effects of Cyberbullying

Kowalski & Limber (2008)

- Study of 931 students in 6th – 12th grades
- Findings:
  - Children who were cyber "bully/victims" had the highest rates of
    - anxiety, depression and school absences
  - Children not involved in cyberbullying had
    - highest self-esteem and grades and the fewest symptoms of health problems

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Best Practices for Prevention

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1. Incorporate Into Comprehensive Bullying Prevention Programs

- Include cyberbullying prevention messages in school-wide bullying prevention efforts.

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2. Assess Cyberbullying

- Use an anonymous questionnaire to determine prevalence.
- Look for age and gender trends.
- Collect more detailed information in informal group discussions.

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3. Provide Staff Training

- All staff should be familiar with the basics.
- In-depth training for key staff:
  - Administrators
  - Counselors
  - Media specialists

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4. Develop Clear Rules and Policies About Cyberbullying

- Incorporate into existing "student use of technology" policy or as a separate entity.
- Distribute information about the policy to staff, parents, students.
- Model policy at: www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime

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5. Spend Class Time on Cyberbullying

- Incorporate discussions into class meetings on bullying & peer relations.
  - What is cyberbullying?
  - What are the schools' rules?
  - How to respond to cyberbullying?
  - Bystanders and cyberbullying
  - Online "netiquette," safe blogging, monitoring reputations online

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6. Use Students as Experts

- Youth are more knowledgeable than many adults.
- Youth involvement and leadership sends an important message.
- Peer-to-peer engagement can be effective.

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PSA Posters developed by high school students

Kennesaw High School, Kennesaw Georgia

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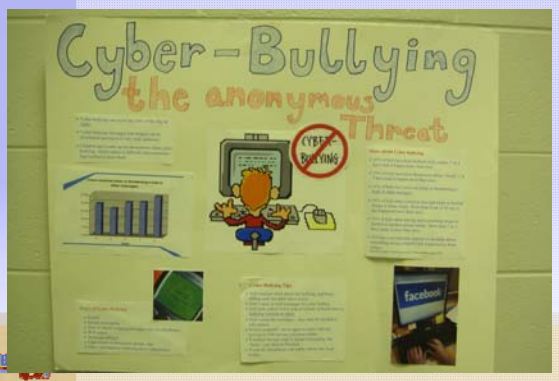

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If you wouldn't say it in front of your mom,don't say it Online.

Don't Cyber Bully.

This message was brought to you by the Cobb County School District and the students of the Kennesaw Mountain Magnet Program.

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7. Build Strong Parent/ School Partnerships

- Host parent programs at the school on cyberbullying. Post information on your school Web site.
- Send home printed materials on cyberbullying for parents.
- Have a contact person at the school who is knowledgeable about cyberbullying and can assist parents with their concerns.

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Intervening in Cases of Cyberbullying:

Tips for Educators

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Warning Signs – *A child may be experiencing cyberbullying if he or she:*

- Is visibly upset or angry after Internet or cell phone use
- Withdraws from family and friends
- Has a drop in academic performance
- Is a target of traditional bullying at school
- Appears depressed or sad

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Review Evidence

- Request that copies of evidence be shared with the school authority.
  - Printed SNS pages, instant messages, emails, text messages

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Determine

- *Who* is involved?
  - Obvious and not so obvious (cyberbullying by proxy, anonymous, impersonation, retaliation issues)
- *What* is occurring?
  - What are the forms and technologies being utilized
- *When* and *where* is this occurring?
  - Off campus, on campus, off campus with school nexus

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Why Students Do Not Often View Adults as Helpful Resources

- Because it is happening off campus
- Because they fear retaliation
- Because they fear punishment or loss of technology privileges (from parents and school)

Students need to be reassured that the adults will do everything in their power to get the cyberbullying to stop.

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Train Peer Leaders

- To recognize cyberbullying as *bullying behavior*
- About the role of bystanders in discouraging or encouraging cyberbullying
- How to report risky online behavior to trusted adults

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Educators Should

- Notify parents of all involved children (when known).
- Provide suggestions on various response options.

-Ignoring
-Blocking
-Removal

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Formal Discipline

- May be appropriate if it:
  - occurs on campus
  - occurs off campus but includes on-campus harmful interactions
  - causes substantial disruption
- *But, suspension alone does not solve the problem.*

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Report Inappropriate Content and Fake Profiles on Social Network Sites

- Email abuse@facebook.com.
- You Tube has a new help center.
- MySpace – click on the report abuse link at the bottom of a profile if someone is violating the terms of service.
- For more links or information on reporting or removing online content visit www.cyberbullyhelp.com.

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Alternatives to Suspension/Formal School Discipline

- Individual conferences with students and parents
- Accountability circles, restorative justice
- Focus is on stopping the behavior and "repairing the harm"

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Referrals to Mental Health Resources

- Review the situation to determine if the students involved in a cyberbullying incident may be in need of mental health services.
- This may include referrals for either or both perpetrators or students targeted by cyberbullying.
- Refer students for further threat assessment if they mention hurting themselves or others.

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Cyberbullying Resources from *Stop Bullying Now!*

- Web pages on the upgraded SBN! adult and youth pages about cyberbullying—what it is and what to do about it
- Webisode: KB's experience of cyberbullying
  - Online catalog of cyberbullying resources

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Cyberbullying Resources from *Stop Bullying Now!*

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Information For Youth

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Webisode on Cyberbullying

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KB's Day

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Catalog of Resources

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Cyberbullying Resources Offered by SBN! Campaign Partners

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National Crime Prevention Council

Public advertising campaign and cyberbullying resources
www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying

In partnership with *Sony Creative Software* and the *Ad Council*, NCPC selected two winning PSAs produced by teens to raise awareness about cyberbullying .

- *Illuminate Cyberbullying*
- *Words Really Do Hurt*

Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts

- Fact sheet for parents with facts on cyberbullying and its effects on children
- Audio messages
- Web page & banners

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NCPC: Talent Show

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Anti-Defamation League
A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
Institute

Workshops for educators, school administrators and parents.

— *Trickery, Trolling and Threats: Understanding and Addressing Cyberbullying*

— *Youth and Cyberbullying: What families don't know will hurt them*

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Anti-Defamation League

Online Anti-Bias Lesson Plans and Resources --

Cyberbullying: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty

Elementary: *Building a Foundation for Safe and Kind Online Communication*

Middle: *Dealing with the Social Pressures that Promote Online Cruelty*

Secondary: *Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty: Challenging Social Norms*

www.adl/education/curriculum/cyberbullying

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Legal and Policy Issues for Educators

- Whether school personnel can discipline students for off-campus expression
- Whether teachers can safely participate in social networking sites with students
- Whether school staff can search students' cell phones

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THE ISSUE:

WHETHER A SCHOOL CAN DISCIPLINE STUDENTS FOR OFF-CAMPUS EXPRESSION

SOCIAL WEBSITES

BLOGS

PERSONAL WEBSITES

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THE ISSUE:

EXPRESSION

VULGARITY

DISPARAGEMENT

DEFAMATION

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THE ISSUE:

EXPRESSION

THE TARGETS:

TEACHERS & ADMINSTRATORS

OTHER STUDENTS

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THE DILEMMA:

- STUDENT IS USING A REMOTE COMPUTER (HOME, FRIEND)
- THE CONTENT IS CREATED AWAY FROM SCHOOL SETTING
- THE MESSAGE IS NOT INTENDED TO BE VIEWED AT SCHOOL
- STUDENTS HAVE FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS
- SCHOOL DISCIPLINE HAS LIMITED JURISDICTION

BUT: THERE IS SOME IMPACT AT SCHOOL

TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS GET ANGRY

(Objects of Insult, Derision, Maybe Defamation)

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STUDENTS GET UPSET AND DISTRACTED

(Humiliated, Upset, May Want To Hit Back)

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IS DISCIPLINE LAWFULLY AVAILABLE?

TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS GET ANGRY

(Objects of Insult, Derision, Maybe Defamation)

ANGER IS NOT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY DISCIPLINE

"SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT" ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

(From *Tinker*: A School-Based Political Speech Case)

Computer Shutdown ● Teacher Breakdown ● Discipline Breakdown

STUDENTS GET UPSET AND DISTRACTED

(Humiliated, Upset, May Want To Hit Back)

MERE UPSET, ANNOYANCE IS NOT SUFFICIENT

"INVASION OF THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS"

Violence ● Interference With Learning

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"SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT" ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

(From *Tinker*: A School-Based Political Speech Case)

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But conduct by the student, in class or out of it, which for any reason -- whether it stems from time, place, or type of behavior -- materially disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others is, of course, not immunized by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech. - *Tinker*

"INVASION OF THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS"

Violence ● Interference With Learning

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THE ISSUE:

WHETHER A TEACHER CAN SAFELY PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES WITH STUDENTS

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From the Brookfield Now Website (Brookfield, Wisconsin)

Board finalizes policy on teacher-student communication

By ISRAL DEBRUIN

Posted: Feb. 18, 2009

School Board members voted Feb. 10 to finalize a policy banning communication between Elmbrook staff and students on social networking Web sites and instant messaging services, after deciding against a much more restrictive policy.

Chris Thompson, the district's chief information officer, said it would be impossible for Elmbrook to provide adequate oversight of services like Facebook.

"There is absolutely no reason that any teacher right now should be on Facebook with their students," Thompson said. "You cannot control it."

(Elmbrook School District Policy 4511)

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Board finalizes policy on teacher-student communication

Nancy Willard:

There is lot of flirting going on in these environments – and the minute a student flirts with a teacher that teacher is at risk no matter how he or she responds.

The teacher is likely also linked to other adult friends who are likely engaged in adult activities and the teacher would become a "guarantor" of sorts that none of his or her friends are doing something or have any images or material posted that would in any way be objectionable from a teen perspective. A school resource officer who set up a MySpace profile to "meet students where they are at" was under criminal investigation because one of his adult friends had some obscene material on his profile.

In an extension of this fear, teens tend to send friendship requests to people on the profiles of their friends. So now the teacher is "on the hook" for the possible sexual behavior of any of his or her friends.

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Board finalizes policy on teacher-student communication

Justin Patchin:

Personally I think this kind of a policy is ridiculous. Adolescents hang out in these environments and increasingly so do many adults (especially younger adults). This is akin to saying that teachers aren't allowed to talk to students they see in the mall or elsewhere in the community.

Adults need to recognize that this is the way youth communicate these days. If adults want to talk to kids, this is how they are going to have to do it. It can open up lines of communication previously not available.

I know of many teachers who utilize social networking sites in a positive way to interact with their students. For example, they post student art and creative writing or interesting articles or books that relate to topics discussed in the classroom. Why punish them for the inappropriate actions of a select few? Instead of banning their use, why not focus on teaching both staff and students how to use them responsibly?

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Some Observations:

- Is it worth the risk to the teacher, even though it might provide a way to connect with students you can't reach otherwise?
- Is the policy enforceable, either from a legal or practical point of view?
- What about vulgarity or implied threats? What if the moderator, or one of the contributors, seems to be provoking a fight?

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THE ISSUE:

Teachers & Principals Searching of Student Cell Phones

WHAT THEY DO:

- **They search incoming telephone calls.**
- **They search for and read incoming text messages.**
- **They use the cell phone and impersonate the student, hoping to "trap" a perpetrator (using text messaging or Instant Messaging).**

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THE PROBLEM:

This Can Get You Sued:

- **State and federal wiretap laws**
- **4th Amendment (search & seizure)**
- **1st Amendment (chilling effect on otherwise innocent communications)**
- **Invasion of Privacy (accessing private communications, address lists, etc.)**
- **Invasion of Privacy (possible cause of action for the senders of messages)**

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THE PROBLEM:

It Can Lead To A Suppression Of Evidence:

- Public school teachers and school administrators are state actors.
- While the search and seizure rules for schools are different (e.g., locker searches), the 4th Amendment still applies to school-based searches.
- Evidence seized by an illegal search can be suppressed by the court. That can undermine an otherwise legitimate prosecution.

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THE SOLUTIONS:

- Informed consent waives 4th Amendment rights. Who owns the phone: the student or the parents?
- It's permissible to seize the phone and save it for the police. Make sure to maintain a "chain of custody" to prove no tampering.
- Seal the phone with a dated seal.
- If an actual emergency or threat: the (criminal) evidence would still be suppressed, but that might avoid a lawsuit.

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Questions?

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Follow the *Stop Bullying Now!* Campaign on Twitter!

@StopBullyingNow

http://twitter.com/StopBullyingNow

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For More Information…

- Visit http://www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov
- Send additional questions to, Katie.Reardon@widmeyer.com
- For other inquires contact our panel
  - Stephanie Bryn (sbryn@hrsa.gov)
  - Patti Agatston (pagatston@bellsouth.net)
  - Sue Limber (slimber@clemson.edu)
  - Mike Tully (mike@miketully.net)

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