



**T**weens and teens across the globe have become engaged 24 hours a day, seven days a week in society's ever-advancing social media and technology like Facebook, Twitter and text messaging. This has become their normal form of communication, and they intuitively know how to use it all, with no questions asked. This powerful knowledge, however, has taken an already existing problem to a new level. Unfortunate bullying incidents have now escalated into complex and disheartening scenarios in the bully's new cyberworld.

According to the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and through time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending him or herself. In the United States, one in five "tweens" (ages 8 to 12) report knowing a friend who has been bullied online. Seven percent of tweens have personally been bullied, and 18% of a surveyed group of 3,767 middle school students reported being cyberbullied at least once in recent months. It was also found that 11% of those surveyed reported they recently cyberbullied others.

"Cyberbullying shares some characteristics with traditional bullying, but it presents a greater advantage on the side of the bully to do more harm," says Michelle Nutter, Safe Schools manager of the Center for Safe Schools.

Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in the following ways:

- 1** Students exhibiting bullying behaviors believe they are anonymous. They think their identity is hidden, and with so many people using digital technology, they believe their actions won't be traced back to them.
- 2** Technology offers aggressors instant accessibility to their targets. If no one monitors their outgoing messages, their ability and willingness to hit "send" is much greater.

## Face the NEW bully

Programs work to teach kids about cyberbullying

- 3** Punitive fears prevent action by targets of cyberbullying. Many victims of cyberbullying do not report incidents to parents because they fear the ramifications will result in losing access to their digital technology.
- 4** Bystanders may be more apt to join in the bullying behaviors. Aggression toward a victim may heighten with the encouragement and influence of the "anonymous others."
- 5** Students participating in cyberbullying are less likely to be inhibited by accepted behavior norms, meaning they say and do things online they would most likely never say or do in public.

"When kids can't see the reaction or facial expression of their target, they continue to engage in this behavior," says Lynn Cromley, director of the Center for Safe Schools. "As parents, teachers and mentors, we need to protect, educate and help kids understand they are accountable for all their tweets, texts and posts."

Steps are being taken to address cyberbullying, and the Center for Safe Schools, with funding provided by Highmark Healthy High 5, an initiative of the Highmark Foundation, has provided 250 grants to public, private, parochial and charter schools in Pennsylvania throughout the past five years to implement the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. This program supports creating climates that help stop the behavior. More than 7,000 administrators, faculty and staff have been trained in this blueprint program, and more than 131,000 Pennsylvania students have been affected by this bullying prevention initiative.

"The Center for Safe Schools is eager to be working with the Highmark Foundation to produce a bullying prevention toolkit for parents and educators that will be released this fall," Nutter says. "While technology can be exciting, it's important children have the appropriate tools to develop into positive members of society as they interact with others in the cyberworld."

To learn more about cyberbullying prevention, visit [SafeSchools.info](http://SafeSchools.info) and [StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov).