



## **SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES BULLYING PREVENTION**

**The Governor's Prevention Partnership**  
30 Arbor Street, Hartford, Connecticut, 06106

### **ABOUT:**

Created in 1989, The Governor's Prevention Partnership is a not-for-profit partnership between state government and business leaders with a mission to keep Connecticut's youth safe, successful and drug-free today for a stronger workforce tomorrow. Co-chaired by Governor M. Jodi Rell, The Partnership provides leadership and services to help schools, communities, youth organizations, colleges and businesses create and sustain quality prevention programs. The Governor's Prevention Partnership works in collaboration with local, regional and statewide providers to maximize youth development programming without duplicating services. The Partnership's programs affect children in virtually every community in the state.

### **GOAL:**

With a focus on Connecticut's youth, The Governor's Prevention Partnership is a statewide public-private alliance, building a strong, healthy future workforce through leadership in mentoring and prevention of violence, underage drinking, and alcohol and drug abuse.

### **HOW TO:**

The Governor's Prevention Partnership was established in 1989 by the late Governor William O'Neill. The organization was developed as a nonprofit, public/private partnership in which the private sector matched the state government funding. The state of Connecticut initially contributed one million dollars to the program, which was matched by corporate donors. At the time of the organization's founding, major corporate funders included Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Champion International, Heublein, MassMutual Life, UTC, Travelers, CT Retail Merchants Association and GE Capital Corporation.

Currently, funds are still secured through both the public and private sectors. A fund development director employed by The Partnership works to develop and maintain relationships with corporate contacts in order to solicit funds. State funds were available via a direct legislative line item; these funds were later transferred to the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and are now received as part of The Partnership's state service contract. The Partnership also holds an annual Governor's Luncheon to honor and thank corporate donors, encouraging continued support. The Governor's Prevention Partnership is governed by a Board of Directors that functions in an advisory capacity, helping to lead strategic and program planning processes. The Board of Directors meets quarterly.

While The Governor's Prevention Partnership works in many ways to promote the safety and success of the state's children, the focus here is on the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program, which includes bullying prevention.

This program was developed in response to two events: firstly, Connecticut's anti-bullying law was revised in 2008, adding many specific requirements that schools must meet; secondly, Operation Respect Connecticut, a non-profit focused on bullying prevention, chose to dissolve and approached The Partnership to help carry on its program tradition. Before these events, The Partnership had a broader approach to violence prevention in schools; the new legislation and the absorption of

Operation Respect Connecticut's assets sharpened the focus to bullying. In addition, The Partnership strengthened its relationships with Connecticut's State Department of Education and the Connecticut Commission on Children, among other key stakeholders, in order to launch the new anti-bullying initiative.

In short, the current program works to help schools follow the law, which is helpful for schools, regardless of the legality. The Governor's Prevention Partnership works with each school for a year at a time to make sure that the school has the correct policies, curricula and environmental attributes in place. For example, schools must have the correct means of documenting and reporting bullying incidents, teachers and students must be properly educated about bullying, and all physical areas of the school must be well monitored, including cafeterias, locker rooms and hallways.

The Partnership uses a comprehensive checklist of the legal requirements to assess each school (see resources section below). After assessment, the Partnership either provides the necessary resources to improve the school or puts the school in touch with the necessary contacts to do so. This includes actions such as putting on student assemblies to teach students how to be active bystanders, as well as teacher trainings that inform teachers how to effectively identify and intervene in bullying situations.

#### **BUDGET:**

The budget specifically for the bullying prevention program has three sources. Firstly, The Partnership receives money from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services—some of this money is slated for bullying prevention. Secondly, funds from Operation Respect Connecticut, which The Governor's Prevention Partnership absorbed, are also used for this program. Thirdly, funds from corporate funders and foundation grants are used to build on the first two sources.

#### **BARRIERS:**

- **Schools are busy:** Especially due to the No Child Left Behind law, schools have many academic mandates and are often focused heavily on achieving specific testing standards. This means that climate improvement within the schools sometimes takes a back seat.
- **Lack of baseline data:** Because there is no mandatory student survey throughout the state, it is difficult to obtain baseline data describing schools' current status. It is therefore challenging to gauge which schools need more attention, and how well the prevention efforts are working.
- **No single-platform solution:** There is no single curriculum, program or software solution that will allow schools to meet all regulatory mandates. Achieving the bullying prevention directives takes work and cooperation on many levels and throughout the community.

#### **BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED:**

- **Relate school climate to academic achievement:** Educate teachers and staff as to the importance of school climate in relation to academic performance. Academic instruction can only bring a child so far; in order for most children to excel, the school also has to feel safe, secure and connected. Bullying prevention will therefore help increase performance.
- **Practical teacher training:** Teachers and other school staff must be explicitly taught how to recognize bullying, as well as what to do and say when it occurs. The Governor's Prevention Partnership works to arm the teachers with tactical advice.
- **Involve the parents:** Parents must be aware of the effects of bullying, as well as what they can do to prevent it. They must also feel like partners in the solution. The Partnership has addressed

this issue by holding parent forums that raise awareness on these topics and help parents effectively communicate about bullying with the school and their children.

- **Tailor the program to each school:** What works in one school doesn't necessarily work in all schools. Urban schools may have different needs than suburban or rural schools. Additionally, some schools may have a culture of normative bullying, whereas this behavior may be less common at others. It is therefore important to tailor each program to the specific environment and check back often to see how things are working. Changes should be made as necessary.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

School Assessment Checklist

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