Working Together to Stop Elder Bullying

Elder Presentation
Key Points

• What is Bullying?
• Characteristics of Bullies
• Causes of Bullying
• Warning Signs of Bullying
• Bullying Cycle
• Interventions
• Review of Participation Agreement
What is Bullying?

Intentional, repetitive aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power or strength.

Hazelden Foundation, 2008
Types of Bullying

- Verbal: name calling, teasing, insults, taunts, threats, sarcasm, or pointed jokes targeting specific individuals
- Physical: pushing, hitting, destroying property, or stealing
- Anti-social: shunning/excluding, gossiping, spreading rumors and using negative non-verbal body language (mimicking, offensive gestures)
Bullying

- Insults or belittling jokes
- Spreading rumors or whispering when individual enters room
- Harassment, meanness, insulting individuals, gossiping and racial and ethnic slurs
- Criticizing or ridiculing physical or mental disabilities
- Offensive gestures or facial expressions
- Physical intimidation or abuse
Causes of Bullying

- To show they are in charge
- They’re insecure with themselves
- They’re victims of bullying or have been a victim of bullying
- Medical or Mental Health issues
- Substance abuse
- An individual may be irritable due to pain, medication, lack of sleep, grief, etc.
Bullying Warning Signs

- Individuals who are being bullied may exhibit these behaviors:
  - Anger, frustration
  - Self-isolation
  - Avoidance of specific areas or activities
  - Vague complaints “They don’t like me” or “They won’t let me be in their group.”
  - Depressed mood
Bullying Warning Signs

- Individuals who bully their peers may exhibit these behaviors:
  - Intimidate staff
  - Often tell others what to do using a bossy style
  - Criticize others or lack empathy toward them
  - Make repeated complaints about others
Bullying Cycle

1. Bully targets victim
2. Supporters/followers participate in bullying
3. Victim and onlookers do not intervene
4. Bully is empowered
5. Onlookers don’t intervene

Bullying Culture

Caring for Generations
Interventions for Bullying

- Preventing and minimizing bullying behavior requires intervention at multiple levels:
  - Community
  - Bully
  - Victim/Target
Community Intervention

- Have elders sign a “Participation Agreement” that specifically addresses bullying behavior and other behaviors.
- Support individuals to support others with consideration, respect, and dignity.
Interventions for Individuals who Bully

- Consistently set limits on bullying behavior (Participation Agreement)
- Offer an appropriate outlet to vent frustrations
- Help them to:
  - Identify alternative methods to feel in control
  - Learn positive communication skills
  - Develop empathy
  - Expand their social network
  - Address feeling of loss
Interventions for Individuals Being Bullied

- Stand up for your rights
- Manage feelings of anger
- Use positive communication strategies
- Make your opinion clear without any aggressive language or motions
- Remove yourself from the situation
- Report violations of the Participation Agreement to staff immediately

Never interrupt or provoke!
Participation Agreement Review
Code of Conduct for Service Centers

Be Respectful to All Individuals

- Include Everyone
- Encourage Others
- Accept Differences
- Control Your Emotions
- Use Positive Communication
- Leave Gossip At Home
- Distance Yourself from Negative Situations
- Promote team spirit
Sources

- The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC), [www.ltcombudsman.org](http://www.ltcombudsman.org)

- Alzheimer’s Association – alz.org

- “Who bullies and who gets bullied?” Robin Bonifax, PhD, MSW, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Arizona State University