

# Working Together to Stop Elder Bullying

## Staff Training



# Key Points

- What is Bullying?
- Types of Bullying
- Characteristics of Bullies
- Causes of Bullying
- Warning Signs of Bullying
- Bullying Cycle
- Staff 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

- Exclusion of individuals from social events or even the formation of cliques
- Harassment, meanness, insulting individuals, gossiping and racial and ethnic slurs
- Physical intimidation or abuse

# Who Bullies?

- Some common characteristics of people who bully:
  - Seek to control others
  - Feel reinforced by:
    - Being powerful and controlling
    - Making others feel threatened, fearful or hurt
    - Causing and observing conflict between people
  - Have difficulty tolerating individual differences
  - Lack empathy
  - May have been bullied or abused in their lifetime

# Causes of Bullying – Age-Related Issues

- Loss of independence, relationships, income and valued roles
- Powerless due to move to more “supportive” environments
- Seeking “control” at a time that they feel most powerless

# Causes of Bullying

- Mental illness
- Dementia
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance abuse
- An individual may be irritable due to pain, medication, lack of sleep, grief, etc.

# Signs of Depression

- Irritability or agitation
- Sleep disturbance
- Refusal of care or assistance
- Inability to make a decision
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Sad mood or demeaner

# Signs of Dementia

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
- Challenges in planning or problem solving.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
- Confusion with time or place.
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

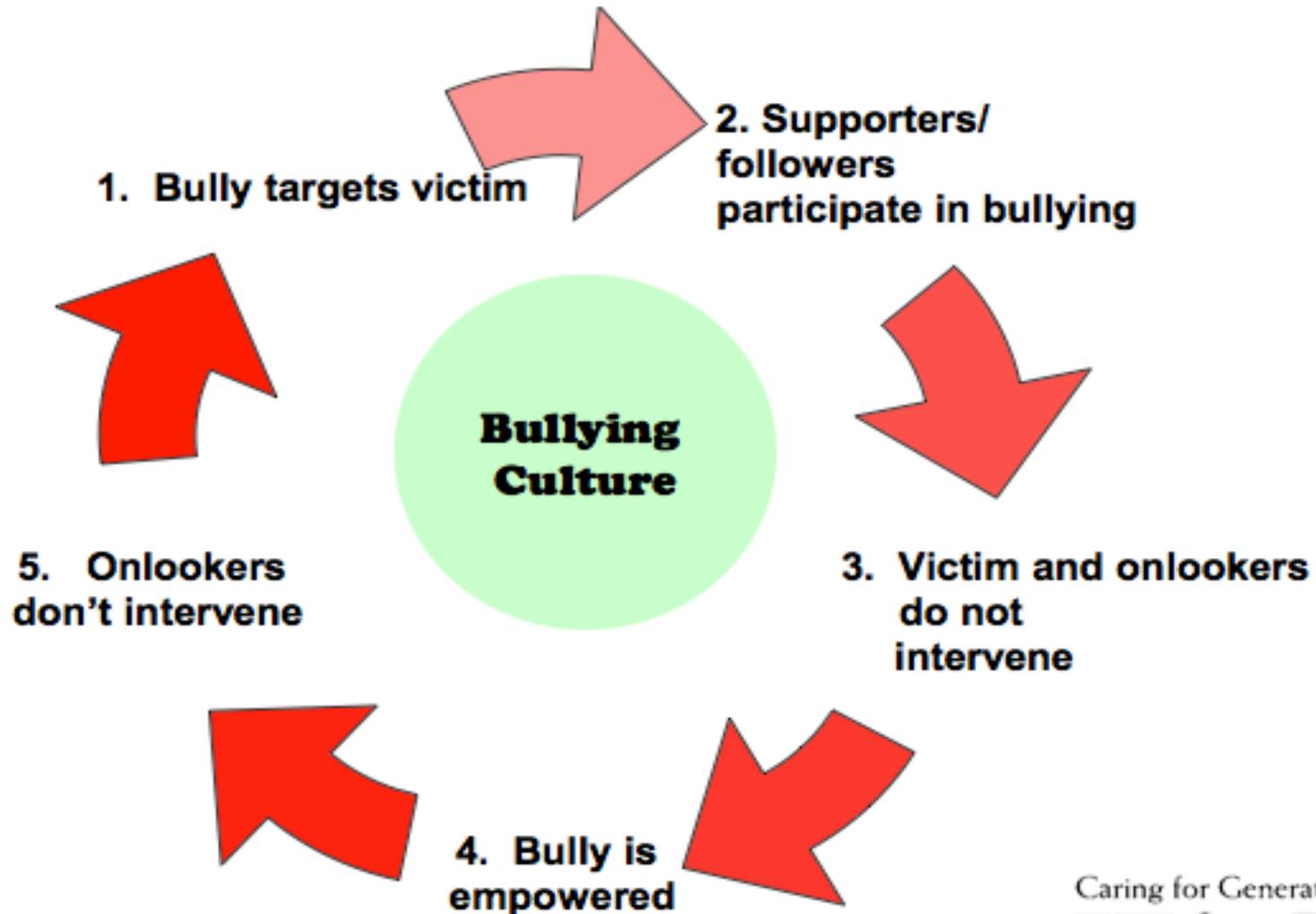
# Bullying Warning Signs

- 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



# Interventions for Bullying

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

# Steps to Prevent Bullying

- Set clear expectations and boundaries within the community that make elders and staff aware of the community's commitment to a respectful environment
- Conduct ongoing discussions with staff, residents, and families to identify problems
- Evaluate and implement changes that can decrease the power of bullies (isolated areas, reserved seating, etc.)
- Provide ongoing training for staff and elders
- Implement clear and easy reporting processes to encourage victims to report bullying
- Instate a "no-tolerance" policy for bullying
- Include a standard process for resolving bullying incidents such as mediation and consequences

# Community Intervention

- Have older adults sign a “participation agreement” that specifically addresses bullying behavior and other behaviors
- Support individuals to treat all members with consideration, respect, and dignity

# Interventions for Individuals who Bully

- Consistently set limits on bullying behavior (Code of Conduct – 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

- Focus on skill development to help them avoid being victimized:
  - Standing up for one's rights
  - Managing feelings of anger
  - Using direct communication strategies
  - Review the Participation Agreement

## Staff Intervention - What Can You Do . . .

- Speak up calmly and with authority.
- Call them by name.
- Make your statements clear, but without any aggressive motions or behavior.
- **Never interrupt or provoke!**

## Staff Intervention - What Can You Do . . .

- Listen attentively and express respect for their opinion.
- Always maintain eye contact.
- Seek true understanding of the individual's insecurities.

# **Review Participation Agreement**



## **Code of Conduct for Service Centers**

### **Be Respectful to All Individuals**

**No Bullying**

**No Gossiping**

**No Slandering**

**No Harassing Behavior**

**No Threatening Behavior**

**No Intimidating Behavior**

**No Violent Behavior**

**No Foul Language**

**No Weapons**

**No Drugs or Alcohol**

# Sources

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

# Contact Information

- Mary Weston
- Elderly Services Program Coordinator
- Gila River Indian Community
- Phone: 520-562-5232

