



# Prairie View

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Bullying a Growing Problem Among Children, Adolescents**

Newton, Kan. – Recent events in the nation have sparked a conversation about bullying and the effects it can have on young people.

“Bullying among children is frequently defined as intentional, repeated hurtful acts or other behavior, such as teasing or name calling, and threatening committed by one or more children against another,” said Deborah Ellerbusch, Psy.D, LP-T, of Prairie View.

There are several different classifications of bullying: physical, verbal, emotional and cyber bullying. Physical bullying involves the hitting, punching, biting, strangling or hair pulling of another child. Throwing objects such as rocks and food at another child is also defined as a form of physical bullying.

Teasing, spiteful name-calling and spreading gossip are common forms of verbal bullying.

Emotional bullying involves rejecting, humiliating, terrorizing, blackmailing, manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing and peer pressure of another child.

Cyberbullying occurs when one child sends insulting messages by phone, through text messaging, computer, e-mail, photographs or videos to another child.

There are many warning signs to look for if it is thought that a child is being bullied, said Ellerbusch. The child’s behavior may change, he or she may seem anxious and a change may occur in the child’s appetite and sleeping patterns. A decrease in or avoidance of participating in activities he or she usually enjoys may also be noticed.

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Other warning signs include: coming home from school with torn clothing or damaged property; bruises, cuts and scratches that the child cannot give a clear reason for their appearance; suddenly appearing afraid or unwilling to attend school; has bad dreams or cries out during sleep; and appearing sad or depressed. The child also may start asking for money from parents in order to meet the bully's demands. This can even resort to the child stealing money from family members.

If a child is being bullied, he or she may be too humiliated or frightened by the bully to open up and tell an adult or parents, according to Ellerbusch.

“If your child tells you about being bullied, it has taken a lot of courage for them to do so and they should be acknowledged for their honesty,” she said. “Remind your child that he or she is not alone – a lot of people get bullied at some time in their life.”

Ellerbusch said to place emphasis on the fact that it is the bully, not the bullied child, who has been behaving badly. Do not encourage any kind of physical retaliation, rather encourage the child to open up and describe how and where the bullying occurred. If the child is not comfortable talking to a parent, encourage him or her to talk to a mental health professional, guidance counselor, sibling or friend.

“Teach your child to firmly and clearly tell the bully to stop, then walk away,” said Ellerbusch. “By ignoring the bully your child is showing that they don't care and eventually the bully will get bored with bothering your child”.

She also recommends telling the child that exposing what the bully has been doing is not the same as tattling and that it is okay. Parents should be patient because conflicts between children will not likely be resolved over night.

If bullying at school is suspected, there are steps that can be taken. Encourage administration, teachers and staff to take the problem of bullying seriously and to investigate the situation at hand. There should be written policies and rules against bullying, harassment and intimidation enforced by the school.

Teachers and administrators should speak to the bully and his or her parents informing them of the consequences, such as detention, suspension or expulsion, if the bullying of others continues to exist. Teachers and administrators should also increase supervision of the areas around campus where bullying is most likely to occur.

Parents should develop a loving environment at home where the child can be protected physically and emotionally. Although the effects of bullying can be upsetting, there are resources available to help.

“It's important to take bullying seriously and not just overlook it as something that children need to 'tough out,’” said Ellerbusch. “The effects can be serious and affect

children's self-esteem, emotions and future relationships, even leading to suicide.”

Prairie View is a faith-based, private behavioral and mental health services provider, offering a complete range of behavioral and psychiatric services for children, adolescents, adults and older adults, as well as consultation services to businesses and organizations. In addition to the main campus, including outpatient offices and a psychiatric hospital in Newton, Prairie View has outpatient locations in Hillsboro, Hutchinson, McPherson and Wichita.