Family Focused Interventions to Prevent Bullying

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Role of Family

- Family as Risk

- Family Managing Contextual Risk
  - School, neighborhood

- Family as Protective/Promotive
Family as Risk (for Bullying)

- Violence within the family
  - Intimate partner violence
  - Child abuse and neglect

- Parenting practices
  - Harsh or coercive discipline
  - Poor parental monitoring

- Family relationship characteristics
  - Hostility, conflict, absence of warmth/connection

Farrington, 1993; Pelligrini, 1998; Pepler et al., 2008; Smith & Myron-Wilder, 1998; Smokowski & Koposz, 2005
Family as Risk (for Victimization)

• Overprotective (Enmeshed)

• Avoid Conflict
  – Child unable to cope with conflict
  – Studies do not disentangle the transactional nature of the relationship between parenting and child behaviors

Olweus, 1993; Smokowski & Koposz, 2005
Bullying Prevention Programs

• Overwhelming majority of bullying preventive interventions are school-based; Few family-focused interventions specific to bullying

• Parent training as a component of school-based interventions

• Often focus on children as victims or bystanders

Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; School Based Programs to Reduce Bullying and Victimization, Systematic Review for the Campbell Collaboration
Systematic Review Found

- Inclusion of parenting training component one of the program elements associated with the greatest decrease in bullying and victimization.

- Parent training a component of 11 of 30 programs reviewed.

- Parent meetings; lectures and information provided.

Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; School Based Programs to Reduce Bullying and Victimization, Systematic Review for the Campbell Collaboration.
Family as Risk (for Bullying)

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What do we need to do in families?

- Nurture parenting skills
- Stable family relationships (emotional connection, communication, support)
- Supervision and monitoring of children
- Parental involvement in school
- Connect families within neighborhoods and to social supports

Gorman-Smith et al. (2005); O’Connell et al (2009)
Promote healthy development and family capability in high risk communities

• Build protection through:
  – parenting skill and quality of family relationships
  – parental involvement and investment in their child’s education and academic achievement
  – building a network of social support
  – managing social ecological and developmental challenges

• To impact:
  – Aggression, violence and related problem behaviors
  – Academic achievement
  – Positive youth development

Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2009, 2013; Tolan et al, 2004; Tolan et al., 2010
High School Outcomes for SAFE Children (working with families of 1st grade students)

- 50% reduction in school reports of serious misconduct (including bullying)
- 33% reduction in school reports of violence
- 20% increase in being “on track” for high school graduation
GREAT Schools and Families

- Evidence of an “ecological effect” in schools where targeted sample received the family intervention
- Lower student and teacher reports of aggression (school-level)
- Effects not found at immediate post, but increasing divergence over time
- Intervention with high-risk youth who are socially influential can affect overall aggression

MVPP, 2009
Examples of family focused programs

Target parenting behavior, parent-child relationship, parental involvement in school

- Incredible Years
- Strengthening Families
- Raising Healthy Children

Catalano et al., 2003; Spoth et al, 2001; Webster-Stratton et al., 2005
Future Research

• Specific relation between aspects of family risk and types of bullying/victimization?

• Ethnic/racial and contextual differences in family risk?

• Impact of existing family focused interventions on bullying?

• Developmental timing of interventions to impact bullying behavior?
Resources regarding evidence of impact for family focused interventions

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development
www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html

Social Programs that Work
www.evidencebasedprograms.org

Top Tier Evidence
http://toptierevidence.org/