Antibullying Laws and Policies:
Research Evidence and Knowledge Gaps

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April 10, 2014
Antibullying Laws and Policies: Rapid Expansion

Stuart-Cassel et al. (2011)
Antibullying Laws and Policies: Conceptual Frameworks

Antibullying Legislation: A Public Health Perspective
Jorge C. Srabstein, M.D.¹, *, Benjamin E. Berkman, J.D., M.P.H.², and Eugenia Pyntikova, M.S.³


State Laws and Policies to Address Bullying in Schools
Susan P. Limber and Mark A. Small
Clemson University


Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
Policy and Program Studies Service
Antibullying Laws and Policies: State-Level Variation in Number of Key Components Included

Stuart-Cassel et al. (2011)
• Little empirical investigation of effectiveness of these laws and policies
• “...the question of whether state laws can provide a useful vehicle for reducing bullying behavior among children remains unanswered.”

1Limber & Small, 2003, p.446
Proportion of school districts with anti-bullying policies that were inclusive of sexual orientation in 34 Oregon counties.

% of counties with school districts with inclusive policies:

- 15%: 0%
- 18%: <50%
- 15%: 100%

Oregon Counties
Oregon Healthy Teens (OHT) Study

- Linked ecologic data on inclusive antibullying policies at the county level to individual health outcomes among lesbian and gay youth living in these counties

- Health and sexual orientation data from OHT study
  - Annual surveys to over 1/3 of Oregon’s 11th grade public school students
  - Modeled on Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance studies from CDC
  - N=31,852 11th grade students (2006-2008)
  - N=301 lesbian and gay respondents
  - Primary outcome measure: any suicide attempt in the past year (Brener et al., 1995; 2002)
Highest Risk of Suicide Attempts in Counties with Lowest Proportion of School Districts with Inclusive Anti-Bullying Policies (Lesbian and Gay Youth; N=301)

OR=2.25, 95% CI=1.13, 4.49
Additional Results

- Coded antibullying policies in 3 ways
  - No policy
  - Antibullying policy but no enumeration of sexual orientation as a protected class
  - Antibullying policy specifically including sexual orientation as a protected class
  - Policies that do not include sexual orientation as a protected class status did not protect lesbian and gay youth from attempting suicide
  - Relevance to ongoing debates about enumeration

- Inclusive antibullying policies are associated with a reduced risk for peer victimization among all youth (Wald F=4.44, \( p<0.01 \))
Social Policies Contribute to the Health of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations

The Impact of Institutional Discrimination on Psychiatric Disorders in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: A Prospective Study

| Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, MS, MPhil, Katie A. McLaughlin, PhD, Katherine M. Keyes, MPH, and Deborah S. Hasin, PhD

State-Level Policies and Psychiatric Morbidity In Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations

| Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, MS, MPhil, Katherine M. Keyes, MPH, and Deborah S. Hasin, PhD

Effect of Same-Sex Marriage Laws on Health Care Use and Expenditures in Sexual Minority Men: A Quasi-Natural Experiment

| Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, PhD, Conall O’Cleirigh, PhD, Chris Grasso, MPH, Kenneth Mayer, MD, Steven Safren, PhD, and Judith Bradford, PhD
Antibullying Laws and Policies: What We Need to Know

(1) Effectiveness of antibullying policies
   - Use stronger methodologies for causal inference (e.g., longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs)
   - Take advantage of heterogeneity in the expansiveness of policies to test dose-response relationships
   - Test mediators (why these policies are effective)
   - Test moderators (for whom these policies are effective)

(2) Implementation effects
   - Understand how antibullying legislation is implemented on the ground
   - Identify barriers and facilitators
Antibullying Laws and Policies: Ongoing Research to Address Critical Knowledge Gaps

• Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (PI: Ramirez)
  • Mixed-methods design
    • Outcome evaluation: Assess impact of Iowa’s antibullying legislation on rates of bullying using longitudinal, quasi-experimental design
    • Implementation evaluation: Qualitative interviews with school administrators to identify processes through which Iowa schools have carried out provisions of the law

• Columbia University CDC Injury Center Grant (Co-PIs: Hatzenbuehler, Ramirez)
  • Mixed-methods design
    • Legal content analysis of antibullying legislation in HHS regions 2, 4, & 7, using DOE’s best practice recommendations
    • Link results to 2011 YRBS to measure association between strength of antibullying policies and bullying behaviors