No Bully Solution Team: Outcomes Evaluation 2012-17
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Abstract

School bullying is increasingly recognized as a cause of short and long-term suffering for its victims and perpetrators, and as a potential impediment to student academic success. Rather than relying on traditional punitive approaches that have been shown to exacerbate the problem, many schools are searching for effective interventions that address bullying in a more meaningful way. No Bully, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, has developed a system that schools implement for preventing and responding to student bullying and harassment. This report evaluates the effectiveness of one part of the No Bully System known as Solution Team. Under Solution Team a teacher or staff member trained by No Bully brings together a group of students that includes the bully, bystanders, and prosocial peers, and leads the team through a series of meetings to end the bullying of one of their peers by cultivating empathy and developing peer-driven solutions. Data from 300 Solution Teams were analyzed for this report. The Solution Team intervention was found to be effective in reducing the intensity of bullying for the target in 87.7% of cases, and in reducing the frequency of bullying for the target in 88% of cases. Average feelings of safety at school significantly improved for targets after the Solution Team intervention (p<.0001), and in 87% of the cases, the adult facilitator reported that the process had been "successful" or "very successful."

FREQUENCY AND IMPACT OF STUDENT BULLYING ACROSS THE U.S.

Research has shown that large numbers of children and youth experience bullying, irrespective of socioeconomic, racial, or urban/rural characteristics (Nansel et al., 2001). Studies find that between 30 and 45 percent of youth experience bullying in their peer group, either as a victim, bully, or both, and that most of this bullying occurs in schools (Dinkes et al., 2009; Kasen, et al., 2004; Nansel et al., 2001). Moreover, frequent victimization (occurring two or more times per month) is estimated to occur at a rate of 20 to 30 percent among students in grades 4-12 (Sawyer, Bradshaw, & O'Brennan, 2008). Being a target of bullying has been found to have a range of mental health impacts, including reduced self-esteem (Hodges & Perry, 1996; Olweus, 1993), depression and anxiety (Craig, 1998), depression with suicidal ideation (Klomek et al., 2008; Roland & Galloway, 2002; Seals & Young, 2003), and alcohol or drug use (Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Thompson, Sims, Kingree, & Windle, 2008). Negative symptoms and behaviors may persist into adulthood; many of these children experience adult depression, suicidality, and criminality (Rigby, 2000), as well as shame, difficulties in forming relationships, and heightened levels of anxiety and depression (Carlisle & Rofes, 2007). In addition to its effects on the psychosocial functioning of youth, bullying has serious consequences for school-related outcomes. Disengagement and low sense of school belonging are highest among students involved in peer victimization (Glew, et al., 2005; Juvoven et al., 2003).

SOLUTIONS TO BULLYING

Not all approaches to address bullying are equally effective. For example, research has shown that punitive "zero tolerance" approaches can exacerbate inequity, worsen school climate, and generally fail to address the underlying issues that fuel bullying and other disruptive behaviors (Evenson, et al., 2009; Harvard University, 2000; Reynolds, et al., 2008). By contrast, approaches that empower youth and give them a role in the resolution of bullying help to create more durable solutions and more positive school climates (Davis & Davis, 2007). One such approach is

Solution Team, which has been developed by the US-based nonprofit, No Bully (Steiger, 2010). Solution Team is the third level within the four-level No Bully System under which a Solution Coach (a member of school faculty or staff trained by No Bully) facilitates students in a process to resolve instances of ongoing bullying or harassment. No Bully describes the Solution Team process as follows:

> *…a Solution Coach brings together a team of students and leverages their empathy to end the bullying of one of their peers. The educator tells the team they are not in trouble, describes how it feels to be in the target's shoes and asks the team what they can do or stop doing to stop the bullying. The team includes the bully, the bully-followers and positive leaders from the peer group. The educator leads the team through two structured follow-up meetings, the final one attended by the target.*

Between 2012 and 2017 No Bully trained personnel from 78 schools across California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Utah, on how to implement the No Bully System. This included a foundational training for all staff and faculty, training for key staff and faculty at each school in how to serve as their school's Solution Coaches, parent workshops, and one-on-one coaching for school administrators. Data from 300 Solution Teams conducted between fall 2012 and spring 2017 have been compiled and analyzed here to evaluate the effectiveness of Solution Teams to improve experiences for the targets of bullying. Please note that this analysis does not consider the entire No Bully System, only the Solution Team intervention.

METHODS

The data for this report were derived from Solution Team Logs. When No Bully trains Solution Coaches, they are asked to complete a log each time they attempt to address an instance of bullying using the Solution Team process. The log serves as a record of the process for evaluation purposes, while simultaneously guiding the Solution Coach through the process, thereby helping to ensure fidelity to the model. The log tracks students' demographic data as well as the circumstances of the bullying situation. At three points in the Solution Team process the bullying target is asked by the Solution Coach to report on his or her current experience in terms of the intensity and frequency of bullying, on a scale of one-to-ten (with ten signifying "very bad" and "very often"). Bullying targets are also asked at these three data collection times to estimate their current sense of safety at school, on a scale of 1-5 (with five signifying "very safe"). The first data collection point is at the time that the bullying first comes to the attention of the Solution Coach, the second is directly following the Solution Team intervention, and the third is at a follow-up check-in three months later. Bullying targets provide their responses orally and Solution Coaches complete the Solution Team Log.

Data from 300 Solution Team Logs were shared with the outside evaluator who ran an independent analysis of targets' outcomes. The evaluator calculated mean scores for bullying intensity and frequency, and for sense of safety, at baseline, post intervention, and three-month follow-up, and also quantified the proportion of bullying targets who reported improvements. Some of the Solution Team logs did not have every field completed, particularly for the three-month follow-up data collection point. Rather than eliminate these cases from the analysis, we provide the "*n*" for each aspect of the analysis.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF BULLYING TARGETS

Among the targets, 44.9% were male, 53.8% were female, 1.3% identified as other. Participants' ethnicity is listed in the adjacent table (please note that some targets identified as two or more ethnicities, so the total exceeds 100%

| Ethnicity	n	%
White	122	38.5%
Latino	100	31.5%
African American	58	18.3%
Asian	9	2.8%
Middle Eastern	6	2.2%
Other/Refused	17	5.4%

of the targets).

Across school levels, 52.8% of the targets were elementary schoolers (grades 1-5), 43% were middle schoolers (grades 6-8), and 4.2% were high schoolers (grades 9-12).

REDUCTION IN INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY OF BULLYING

Bullying targets who participated in Solution Teams were asked to rate the frequency and intensity of bullying that they were experiencing on a scale of one to ten, with ten being equal to extreme levels and one indicating no bullying at all. At the beginning of the process, before the Solution Team intervention was initiated (Baseline), the average levels of frequency and intensity reported by targets were 7.14 and 7.23, respectively. As shown on the graph below, these average levels dropped precipitously and *significantly*[1] after the Solution Team intervention to 3.09 and 3.09. While not all Solution Coaches followed the protocol to conduct a three-month check-in (three-month follow-up data were only available for 57% of cases where baseline data were recorded), in those cases where data were available they showed further decreases in the average frequency and intensity of bullying (2.20 and 2.12).

Looking at the data differently, in terms of the proportion of the targets that reported to their Solution Coaches that they had experienced reductions in the intensity and frequency of bullying, we found that, among the 266 cases where there were complete data for both baseline and the initial follow-up, 88% showed reductions in the frequency of bullying after the Solution Team intervention, and 87.7% showed reductions in the intensity of bullying. Complete pre-post data from the three-month check-in were only available for 173 cases. Among these, 91.3% showed reduced frequency and 93.5% showed reduced intensity of bullying between the baseline measurement and the three-month follow-up.
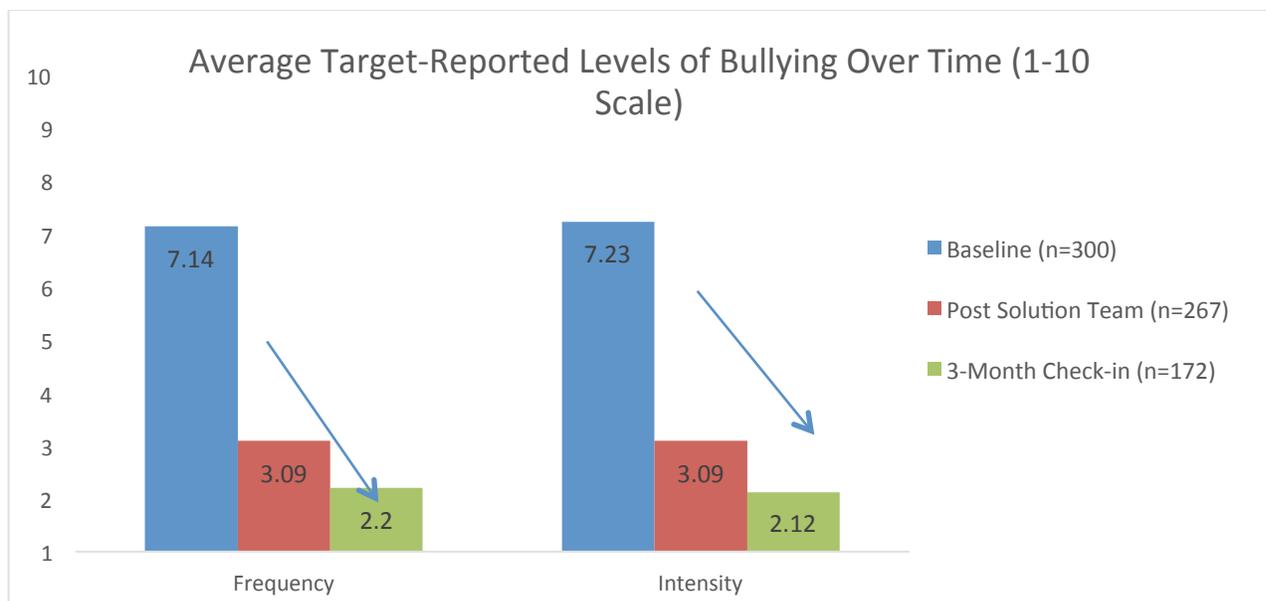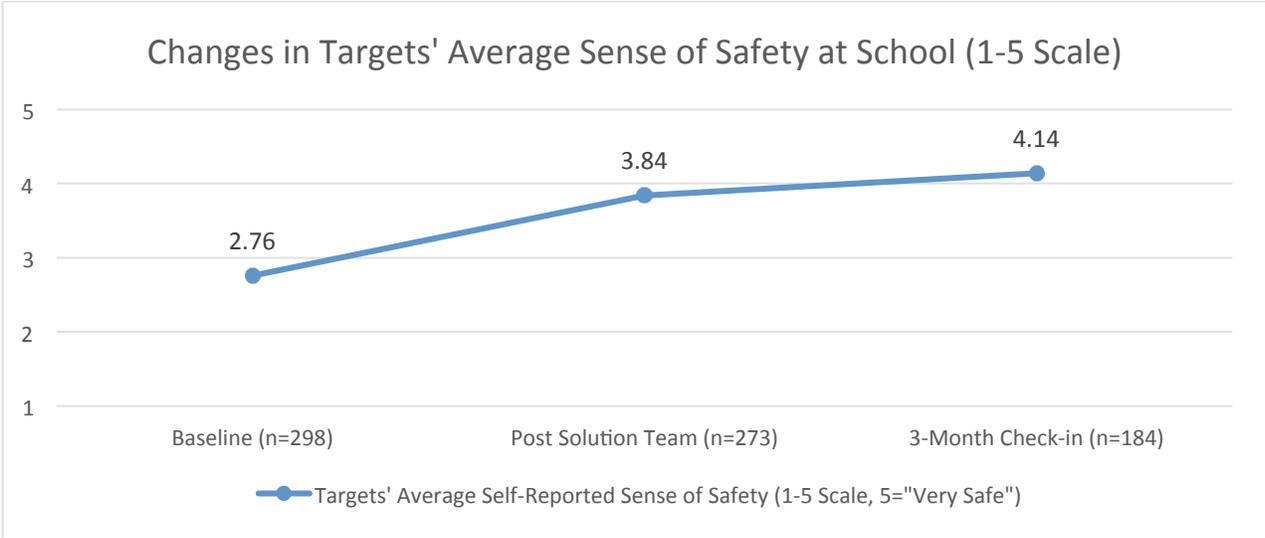

Many participants (38.2%) experienced *total cessation* of bullying at the time of the Solution Team, as indicated by a frequency score of "1" after the Solution Team. Furthermore, by the 3-month follow-up, a majority (58.9%) of the students for whom data were available reported that they were no longer experiencing any bullying.

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[1] T-tests show the drop between Baseline and post-Solution Team check-in to be statistically significant (p<.0001).

Only 7.5% of targets for whom there were data showed no reduction in the frequency of bullying at either the post-Solution Team check-in or at the three-month check-in (20 cases). And only 7.3% of cases showed no reduction in intensity at either check-in (19 cases).

IMPROVED FEELINGS OF SAFETY AT SCHOOL

The targets on behalf of whom Solution Teams were run were also asked to rate how safe they felt at the three data collection points. In the graph below are the average (mean) self-reported safety scores of Solution Team participants at the three data collection points, with 5 indicating feeling "very safe." The change in perceived safety between baseline and post-Solution Team were found to be statistically significant ($p<.0001$).

Changes in Targets' Average Sense of Safety at School (1-5 Scale)

Baseline (n=298) — 2.76
Post Solution Team (n=273) — 3.84
3-Month Check-in (n=184) — 4.14

Targets' Average Self-Reported Sense of Safety (1-5 Scale, 5="Very Safe")

Among the 270 cases where target's sense of safety was recorded for baseline and either post-Solution Team or at the three-month check-in, 72.2% showed improvements.

FACILITATOR IMPRESSIONS OF THE PROCESS

Among the 300 Solution Team logs, 238 included data on the facilitator's impression of how effective the Solution Team process had been in resolving bullying. In 87% of cases (207) the Solution Coach reported that the process had been either "successful" (47.5%) or "very successful" (39.5%).

CONCLUSION

This report provides evidence that school personnel trained in Solution Team achieve a high level of success in remedying, and in many cases completely resolving incidents of student bullying. While not part of a large scale randomized study, these findings are promising for a field that is still struggling to find effective interventions. The data suggest that Solution Teams could be a worthwhile tool for schools seeking to improve school climate, engage alternatives to suspension, and mitigate the physical and mental health impacts of bullying.

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