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## National PTA® Connect For Respect Initiative A Planning Tool for PTAs to Host a Conversation on Bullying in Your Community

Parents and caring adults can play pivotal roles in creating a healthy school and community climate that is free of bullying. By working together, educators, parents, concerned citizens, business leaders, advocates and community members can support the implementation of bullying prevention programs, reinforce bullying prevention messages, and advocate for bullying policies to be put into place. This collaboration is critical as bullying happens everywhere that young people gather, including online, via text, and in social networks. PTA leaders and parents can play an important role in convening community conversations to build awareness of this as an important issue and to take action to stop bullying in your communities.

This tip sheet was created to help you, as PTA leaders and parents, design and facilitate a *Connect for Respect* event in your community. During this event, it is hoped that parents, students, and teachers can learn more about what bullying is and discuss ideas to prevent it together. There is no prescribed way to host a *Connect for Respect* event – rather, it should look and feel unique to your own community. The tips below provide some general planning tips that can help you design, execute and evaluate your event, including some best practices in school- and community-based bullying prevention programs.

### Planning Tips

**1. Develop Goals and Objectives:** As planning for the event begins, it is important to determine the goals and objectives for your *Connect for Respect* event. Setting your goals is an important task in order to guide your work and ensure that you stay on track. Generally speaking, goals are broad concepts that set a clear vision for what you want to achieve. It is best to stick with one to three goals that are realistic in order to maintain your focus. Once the goals have been decided, you will need to determine the objectives within each goal. Objectives describe the individual outcomes that need to be in place in order to meet your goals. Your objectives should be measurable and time-bound.

Below is an example of a goal and two objectives for a *Connect for Respect* event:

- **Goal:** To host a *Connect for Respect* event to raise community awareness about how bullying has impacted your community
- **Objective 1:** At the conclusion of the event, parents, students, and community members will reach consensus on three ideas that can help prevent bullying
- **Objective 2:** By the end of the event, 20 participants will sign up to lead a bullying prevention committee to implement the ideas shared at the event

**2. Determine the Type of Event:** Your *Connect for Respect* event should reflect your goals and your local needs as they relate to bullying prevention. You might consider holding a community conversation, a town hall, a workshop to educate and engage parents and community members. Consider your goals and the best event format to meet your needs.

**3. Select a Date and Time:** Start to think about when would be the best date and time to hold a *Connect for Respect* forum in your community. Consult your school calendar and talk with school administrators to avoid any other major events.

**4. Determine a Location:** When thinking about hosting a *Connect for Respect* function, location is key. Some things to consider when determining a location:

- a. Make sure you have enough space to host the event and your expected number of attendees.
- b. Try to find a place that is in a neutral environment for parents, students, and community members.
- c. Look for a location that is wheelchair accessible, close to public transportation, and has free parking.
- d. Be sure to get approval to use the facility prior to the event.
- e. Make sure the location has things like chairs, tables, podiums, and microphones, if needed.

**5. Consider the Unique Needs of Your Community:** In order to attend, will parents need childcare? Are most parents and community members free during the time you plan to have your event? Will food be provided at the event? Has there been a major event or tragedy that has raised awareness or concern about bullying in your community? Consider how you might incorporate these and other concerns into your event, with the goal of creating an event that will welcome all families and community members. **Review What Works in Successful Bullying Programs:** As you plan your event, be sure to take a look at the research and best practices that exist on bullying prevention. A great source for this information is Stop Bullying Now, an initiative coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Department has identified the following best practices after reviewing existing bullying prevention programs and gathering feedback from educators in the field for school-based prevention programs:

- Focus on the social environment of the school
- Assess bullying at your school
- Garner staff and parent support for bullying prevention
- Form a group to coordinate the school's bullying prevention activities
- Train the school's staff in bullying prevention
- Establish and enforce school rules and policies related to bullying
- Increase adult supervision in hot spots where bullying occurs
- Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations
- Focus some class time on bullying prevention
- Continue these efforts over time

These programs can benefit from support from PTAs and family members who can help support these programs over time. You can find out more online at: <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/tip-sheets/tip-sheet-23.aspx>

**6. Develop an Agenda and Invite Guest Speakers:** Once the date, time and location for the event have been finalized, start to think about what bullying topics should be addressed, how these topics have impacted your community, and who the appropriate speakers for the event will be. Consider speakers that can talk about why bullying is important, what the research says about bullying prevention, and how best practices can be implemented in your community. You might consider including:

- a. An expert on the topic of bullying.
- b. A student or panel of students to talk about bullying and how it has affected their lives.
- c. Members from the school district or county school board to discuss related policies on bullying.
- d. A principal, teacher or school counselor to discuss the impact on the school environment and on student learning.
- e. Parents who have experienced their child being bullied.

**7. Communicate About Your Event:** Create posters and flyers to post around your neighborhood, have students take the flyers home, have the information posted in the PTA newsletter and/or website, and market the event in or local newspaper and to your local news station to maximize participation at your event.

**8. Develop Materials to Hand Out at Your Event:** A good rule of thumb when hosting an informational session is to give people something to take home. Providing pamphlets, brochures, and flyers about the information talked about during the session will give people more time to think about the information that was shared. Five tip sheets for parents, communities and PTA leaders can be downloaded at [PTA.org/bullying](http://PTA.org/bullying). Other resources from experts on bullying are also available on that site as well.

**9. Host Your Connect for Respect Event:** The day of the event, be sure to welcome all parents, students and members of your community with open arms. Kick off the event by sharing the purpose and outcomes expected from the event. Consider sharing a definition of what bullying is and how it has affected your community, so everyone begins the conversation on the same page. Throughout the event, keep your eyes and ears open for solutions that you can implement together as a community to reduce bullying. At the conclusion of the event, be sure to determine next steps and to conduct an evaluation.

**10. Evaluate Your Event:** An evaluation should always be used to give feedback and data to provide you with information about what you did well and what can be improved upon for next time. Evaluations, such as a survey or pre- and post-test, can tell you what attendees learned from your event and how they might plan to use that information. Developing a survey to be given out at the end of the event is a great way to measure if your *Connect for Respect* event met the goals and objectives set during the planning period.

**11. Plan for the Future:** As your project comes to a close, consider how the work to prevent bullying in your community will continue. Will this event become an annual activity? Is there opportunity for this same type of event to be replicated in other neighborhoods and communities? Is there a committee to help implement the key learnings from your event in your local schools? These questions will help guide the planning and development of a meaningful conversation around a poignant topic within schools today. Also, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers the following guidance on developing community-wide strategies to stop bullying:

- a. Involve youth, parents, professionals, and volunteers in promoting bullying prevention – Everyone has a perspective to contribute that is of value. Leverage the existing knowledge that already exists in your community.
- b. Assess strengths and needs in your community – Survey the bullying prevention activities in your community to understand what works and what does not. Understand the impact of bullying on your community.
- c. Raise community awareness – Use your voice to raise awareness of the issue. Share information through the media, Facebook, and by sharing tip sheets and other materials.
- d. Develop a comprehensive community strategy to address bullying – Set goals and create plans to meet those goals. Advocate for appropriate policies to be put in place.

More information can be found on the Department's website, at: <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/tip-sheets/tip-sheet-25.aspx>.

To find out more, and to download tip sheets on bullying prevention, visit [PTA.org/bullying](http://PTA.org/bullying).

## About National PTA®:

PTA® comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education health, and welfare of children and youth.