



Gender-Based Bullying and Harassment: You Are Part of the Solution.

Gender-based bullying and harassment has a significant impact on Maine youth.¹ Students experience gender-based bullying and harassment on the way to school, to and from school, and online.² Many harassing behaviors have traditionally been considered part of growing up, but they are in fact gender-based bullying and harassment.

Victims can experience poor health outcomes, inability to focus on school, and even suicide,^{3,4} and perpetrators are more likely to go on to engage in other gender-based aggression, including sexual assault.⁵ This kind of bullying and harassment creates an unsafe school climate, and it may also be sexual harassment and an infringement of a student's civil rights.

For more information contact us at
www.backbonezone.com or call us at 207-626-0034

WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?

The good news is that there are solutions! Many kinds of sexual violence prevention have been proven to decrease sexist attitudes and increase positive bystander action.⁶ Bystander engagement strategies are an evidence-based approach⁷ to violence prevention — and several programs in Maine aim to change sexist and homophobic attitudes, and increase positive bystander behaviors. The Backbone Zone social marketing campaign can support these programs in building a healthy school climate. It aims to help students recognize the impact of sexist and homophobic language, and encourages the development of skills to speak out when they see it and hear it.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TODAY?

- It's up to adults to teach young people how to recognize and respond to aggressive behavior and language and to develop active bystander skills. Support a climate of change.
- Learn - and use - positive active bystander skills, and help youth do the same. Enthusiastically support positive bystander behaviors when you see them. Remind young people that there's always a chance to learn from mistakes - no one has to get it right every time.
- Recognize when bullying becomes sexual harassment, and introduce yourself to your school's Title IX coordinator: every school that receives federal funding has one. Work within your community to ensure that schools meet their obligations to address Title IX violations in a way that supports the victim of harassment.
- Support ongoing educational programming that aims to shift the culture of sexism and homophobia, such as your local sexual assault support center's classroom-based education, Boys to Men's Reducing Sexism and Violence Program, Add Verb's You the Man, and your school's Civil Rights Team Project.
- Whether you are a teacher, a coach, a parent, a local business leader - in every role, you have an opportunity to model anti-sexist, anti-homophobic behaviors, and to make your office, classroom, or kitchen a safe and healthy space for young people. Being a positive mentor is the most important step toward creating a community of equality and respect, and free from violence.

¹ Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). *Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey: Results of the high school survey*. Retrieved from: <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=101987&an=1>

² Ibid.

³ Kochenderfer, B., & Ladd, G. (1996). Peer victimization: Cause or consequence of school maladjustment? *Child Development*, 67, 1305–1317.

⁴ Boulton, M., & Hawker, D. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 41, 441–455.

⁵ Espelage, D., Basile, K., Hamburger, M. (2012). Bullying perpetration and subsequent sexual violence perpetration among middle school students. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 50(1), 60-65.

⁶ Fay, F. & Medway. (2006). An acquaintance rape education program for students transitioning to high school. *Sex Education*, 6(3): 223-236.

⁷ Coker, A., et al. (2011). *Evaluation of Green Dot: An active bystander intervention to reduce sexual violence on college campuses*. *Violence Against Women* 17(6), 720-742.