

## Cyber-bullying and Student Suicide Preparing Drivers and Attendants for Prevention

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### Introduction

We have talked to you about bullying before, but the characteristics of bullying have evolved to fit the technology era in which we are living. In this workshop we will explore:



- Cyber-bullying
- Student suicides
- The role of the school bus driver and monitor
- What you, the transportation manager, can do to prepare your drivers and attendants.

### Teen's Thinking

It is common for teens to talk about death to some degree. Their thinking capabilities have matured and their emotions run deep. They have begun to think about death, and the obscure meaning of life. To some, death may even begin to seem poetic, and experience the “Romeo and Juliet Syndrome” which is filled with the romanticism of death. Every emotion seems overwhelming – every issue clearly the end of the earth.

### Student Suicides

Student suicide is the third most common cause of death among 15 – 24 year olds in the U.S. Depression is a large indicator of the potential for suicide among teens. All types of bullying may lead to depression and potentially suicide. Cyber- and Techno-bullying are emerging as the most prevalent forms of bullying with school students. Bullying impacts students' lives deeply – leaving them frustrated and empty. There has been a recent case in the national news about a student who was relentlessly cyber-bullied. She killed herself. Reports of bullying and suicide incidents are on the rise and creating a concerning trend.

### Signs of Student Depression Which May Lead to Suicide

- Persistent sad or empty mood
- Fatigue or loss of interest or pleasure in activities enjoyed in the past
- Drop in attendance at school or social events

- Dropping out of school
- Signs of Student Depression Which May Lead to Suicide, continued
- Irritability/increased crying
- Anxiety/panic attacks
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Talking about death or suicide
- Hopelessness
- Depression
- Bullying
- No escape from emotional pain



### **National Crime Prevention Council Study – April, 2010**

The National Crime Prevention Council performed a study in April of 2010. The following statistics were reported in that study:

- 40% of teens with Internet access reported they were bullied online in the past year.
- 35% reported they were threatened.
- 21% reported they received mean or threatening e-mail messages.

More than half of students surveyed, reported they had said something hurtful online at least once. The problem has reached epidemic proportions.

### **What is Cyber-bullying?**

Harassment using a computer (desktop, laptop or mobile phone) to send mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images. It can involve posting sensitive, private information about another person or pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad. It can also be intentionally excluding someone from an online group.

## Cyber-bullying Can Involve Varying Forms of Technology (\*= most common)

- Mobile phone calls\*
- Text messages\*
- Picture/video clips
- E-mail
- Instant messaging\*
- Facebook\*
- My Space
- You Tube
- Skype
- Chat rooms
- Web sites
- Gaming

## Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is harassment via:

- Texting
- Taking photos
- Videotaping
- Mobile phone Internet connections
- "Sexting" – Pornographic "forwards" in messages, sexual jokes, etc.
- Unauthorized photos – up skirts, down blouses, etc.
- "Happy Slapping"
- Videos of inappropriate behaviors shared with others

## Warning Signs a Student May Be the Victim of Cyber-Bullying

There may be several warning signs in your students which indicate they are potentially the victim of cyber-bullying. They include:

- Displaying negative talk or attitude about the computer, cell phone, and other technological devices
- Appearing stressed when receiving an e-mail, instant message, or text
- Withdrawing from friends, changing seats on bus without obvious reason
- Warning Signs, Continued...
- Acting reluctant to attend school and social events
- Avoiding conversations about computer/phone use
- Displaying negative feelings: sadness, anger, frustration, reduced tolerance and worry which seem to be connected to computer or phone, etc.



## Why Does Cyber-bullying Seem Worse than Other Forms?

Cyber-bullying seems worse than other forms of bullying and harassment because of its easy access, its far reach, and anonymity.

- Access: Students cannot get away from it – there is no safe haven.
- Reach: There are no barriers to the audience – world-wide capabilities.
- Anonymity: not face-to-face, fosters a lack of inhibition – adolescents act harsher than they would in "real life."

## If the Student Feels Something, They Must Tell an Adult

Drivers & Monitors must encourage students to tell someone! Tell students it is their job to stop anything or anyone who is bothering them. If the text, e-mail, online message, voicemail, etc., **MAKES THEM FEEL SOMETHING – THEY MUST SAY SOMETHING!**

"Feel something" means:

- Fear or Anger
- Sad or worried
- Uncomfortable – anything!



## Primary Deterrent to Cyber-bullying

Telling someone that bullying is happening is the only way to stop it. Students must not think bullying of any type has to control or ruin their life. Tell students to talk to an adult – parent, grandparent, teacher, YOU – anyone they trust. Always follow up with the student – they must keep talking about it until bullying behavior stops.

## Suicide Prevention

Most effective suicide prevention is early intervention in the acts or behaviors that result in deep depression. Don't let cyber-bullying or bullying of any form, continue – urge your drivers and attendants to intervene. Your students are counting on us.

## Prevention is Key

- Education
- Train your drivers and attendants
- Observation
- Understand everything you see may be contributing
- Reaction
- Intervene, follow through, stay with student
- Pay Attention
- Listen to students, encourage them to talk to you – be there, act on what you hear

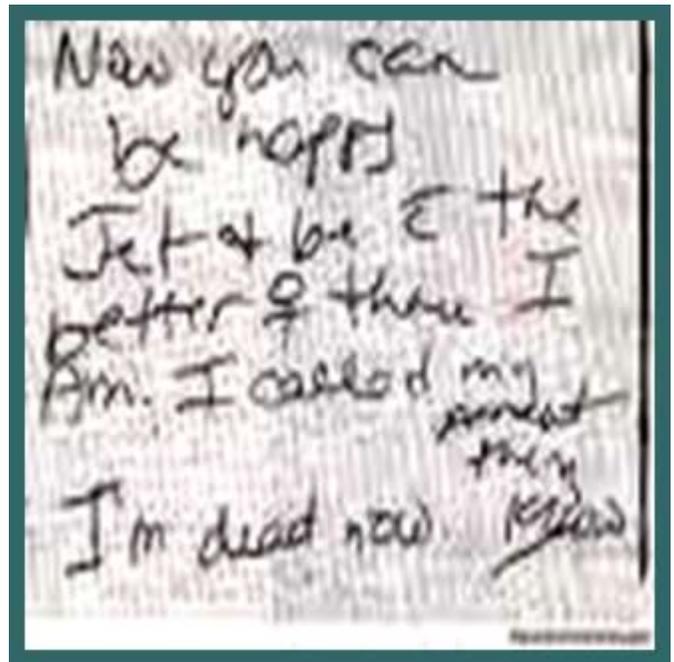
## Suicide Intervention

Tell your Drivers and Attendants if they notice or hear something, report it immediately. If they have strong evidence to suspect a suicide attempt is imminent, call for assistance – don't leave the student, stay there until help arrives. Drivers and Attendants must talk about how valuable the student's life is. These feelings are temporary, and causes can be treated.

## Your Role as a Transportation Professional

We are responsible for student's emotional and physical well-being on their bus. We must "display" commitment to children – be diligent in their observations. Be alert to the signs of bullying – all forms, but especially cyber-bullying. Explain to students the difference between "tattling" and "telling": Simply trying to get someone in trouble versus reporting a serious problem.

We must hold bullies accountable; consistently intervene – we are obligated to intervene as a TRANSPORTATION PROFESSIONALS!



## School Wide Programs

As an administrator – get involved in school and community suicide prevention programs. Create a communication process for identifying at-risk students on your buses. Connect Drivers and Attendants to your school-wide suicide prevention program. Give Drivers and Attendants realistic and effective ideas for interacting with at-risk students.

## Interacting with At-risk Students

Create a bus environment where students feel safe to share information about how they feel. Give the student opportunities to be successful –and praise liberally. Ask them to help someone on the bus – it will raise their self-esteem!

## Tell Your Drivers and Attendants to...

- Listen to what the students are talking about.
- Watch behaviors of students – they know more about them than they might think they do; pay attention to something that doesn't fit, such as personality changes.
- Read their body languages, expressions, eye exchanges – they are speaking to them; ask questions discreetly.
- Trust their "gut feeling" – in most cases their "feeling" is right.

## Final Diary Pages of Vijay Singh

"I shall remember forever and will never forget:

Monday: my money was taken.

Tuesday: names were called.

Wednesday: my uniform was torn.

Thursday: my body pouring with blood.

Friday: it's ended.

Saturday: freedom"



*See Something,  
Say Something!  
It Could Save  
a Life!*