

For Immediate Release

1/6/14

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NJ Schools Fail to Report Most School Violence and Bullying

An analysis released today by NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention shows that **violence and bullying is dramatically under-reported in NJ schools**. The Coalition analysis is of data from the Electronic Violence and Vandalism Reporting Survey (EVVRS), the major method used annually by NJ's Department of Education (NJ DOE) to collect data from NJ schools about incidents of violence in schools, including harassment, intimidation and bullying ('HIB'). The analysis, by the Coalition's Research Advisor, Dr. Michael B. Greene, points out that on the EVVRS:

- almost a quarter of NJ's school *districts* report *zero* incidents of bullying in the entire year;
- almost half of NJ *schools* (44%) report *zero* incidents of bullying in the entire year;
- more than half of NJ schools (58%) report *zero or one* incident of bullying in the entire year.

The EVVRS-reported percentage of bullying in NJ schools in the 2012-2013 school year is *0.5%*. This unbelievable figure contrasts with every other reputable research report, including the U.S. government's CDC report (YRBS, or 'Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance'), which estimates bullying rates of about 20% in NJ schools. (There are other reputable state and national reports which range as low as 8%, but no report has *ever* suggested rates of bullying as low as NJ's EVVRS data.) (A related NJ DOE report for 2012-2013, the HIB-ITP, provides almost identical low reported rates.)

Each year, NJ DOE reports the EVVRS results to the legislature, as it is required to do, and each report is followed by media coverage which suggests – based on this false data – that bullying and violence has risen or dropped accordingly. This year, the widely reported headline was that rates of bullying in NJ schools have dropped dramatically. But the data which generates the headlines is *not reliable*.

According to Coalition Director Stuart Green, "DOE is well aware that schools continually under-report bullying and violence, for many reasons. Most obviously, no school district wants to report violence data honestly unless it can be assured that all other districts are doing so. The risk is that a particular district, reporting honestly, will acquire a negative reputation for having violent schools. NJ DOE is aware of this problem, but does not, year after year, adequately address it. Direct surveying of students is one answer (and there are others), but DOE does not pursue this option. NJ law which requires active parental consent for surveying students about violence is another barrier, unchallenged by DOE."

According to Dr. Michael B. Greene, NJ Coalition Research Advisor, "These reports under-represent the true rate of bullying by a factor of 28 to 1. These figures are simply not believable. We can state with one hundred percent assurance that these reports vastly under-report the rate of bullying in our schools."