

Coalition Update 4-29-05

Stuart Green, MSW, MA

(1) Administrative (organizational):

As the bullying-related workload (and the perceived need) continues to increase, I've now exceeded my capacity (or at least now realize I have) to adequately manage the process, while concurrently maintaining my 'day job' (medical education). As we discussed at the 3/29 meeting, reaching out for funding (e.g., from grants or other sources) to provide for administrative and staff help has been considered. But beyond receiving funding for staff help, it will be necessary to recruit an administrative team for the Coalition. The team will have to consist of people who are not otherwise (over) occupied with their own current 'day jobs', someone who is in a position to prioritize the Coalition role and has the time to do so. The very first task of this team will be to complete the funding identification and application process, in the hope of creating a paid administrative function. Some of the Coalition organizations (e.g., NJSACC) have traveled this same path. It is probably necessary for the Coalition to become a 501c-3 organization with a formal board (beyond the project leadership group which now serves that function). A Coalition organization (such as NJSACC) can function temporarily and transitionally as a conduit for grant applications and funding, pending further development. Much of the work will inevitably still be done by volunteers - I've had outreach from several people interested in providing volunteer help with various aspects of Coalition functioning, including everything from PR to web design to stuffing envelopes. I've been discussing these Coalition leadership and volunteer staffing needs with people and have gotten an enthusiastic response - there's a resonance to the mission and the possibilities.

(2) Projects: When I say I've exceeded my capacity (or realize it), I'm thinking most of what it takes (on my part, including what should reasonably be expected of me in urging progress, providing links, making calls, doing legwork, etc. etc.) to move our identified projects forward. Here's a summary of what I think is needed:

Hotline (or 'support line') project: There needs to be follow-up of calls already made to existing organizations with support line expertise (e.g., Parents Anonymous), and further discussion with Office of Bias Crime and Community Relations (OBCCR) toward the next concrete step: meeting to establish a plan for supporting and extending the reach and services of the existing line. Initial contact has also been made with United Way-funded 211 lines in NJ. (In CT, all 211 calls re bullying are referred to that state's anti-bullying advocacy group.)

Law: As discussed on 3/29 (and before and since) with Jeanne Locicero, Elizabeth Athos and Leisa-Anne Smith, there is the need to generate some (very short) documents which sum up where we are in NJ with bullying issues from an expert legal point of view, even while L.W. developments are pending. Such documents need to be available through the Coalition on the website and for distribution at talks, and for publication in law-related media. Mostly, this is a service, since such info is not reliably available to parents, schools, etc., at least to my knowledge. But it also serves to keep up awareness in those circles while LW resolution is pending. And, as soon as possible after LW resolution, there needs to be planning for a law-related conference (e.g., an ICLE conference, if possible) and - even more important - a process: for identifying and involving private lawyers and/or identifying public legal resources who can help

advocate for bullied children and advise schools in such a way as to help them move in directions which help bullied children (and not in some other, more defensive, directions). We also should establish a more systematic working connection with the NJ legislative world, at the least in terms of being able to provide legislative leaders and supporters of the anti-bullying movement with information and support (for these specific efforts). The law project is probably the right project group to manage that task, if 'law' also includes 'advocacy' (which I know is problematic for some Coalition organizations). Making sure that developments such as the new student code and other 'legal' documents are called to our attention and receive appropriate review would be another function of that project group.

Website: A lot of valuable website help has been provided by Kathy Bakes, courtesy of Faith Rice and TSANJ (and Kathy's enthusiasm for the work and willingness to always do more). The site still needs a coordinated, intensive upgrade of the content by folks with more time to devote to it than I have, including coordinating the additional volunteer help being offered, and to scan and provide all the necessary content that's out there. As specific examples, the 'Research' page needs to have a good number of key articles available, the Participating Organizations page needs to have live links to all the Coalition groups' own websites, the Links page needs to have a lot more than the 5 or 6 I've had time to review and put on there, Upcoming Events needs continual additions based on regular communication with the Coalition groups and other NJ and national organizations to identify a proper size 'buffet' of bullying-related trainings and events; etc. .etc. (almost every page could use additions, redesigns, etc.).

Resources/Training: As of 3/29, the plan was to try to provide schools and communities with a comprehensive list of all the bullying-related resources and training programs available in NJ (some of national origin). This database could then be screened (by the end-users/schools, e.g.) with a document such as our Guide for School Administrators (or similar). This would presumably help schools approach their consultation needs more systematically. Non-profit Coalition organizations would continue to be highlighted, as available, especially an organization such as NJ State Bar Foundation which provides free training for school staff, and CAP with its statewide reach and familiarity to schools from its child abuse work and ability to go on-site, organizations with prior implementation project experience such as Prevention First, but also the other good programs (especially and perhaps exclusively the non-profits). This needs coordinated staff help to go forward - it's too big a project to get done without hired help or volunteer help with the time to track resources down, vet them (by whatever standard) and create a document.

Parents Campaign: This one needs the most immediate help. In our eagerness to get this going, Sh'corah Yehudah (SPAN) and I set a date for the 1st organizational meeting of 6/7, only weeks away, with the NJSBF graciously offering to host. While still determined to make this work, there's a lot (perhaps too much) to be done between now and then. Lisa Toomey of the CT campaign has agreed to attend and provide inspiration and guidance, and Laura Grams (LW's mother) has also agreed to attend. What needs to be done is calling those Coalition organizations who are most likely to be able to identify parents of bullied children who may be interested in attending, following up with individual calls to those parents who have already identified themselves to me through the website or otherwise, taking other steps to recruit parents for the meeting as may be

needed so that the group which gathers is reasonably representative, if that's an issue (I think it is), perhaps (ideally) having some prior (to the meeting) discussion with a few parents (at least) to come up with the agenda for the meeting which makes the most sense (organizationally) and best meets the need of those parents who will gather, anticipating the likely needs such a campaign may have and identifying resources and allies within Coalition organizations which should be made available to the campaign, and other such thinking through and pre-meeting work.
