Students and Bullying

According to the National Association of School Nurses position statement, *Prevention and Intervention of Bullying and Cyberbullying in Schools* (2023), bullying is a significant issue in schools and in the lives of students and includes aggressive and intentionally harmful behavior that may be carried out directly or via electronic means. Addressing bullying requires a coordinated team approach that includes all school staff, students, families, and the community (NASN, 2023). According to the North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2021), nearly 40 percent of middle and 14 percent of high school students have been bullied on school property in the past 12 months. "The…school nurse is an essential member of the school team that works collaboratively to prevent bullying, to identity students involved in bullying, and to provide sustained, systemic interventions that halt bullying." (NASN 2023).

As directed in NC G.S. 115C-407.16, each local school administrative unit is required to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying or harassing behavior. As part of that policy, local procedures are to be developed for reporting, investigating, and implementing the consequences for these behaviors. NC G.S. 115C-407.15 further defines the terms "bullying or harassing behavior."

Stopbullying.gov (2021) lists possible signs and symptoms of bullying. It is important to be aware that not all children who are bullied will exhibit warning signs.

a. Signs that a student may be experiencing bullying:
    - Unexplainable injuries
    - Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
    - Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
    - Changes in eating habits
    - Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
    - Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
    - Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
    - Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
    - Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

b. Signs a child may be bullying others:
    - Physical or verbal fights
    - Has friends who bully others
    - Increasingly aggressive
    - Sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
    - Unexplained extra money or new belongings
    - Blaming others for their problems
    - Don't accept responsibility for their actions
    - Competitive and worrying about reputation or popularity

Additional resources are available at the NC DPI Safer Schools Info for Students website and Stopbullying.gov.