

## **The KDHE Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Bullying Prevention Initiative**

### **Description of the Program:**

In an effort to address the problem of bullying and to build capacity in Kansas schools, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's (KDHE) Sexual Violence Prevention and Education (SVPE) Program is contracting with 16 schools (about 2,500 students) across Kansas to implement the Committee for Children's Steps to Respect (STR) Program, an evidence-based, comprehensive bullying prevention program. The STR Program addresses bullying from a social ecological perspective by delivering a classroom-based curriculum designed for children ages 8 through 12 years old. The STR curriculum is incorporated as a part of the regular education program for third to sixth grades of the participating schools and is taught by the school staff to all students in these grades.

An underlying theory of the curriculum is that if children develop the skills to make friends, these skills will serve as a protective factor against bullying (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999). This suggests that bullying is a problem that has to do with relationships and relationship problems such as bullying can best be addressed through teaching healthy relationships skills (Craig, Peplar, Murphy, & McCuaig, 2010). The STR curriculum focuses directly on building healthy relationships.

The 15 schools participating in the program have agreed to:

- 1) Classroom teachers implementing the full STR curriculum which includes 11 lessons delivered weekly with information on identifying bullying, building skills so students will have healthy and respectful relationships with their peers, and an optional literature unit that builds on the components of the 11 lessons;
- 2) Implement the STR school staff training (including bus drivers, cafeteria workers, paraprofessionals, school nurses and custodians) on recognizing and responding to bullying behavior;
- 3) Implement the STR parent component that includes a 1 hour parent training and sending letters home to parents throughout the curriculum implementation to keep them involved;
- 4) Implement the STR coaching component involving training specific staff in a school to serve as "coaches" who meet with each individual student involved in bullying to provide support to the targets of bullying and coach those engaging in bullying to change their behavior and make more respectful choices;
- 5) Attend the KDHE Steps to Respect training;
- 6) Participate in technical assistance calls with the KDHE SVPE Coordinator to report on the progress;
- 7) Participate in the KDHE SVPE and STR program evaluation;
- 8) Participate and present at a KDHE SVPE Program midpoint webinar highlighting the implementation process.

## **Program Evaluation Component**

The KDHE SVPE program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One requirement for receiving CDC funding is to use outcome evaluation to assist with program improvement. The STR program evaluation will provide information on program outcomes to the KDHE and schools and will help schools understand if students are gaining knowledge, skills and are changing attitudes and behaviors that lead or contribute to bullying behavior, and if they are developing the knowledge and skills needed to develop healthy and respectful relationships.

In addition, staff feedback on the perceptions of use of the Steps to Respect program will be gathered from school staff through an online survey. The results of the information collected through student assessments and staff feedback will be compiled as a program evaluation report and will be shared with the school staff for further improvement of the STR program.