An Exploration of Bullying and Disability
A Project of the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council

Submitted to the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
February, 2014
An Exploration of Bullying and Disability

A Project of the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council

For more information, please contact:

Emily Murillo, MSW
emurillo@omni.org
303-839-9422 Ext. 155

Erin Ingoldsby, PhD
eingoldsby@omni.org
303-839-9422 Ext. 116

Acknowledgements: This project was funded by the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council. Special thanks to Fred Pampel, PhD, and the members of The CDDC Bullying Project Advisory Committee for informing all aspects of the research design and implementation.

OMNI Project Contributors: Suzanne Kennedy Leahy, PhD; Alexa Cares, MPH; Alex Clay, BA; Maddie Frost, BA; Misty Schulze, MS, CPSII and Lindsay Moore, MA, CPSII, Regional Prevention Consultants
# Table of Contents

**PROJECT BACKGROUND** .................................................................................................................... 2
  - Project Goals ...................................................................................................................................... 3

**METHODS** ........................................................................................................................................ 4
  - Project Team ....................................................................................................................................... 4
  - Key Project Components .................................................................................................................... 4
  - Project Advisory Committee: Learning from Schools, Professionals, and Advocacy Groups .... 5
  - Stakeholder Meetings and Survey: Learning from Community Members with Disabilities and their families .................................................................................................................................................................................... 6
  - Key Informant Interviews: Learning from Service Providers and Systems Professionals ...... 8
  - Literature Review: Learning from Research in the Field ................................................................. 9
  - Review of Data Sources: Learning from Reporting and Monitoring Efforts ............................. 9
  - Legal Analysis: Learning from Public Policy ..................................................................................... 10

**PROJECT FINDINGS** .......................................................................................................................... 11
  - **Defining Bullying:** Exploring the Scope and Nature of the Problem in Colorado ................ 12
    - What factors impact the potential risk of bullying for individuals with disabilities? .............. 12
    - How does bullying occur for individuals with disabilities in Colorado? ................................ 15
    - How is bullying defined, both formally and by community? ..................................................... 17
  - **Reporting Bullying:** Safe and Effective Reporting Mechanisms ............................................. 20
    - What are key issues impacting the reporting of bullying for individuals with disabilities? ...... 20
    - What current reporting mechanisms exist in Colorado? ............................................................. 21
  - **Monitoring Bullying:** Ongoing Data Collection and Tracking .............................................. 25
    - What is the nature of current bullying monitoring efforts in Colorado? .................................. 25
    - What current systems monitor bullying in the youth population? ........................................... 26
    - What current systems monitor bullying in the adult population? ............................................ 30
  - **Addressing Bullying:** Best Practices and Potentially New or Innovative Strategies ............. 33
    - What are possible systems-level strategies to address bullying? ............................................ 34
    - What are possible group-level strategies to address bullying? ................................................ 35
    - What are possible individual-level strategies to address bullying? ......................................... 36

**RECOMMENDATIONS** ......................................................................................................................... 38

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ......................................................................................................................... 45

**REFERENCES** .................................................................................................................................. 46

**APPENDICES** .................................................................................................................................... 47
Project Background

Bullying has been shown to have multiple harmful effects, including mental health problems, behavior and school adjustment problems, and worsening of academic performance (Nakamoto & Schwartz 2010; Arseneault, Bowes & Shakoor, 2010). Bullying behavior is not a new phenomenon, however, the concept of bullying as a social problem in need of strategic interventions has only more recently been recognized by researchers and policy makers. This greater attention to bullying has led to the passage of new legislation to protect young people from bullying (C.R.S 22-32-109.1; see also companion document to this report, Bullying and Disability Legal Memo). Moreover, the attention of researchers and policy makers has tended to focus on bullying among youth; there has been limited research about its prevalence and effects among adults.

Bullying behavior is commonly characterized by three central elements: 1) intent to harm; 2) repeated occurrence of aggression or with a potential to repeat; and 3) imbalance of power (see companion document, Bullying and Disability: An Overview of the Research Literature). Surveys utilizing this definition have documented that bullying is widespread. According to the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children 2005 Survey, over 50% of U.S. adolescents reported involvement in some type of bullying behavior, as a bully, victim, or both, during the previous two months (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009).

Despite recent, broad sweeping changes, more research is needed to understand how bullying differs across groups and contexts. Bullying is an especially pressing issue for the disability community, as there are several factors that can make individuals with disabilities more likely to experience bullying than their peers. These can include observable physical, social and emotional differences from others (Hoover and Stenhjum, 2003); fewer opportunities to establish strong social networks (Bourke & Burgman, 2010); and imbalance of power in relationships (Byers, McLaughlin, & Peppin-Vaughan, 2012). Additionally, research predominately indicates that the incidence of bullying victimization among individuals with disabilities is higher than in the general population (Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011).

Further, what is considered bullying behavior as it relates to individuals with disabilities may differ from more commonly used definitions, and vary depending on the type of disability and a range of other individual characteristics. For example, one typology developed from reports of young people with disabilities broadened the definition of bullying to include more covert and nuanced forms of marginalization and harassment, such as ignoring, mocking, and patronizing (Holzbauer & Conrad, 2010). These unique considerations, as well as the high prevalence of bullying victimization within this population, point to the need to monitor, address and prevent bullying of individuals with disabilities at the community, organizational, and individual levels.
The Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council (CDDC) has long acknowledged the issue of bullying and its unique impact on the disability community, youth and adults. In 2012, CDDC funded an 18-month research project in recognition of the following:

- The pervasiveness of bullying as a social problem, and the uniqueness of this problem as it relates to individuals with disabilities
- The lack of consistent efforts to report and monitor bullying of individuals with disabilities
- The dearth of information regarding best practices for both the prevention of bullying of people with disabilities and intervening when it occurs
- The need for evidence-informed recommendations regarding reporting, monitoring, prevention and intervention.

CDDC contracted with OMNI Institute (OMNI), a Colorado-based, non-profit social science firm to lead its investigative process from June, 2012 through January of 2014. Collaborating with CDDC and a wide range of community partners, OMNI carried out this research project to inform future CDDC efforts in addressing bullying of individuals with disabilities.

**PROJECT GOALS**

The four main goals of the project were:

1) **Explore the scope and nature of bullying/intimidation/harassment of people with developmental disabilities in Colorado**
   - Examine how bullying is defined and experienced by individuals with disabilities and the various contexts in which it occurs (e.g., school, employment and residential settings, etc.).
   - Explore definitions of bullying focusing on:
     - Exploring state, federal and community definitions of bullying
     - Capturing diversity within the disability community and ensuring that the problem is examined as it relates to both youth and adults in various contexts

2) **Outline current reporting and monitoring practices in Colorado**
   Assess general barriers and opportunities for ongoing data collection by outlining the following:
   - How and where data are being collected and the comparability of data sources
   - If and/or how data are used to inform prevention and intervention efforts

3) **Examine evidence-based and best practices for prevention and intervention**
   Conduct a thorough exploration of evidence-based best practices, with a specific focus on the relevancy and appropriateness of various programs and strategies for individuals with disabilities

4) **Develop recommendations for monitoring, as well as prevention and intervention efforts**
   Provide recommendations for actions that the Council, as well as other agencies or systems, may take as a result of project findings
Methods

PROJECT TEAM

The project team members at OMNI were assembled based on both content knowledge and expertise in quantitative and qualitative research methods. Several of OMNI’s Regional Prevention Consultants, who provide training and prevention consultation to Colorado communities, also assisted with gathering information from local community stakeholders. Additionally, OMNI contracted with Fred Pampel, a sociologist and professor at the University of Colorado’s Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, to lead literature review efforts because of extensive prior work on the issue of bullying. OMNI also sought consultation from the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition (CCDC), who provided a half-day training for OMNI project staff on cultural responsiveness and accessibility issues related to disability. Finally, OMNI assembled a diverse group of advisory committee partners, comprised of local systems professionals and community members, to consult in all areas of the research. This group was integral to the research process and is further described below.

KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS

While initial research questions and evaluation activities were developed from the scope of work between OMNI and CDDC, the research questions and plan evolved as they were vetted with the project’s Advisory Committee. There were six key project components that evolved throughout the course of the project, as reflected in the figure below and described in further detail in the following section.

Advisory Committee
- Learning from schools, professionals, and advocacy groups

Stakeholder Meetings
- Learning from community members with disabilities and their families

Key Informant Interviews
- Learning from service providers and systems professionals

Literature Review
- Learning from research in the field

Review of Data Sources
- Learning from monitoring efforts

Legal Analysis
- Learning from public policy
Project Advisory Committee: Learning from Schools, Professionals, and Advocacy Groups

As an initial key step for the project, OMNI assembled an Advisory Committee to provide ongoing consultation on the project’s research goals, methods and gradual development of recommendations. OMNI, with input from CDDC, identified an interdisciplinary group of individuals from organizations including advocacy groups, school districts, and other agencies that work with individuals with disabilities, and invited them to serve in an advisory role for the project. Potential participants were asked to commit to attending committee meetings every other month, to share their relevant expertise, and to provide feedback on each phase of the research process. The CCDC, The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People, and the Higher Visions program of the Rocky Mountain Down Syndrome Association also provided consultation by contributing time and resources to the project outside of the committee. These efforts are outlined within the report and a full list of acknowledgements for all partners is provided at the end of the report.

The Advisory Committee played an integral role in the development and implementation of the research plan while also serving as a key information source throughout the project. Committee members vetted research processes, including the study design and research questions and measures (e.g., key informant interview and stakeholder meeting facilitation guides). Members provided ongoing expertise in the areas of community efforts, programs, interventions, and policies to address bullying of individuals with disabilities. Members also shared knowledge about current reporting and monitoring efforts related to bullying. They also assisted with connecting OMNI to a range of community stakeholders which helped ensure the representation of diverse perspectives across key research activities. Finally, members reviewed evaluation findings and assisted in the development of the final recommendations outlined in this report.
Another key research component included the facilitation of community stakeholder meetings. Individuals with disabilities and their families participated in meetings to discuss experiences with bullying and perceptions about both reporting options and interventions. Between June and October of 2013, four stakeholder meetings were held with 50 participants. Of those, 28 participants were adult and youth community members with disabilities and 22 participants were parents, service providers or support people in attendance per participant request (see Table 1).

It is important to note that there were significant recruitment challenges for the stakeholder meetings in most of the intended regions throughout Colorado. Meetings were advertised and scheduled in Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Idaho Springs and Steamboat Springs, but cancelled due to low enrollment. The research team, Advisory Committee and CDDC brainstormed extensively on strategies to increase participation and advertised through key trusted community members and networks, local newspapers and community centers, and service provider agencies as appropriate. Participant incentives were offered and provided; they included a meal during the meeting, grocery gift cards, and optional informational resources on project findings to date as well as bullying reporting and support options. Ultimately, to supplement the stakeholder meetings and provide an additional input option for participants, a brief stakeholder survey with several clear, open-ended questions was developed and administered online in October and November 2013. The survey invitation was distributed via community networks with emphasis on inviting the few participants who had expressed interest in cancelled stakeholder meetings. Four community members with disabilities completed surveys, making a total of 54 community members who ultimately contributed valuable time and insight for this component of the project. Both meeting and survey participants are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. STAKEHOLDER MEETING INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June, 2013</td>
<td>Basalt, CO</td>
<td>5 participants with disabilities; 3 parents or service providers invited by participants as support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 2013</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>21 adult participants with Down Syndrome, facilitated by the Higher Visions for Education (HVE) program through the Rocky Mountain Down Syndrome Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2013</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>14 parents of individuals with disabilities (Spanish-speaking stakeholders attending the El Grupo Vida conference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2013</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>2 participants with disabilities; 5 parents of children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October-November, 2013</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
<td>4 participants with disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both the meeting discussion guide and the survey items explored the scope and nature of bullying among people with disabilities. Open-ended questions assessed the forms in which bullying occurs, the settings or contexts in which it can occur, and common perpetrators. Both measures also explored participant perceptions of how community members intervene when bullying occurs; what types of support are sought; and ideas for improving reporting and interventions related to bullying in general. The Advisory Committee provided consultation to ensure the accessibility and cultural responsiveness of meeting materials which were also used to develop the online survey. Meetings utilized a PowerPoint presentation that met accessibility guidelines from the American Public Health Association DisAbility Accessibility Committee and provided additional visual aids with worksheets and photographs that could be utilized as needed (see Appendix A for the meeting agenda and Appendix B for the survey). Stakeholder meeting and survey data gathered from the 54 participants were aggregated, synthesized and reviewed for common themes as well as critical unique perspectives; community feedback is thus incorporated extensively in both the findings and recommendations sections of this report.

**Limitations:** Initially, meeting recruitment and survey efforts aimed to gather participants who had a wide variety of experiences with disability and other cultural influences to capture a level of diversity within the disability community. Community participants included parents (both English and Spanish-speaking), youth and adults with disabilities, as well as individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or physical disabilities. While all of these participants shared invaluable information and insight, a limitation of this study is that a larger, more strategic sample of participants was not achieved.
Key Informant Interviews: Learning from Service Providers and Systems Professionals

The research team also conducted key informant interviews with individuals from governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations at local and state levels, representing education, employment, residential and other agencies serving people with disabilities. Organizations that granted permission are listed in the acknowledgements section of the report. In October and November 2013, a total of ten interviews were conducted with 17 individuals; each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Interview questions assessed participants’ personal definitions and/or their organizational definition of bullying; local reporting of bullying incidents within their setting; tracking and monitoring of bullying incidents at an aggregate level; and recommendations for prevention or intervention efforts to address bullying among this population (see Appendix C for the full interview guide). Interview data were aggregated and synthesized by theme and then incorporated into the findings and recommendations sections of this report.

The research team also developed a survey that was administered through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to vocational rehabilitation counselors and job coaches. The survey was administered online, and eleven people responded. The survey contained open-ended questions which assessed participants’ definition of bullying within their job context and their perceptions about the frequency of bullying of people with disabilities; the setting in which incidents generally occur; and perceived perpetrator(s). They were also asked to respond to items about incidents that they have witnessed or been aware of, including whether investigatory steps took place after the incident(s); if/how incidents were documented and reported; recommendations for improving the incident documentation; and recommendations for implementing or improving existing policies or procedures to address bullying (see Appendix D for a copy of the survey).

In total, 28 systems professionals contributed time and critical input to the project via key informant interviews or the vocational survey. Interview and survey data were aggregated and synthesized to uncover common themes as well as distinct insights or ideas; findings are incorporated widely throughout the findings and recommendations portions of this report.

Limitations: Key informant interviews were designed to be conducted with multiple individuals within each key context (i.e., education, employment, residential and other service settings), in order to minimize gaps in information and obtain multiple perspectives on key issues. Due to availability of informants, not all individuals who were initially identified and invited, were ultimately interviewed. Resultant information obtained, therefore, cannot be assumed to represent the views and or/knowledge of system professionals in any given area.
Literature Review: Learning from Research in the Field

Fred Pampel, a sociologist and professor at the University of Colorado’s Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, also conducted a comprehensive search of literature and resources in the field related to bullying of individuals with disabilities. The Advisory Committee provided ongoing input to inform the focus of the literature search and the interpretation of findings (e.g., experiences with employment and the applicability of school bullying reduction initiatives to other settings and experiences). The key areas of focus included: 1) how bullying is defined within research and relevant exceptions or limitations (i.e., it is context and group-specific); 2) factors that impact both risk for and protection against bullying; and 3) best practices for intervention and prevention at the community or systems level, groups and classroom level, and individual level.

Literature was reviewed from scholarly publications, research studies, and non-peer-reviewed report publications (grey literature), including best practices from national councils and advocacy groups, such as the National Council on Disability’s Briefing Paper on Bullying, etc. Materials specific to the education setting included a review of school climate and school safety surveys; resources from the Center for Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) Database for Blueprints for Healthy Young Development; and an exploration of school districts’ implementation of anti-bullying programs. Web materials such as blogs and community sites were also included in the review. See report companion document, Bullying and Disability: an Overview of the Research Literature, for the full literature review.

Limitations: The review of literature aimed to include research conducted in both school and a range of adult settings (e.g., housing and employment). Most available studies, however, focus on bullying in schools and draw inferences about applications in adult settings. Further, while adequate studies with strong designs were sought, studies with methodological weaknesses were also considered as important as they served to highlight personal experiences and opinions (e.g., web pages). For these reasons, the findings from this review remain provisional.

Review of Data Sources: Learning from Reporting and Monitoring Efforts

The research team also completed an extensive search of currently accessible public data related to bullying and harassment behavior and any data collection efforts specific to individuals with disabilities. A Bullying and Disability Data Matrix was created in the form of a sortable Excel file, to provide a resource for exploring current data collection efforts in this area. The matrix outlines sources of data, relevancy to both bullying behavior and disability, accessibility of data, dates of efforts and other variables. See report companion document, Bullying and Disability Data Matrix to explore data presently available related to bullying and disability.

Limitations: While the investigation of data sources effort was extensive, this file is based on review of literature as well as organizational and government websites during the 2013 calendar year. It is important to note that the list of sources may not be exhaustive and would need to be revisited frequently to ensure its current relevancy.
Legal Analysis: Learning from Public Policy

Finally, the research team coordinated with the Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older Adults to synthesize relevant legislation and statutory guidelines. The Legal Center explored bullying policies across the education, employment, residential, and general monitoring settings. In addition, they examined relevant legislation pertaining to bullying and disability (i.e., policies that are pertinent to bullying and reporting/monitoring, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Colorado Developmental Disabilities rules, etc.). The Center’s team also reviewed federal and state laws including what the laws enact or require; how bullying is defined (or how it is incorporated); whether there are stipulations related to reporting (mandatory or otherwise) and monitoring; who is responsible for monitoring; and whether there are consequences of meeting legislative goals or requirements. The Center provided pro-bono support for this component of the project and ultimately provided a user-friendly memo which clearly summarizes the above information (see report companion document, Bullying and Disability: Legal Memo for the full memo).

Limitations: The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older Adults listed several qualifications in their legal memo. First, while the review of relevant statues was extensive, there may exist additional authorities that are not listed in the memo. Further, there may be additional legal and policy decisions made in the future that could require modifications of the legal information currently included in the memo. Additionally, the sources included in the memo contain guidelines related to bullying as well as other related conduct (e.g., harassment and discrimination).
Project Findings

Project findings are centered on the following four key research domains: 1) **Defining Bullying:** Exploring the scope and nature of the problem in Colorado; 2) **Reporting Bullying:** Safe and effective reporting mechanisms; 3) **Monitoring Bullying:** Ongoing data collection and tracking; and 4) **Addressing Bullying:** Best practices and new or innovative strategies.

Data and information sources are categorized throughout the report as follows:

- “Community members” will be used to refer to individuals with disabilities and their families who participated in the stakeholder meetings or survey, unless there were distinct differences noted.
- “Key informants” or “systems professionals” will be used interchangeably to refer to the agency representatives who participated in the interviews or vocational survey.
- “Stakeholder input” is used to note all of these sources collectively if the views presented by each group were in alignment.
DEFINING BULLYING: EXPLORING THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE PROBLEM IN COLORADO

A critical step in the research process was to develop an initial profile illustrating the scope and nature of bullying experienced by individuals with disabilities in Colorado. It was important to gain a broad understanding of how bullying is defined in a range of different contexts, where it occurs and in what forms, and which individual and structural factors can influence the incidence of bullying. Both the literature review (See report companion document, Bullying and Disability: an Overview of the Research Literature), and insights from stakeholders contributed extensively to this process.

Early insights gained from the literature emphasized that both real and perceived social differences can be key sources of bullying, especially when they occur in conjunction with power imbalances which are inherently part of most social systems. Individuals with disabilities may at times appear or behave differently than individuals without disabilities, thereby increasing the risk of bullying victimization; they may also experience differences that could potentially protect against bullying. These unique individual differences are commonly referred to as risk and protective factors and can encompass a wide range of issues such as social skills and access to resources. Existing social structures and power dynamics can further contribute to bullying in this population; because individuals with disabilities may be identified as a distinct social group, they are also likely to experience social power structures differently from other groups. Therefore, it is reasonable that their experience of bullying would also be unique.

More in-depth review of the literature revealed that bullying has been repeatedly shown to occur more often in individuals with disabilities (Whitney, Smith & Thompson, 1994). Stakeholder input also underscored that bullying often looks different when disability is a factor, falling outside the realm of how bullying is traditionally defined. While current bullying-related research and intervention efforts are expanding in scope, people with disabilities are still experience bullying differently from how many systems presently define and talk about it. This section will explore: 1) factors that both increase risk and protect against bullying for individuals with disabilities as well as existing social and systemic structures that contribute to bullying; 2) the nature of bullying and how it is experienced by individuals with disabilities; and 3) how bullying is defined, both formally and by community members with disabilities.

What factors impact the potential risk of bullying for individuals with disabilities?

The literature review (See report companion document, Bullying and Disability: an Overview of the Research Literature) clearly outlines a variety of factors that both increase risk for and protection
against bullying; these factors are summarized in Tables 2 and 3 below. Community input illuminated these findings as it provided additional local context in terms of social bias and influences. It is important to note that many individuals do not experience each factor described but rather various combinations of factors, making each individual experience and resultant risk for bullying unique.

**TABLE 2. RISK FACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Differences</td>
<td>Individuals with certain types of disabilities may have differences in communication and interaction styles, as well as ways of behaving in certain environments that vary from typical social norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggeration of Difference</td>
<td>Competition for status in social hierarchy can result in small differences between people with and without disabilities being defined as large, therefore serving as a means to gaining higher status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Separation from the broader community that many individuals with disabilities experience, can widen the social gap between groups. This can cause people to focus on the more superficial characteristics of others, accentuating social differences rather than common interests, shared values and the potential for relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Resources</td>
<td>Access to fewer resources and adequate support systems may further increase the risk for individuals with disabilities to become victims of bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Imbalance</td>
<td>Individuals with disabilities may have less assumed power in the typical social hierarchy, contributing to inequities that result in bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provocation</td>
<td>Individuals with certain types of disabilities may respond in kind to mistreatment, thus at times escalating the bullying. In addition, bullying is often cyclical in nature as those who experience bullying are often set up to experience it again or to become perpetrators of bullying themselves; these individuals are often referred to as “bully-victims” within the research literature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3. SOURCES OF PROTECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship Ties</td>
<td>Cultivating peer relationships creates a network of protection and support. Not only can friends serve as protectors against perpetrators of bullying but they can also create wide-ranging ties that lower risks of being a target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Bullying threats can sometimes be diffused by seeing cues before incidents occur and by responding in ways that neutralize the threat. Confidence, careful observation, and skills in dealing with difficult people, although hard to learn, can help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>When done with appropriate supports, integrating youth with disabilities in mainstream classrooms can increase positive contacts among youth. It can also narrow perceived differences. For adults, participation in typical workplaces, living situations and community life in general may play the same role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A range of other factors can interact with disability and impact how at risk an individual can be for experiencing bullying. Both the literature reviewed and community input explored these issues which are outlined in Table 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent of Disability</td>
<td>Extent of disability has been shown to impact risk for bullying, although this is highly dependent upon the existing combination of other individual risk and protective factors. In general, many individuals with mild disabilities may experience more factors that protect against bullying (e.g., less perceived social differences; larger support networks), thus reducing risk. Extreme and visible disabilities may impact an individual’s contact with typical environments, also limiting exposure to high risk situations for bullying. Individuals with disabilities generally considered to fall in the moderate range, therefore, appear to be those most frequently targeted for bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility of Disability</td>
<td>The ability to perceive a person’s disability also impacts risk, although research and anecdotal evidence from stakeholders is inconsistent in terms of the nature of this risk. Some research suggests that individuals who have perceived social differences yet no clear indication of disability, may be at a higher risk for bullying. Conversely, other research has shown that individuals with specific types of “hidden” disabilities such as learning disabilities, for example, may in fact experience less bullying. The visibility of an individual disability therefore, clearly interacts with type of disability and other risk and protective factors for bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Stakeholder input suggests that age may also impact risk for bullying. First, while school settings generally have more protective infrastructure, adults are typically exposed to less structured settings, less protective entities and have access to fewer options for reporting instances of bullying. Further, adults with disabilities who are also older adults, may experience risk factors that typical older adults experience in addition to risks already present from disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Differences</td>
<td>Stakeholder dialogue speculated about potential regional differences that can impact risk for bullying. Individuals living in rural communities for example, may be at greater risk if the community has less overall exposure to disability. On the other hand, the literature noted that certain cooperative group efforts may reduce risk for bullying; thus, small, tight-knit communities may actually protect against bullying in some cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Cultural Factors</td>
<td>Certainly a range of additional cultural characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity, age (above), religion, socio-economic status, education-level, etc.) can interface with disability and influence risk for and protection against bullying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does bullying occur for individuals with disabilities in Colorado?

The most critical finding in this area was that experiences of bullying for individuals with disabilities are often distinct from traditional definitions, which can include only the most overt acts of verbal or physical aggression. Community members described experiences that regularly fell outside the realm of these commonly used definitions and instead included far more covert acts of bullying.

**FORMS OF BULLYING**

Both the review of current literature (See report companion document, *Bullying and Disability: an Overview of the Research Literature*) and community input confirm that individuals with disabilities certainly do experience traditionally defined, physical and verbal forms of bullying. These forms are noted in Tables 5 and 6 following, in addition to the wide range of more covert types of bullying described. One typology (Holzbauer & Conrad, 2010) developed from youth with disabilities included the following:

**TABLE 5. TYPOLOGY OF COMMON FORMS OF BULLYING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>Taunting, threatening, teasing, tripping, hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denigration</td>
<td>Name calling, mocking mannerisms, goading to do something wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>Patronizing, speaking slowly, treating as incompetent, ignoring, shunning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community input from individuals with disabilities and their families often mentioned the above in addition to many more nuanced forms of bullying:

**TABLE 6. COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disparaging</td>
<td>Being targeted for rumors and gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluding/Ignoring</td>
<td>Not being asked for input, perspectives and opinions; having people default to a support person, caregiver or other representative as opposed to being asked directly; inaction from responsible parties when reporting incidents of bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>Being inappropriately directed or told what to do by peers taking on an inappropriate authoritative role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronizing</td>
<td>Not being taken seriously; being treated as humorous, endearing, a token representative or even mascot; not being believed when reporting incidents of bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternalistic Protection</td>
<td>Unsolicited and/or unneeded protection; being spoken for before having the chance to speak; not being given the dignity of taking own risks and making own choices, as others claim to know best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assuming</td>
<td>Having assumptions made about disability or ability, what an individual is able to do independently and/or with assistance; assumptions about competence and intelligence, ability to have relationships, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Unresponsive Communication</td>
<td>Being explained things in a manner that is not accessible or responsive to individual differences; having to navigate unnecessarily complicated systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTEXTS FOR BULLYING

Settings in which bullying takes place for individuals with disabilities were also explored. A critical learning is that the contexts in which community members reported having experienced bullying, often falls outside the usual scope of where bullying is more or less expected and monitored (e.g., schools or structured service environments such as residential programs). Examples of these unique contexts of bullying include:

- **Public, unstructured environments** such as gas stations, grocery stores, museums, libraries and parks; crowds were noted as particularly high risk areas with no accountability for perpetrators
- **Housing** including public housing and residential programs as well as private housing
- Public Transportation
- Workplaces
- **Medical Settings** such as doctors’ offices and hospitals
- **Other Service Settings** (e.g., benefits offices)

PERPETRATORS OF BULLYING

Individuals with disabilities also experience bullying from a broad range of perpetrators, again most often resulting from a power differential or because of existing social structures. The power imbalance can be formal (e.g., the institutionalized and legitimized power of an authority figure) or informal (e.g., peers who assume social power over others). Community members noted the following common perpetrators of bullying:

- **Authority Figures** including employers/supervisors; school leaders; police; emergency personnel; medical personnel; other service providers; gatekeepers of services (e.g., systems that administer benefits, etc.)
- **Peers** including neighbors; fellow students; co-workers; family members; acquaintances; strangers

How is bullying defined, both formally and by community?

Understanding the scope and nature of bullying for individuals with disabilities is vital to evaluating the appropriateness of current definitions of bullying. A range of definitions exist that include formal definitions (i.e., outlined in legislation, anti-bullying programs, school policies, etc.) and those that are informal (i.e., defined by community beliefs about bullying). Formal definitions, particularly those in state or federal policy, provide guidance for schools, service providers, employers and other entities in terms of policies and standards about bullying. Informal definitions, however, provide meaningful information about individual values and experiences related to bullying. Table 7 following displays three commonly referenced definitions that pertain either directly to bullying of youth or to harassment in the adult population can also be considered bullying in many situations.
### Table 7. KEY DEFINITIONS OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definition of Bullying and Harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **House Bill 11-1254**  
C.R.S § 22-32-109.1 (1)(b) | “Bullying” means any written or verbal expression, or physical or electronic or gesture, or pattern thereof, that is intended to coerce, intimidate, or cause any physical, mental, or emotional harm to any student. Bullying is prohibited against any student for any reason, including but not limited to any such behavior that is directed toward a student on the basis of his or her academic performance or against whom federal and state laws prohibit discrimination upon any of the bases described in section 22-32-1209 (1) (11) (l)… |
| **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
Stop Bullying Initiative | Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include: 1) An imbalance of power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people; and 2) Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. (www.stopbullying.gov) |
| **Colorado’s Definition of “Harassment”**  
C.R.S § 18-9-111(1)(h) | (1) A person commits harassment if, with intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another person, he or she:  
(e) Initiates communication with a person, anonymously or otherwise, by telephone, telephone network, data network, text message, instant message, computer, computer network, or computer system in a manner intended to harass or threaten bodily injury or property damage, or makes any comment, request, suggestion, or proposal by telephone, computer, computer network, or computer system that is obscene; or…  
(h) Repeatedly insults, taunts, challenges, or makes communications in offensively coarse language to, another in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response. |

Systems professionals who were interviewed, as well as some community member participants, commonly referenced these formal definitions of bullying or harassment. However, many provided additional school or agency level definitions which generally referenced bullying in a much broader manner. Additionally, community member perceptions just described, provide insight into their own definitions of bullying through the descriptions of their experiences. All of these wider definitions often emphasize that bullying when involving individuals with disabilities, can be defined as any negative or unwanted action towards a person that is based on his or her
disability. Key findings from analysis of both formal and community level definitions are outlined below.

- **Definitions of bullying are broad**: Both formal definitions and community definitions are broad and cover a wide range of forms and behaviors; many definitions do not outline specific behaviors but rather use terminology such as “aggression” or “physical/verbal acts.” Definitions of harassment appear to include a greater number of specific behaviors than commonly referenced bullying definitions.

- **Definitions are broader when disability is a factor**: The definition of bullying is even broader when involving individuals with disabilities. While all information sources refer to overt forms of bullying, community members often spoke about more subtle forms of bullying related to exclusion and marginalization. Some definitions of bullying can either exclude more covert forms of bullying, or at least not reference them explicitly.

- **Some definitions do not reference disability as critical factor**: Further, some definitions used by key systems (e.g., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) often do not outline bullying specifically as it relates to individuals with disabilities.

- **Definitions are inconsistent**: There is inconsistency in terms of which definitions are referenced and used, both within and across settings (within schools and from youth to adult settings). Some systems do not define behaviors as bullying until the behavior is repeated, although most stakeholders currently believe that interventions should not wait until a behavior is repeated.

- **Terminology used is not always appropriate**: The term bullying is not generally used in adult settings – terms with more legal consequences are often used (e.g., harassment; intimidation; assault; MANE - mistreatment, abuse, neglect, and exploitation).

- **Necessity of stringent definition in question**: Some stakeholders feel too much emphasis is placed on determining if criteria for bullying definition are met versus focusing on broader culture change and mitigating cruel behavior in a more general way.

Policy, legal and informal definitions of bullying are consequential. As indicated above, how bullying is defined has implications for what types of behavior are normative and socially accepted. Definitions, or their limitations thereof, also have implications for: what gets reported as bullying behavior; the data available on bullying; and how the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention methods is assessed.
REPORTING BULLYING: SAFE AND EFFECTIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS

To impact the problem of bullying, it is first critical to have mechanisms in place that provide comfortable and safe avenues to report instances of bullying. These avenues must be reliable, trusted, accessible, and protect individuals from retaliation. They must also offer information about opportunities for intervention - that is, potential next steps to resolve the issue and what those processes entail. This section will explore: 1) factors that impact the reporting of bullying among individuals with disabilities, 2) existing reporting mechanisms, and 3) perceptions of both community members and systems professionals about the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

What are key issues impacting the reporting of bullying for individuals with disabilities?

A wide range of factors can impact whether or not an individual chooses to report an incident of bullying. Community members and systems professionals explained that underreporting of bullying can occur among individuals with disabilities for a variety of reasons, including:

- The normalization of bullying in our society, and a lack of understanding about what constitutes unacceptable behavior
- Lack of awareness about safe reporting avenues
- Fear of retaliation from perpetrators
- Expectations of inaction once an incident is reported
- Difficulty communicating to others what is happening

“For some people, I think that bullying behavior is a cultural norm. It’s sort of like, well why would I report this, it happened to me when I was growing up, teachers and family members treated me this way, a “this is life” kind of thing.”

“There’s a fear of when you report it, it makes it worse. Fear of retaliation is hugely prevalent in disability culture.”

“With a communication processing problem, it’s hard to find people. They know they are hurting but they don’t know why, and they don’t know how to communicate or report it.”

-Key informant interviews with systems professionals
Bullying may be even less commonly reported in adult contexts, as there are generally less infrastructure and protective entities than what are found in school settings. Community members noted that bullying perpetrated by strangers in public settings (e.g. transportation, public places) is rarely reported. Additionally, they pointed out that bullying perpetrated by service providers (e.g. gatekeepers for services/benefits; health care professionals) is rarely reported as a strong power differential exists between parties. Finally, bullying may be underreported in the workplace because the lines between what constitutes bullying versus workplace discrimination can be unclear, and mechanisms to report behavior that does not meet guidelines for discrimination may not exist. For example, statute on bullying may not specifically identify people with disabilities as a protected class, while discrimination against individuals with disabilities is clearly a violation of law (see report companion document, Bullying and Disability Legal Memo for more information). There are evidently a number of issues that make decisions about reporting for bullying victims complicated and uncertain.

What current reporting mechanisms exist in Colorado?

A number of current options for reporting bullying behavior exist in Colorado. Systems professionals and Advisory Committee members noted various options and shared thoughts about consistency and overall effectiveness. These perceptions and some related implications are outlined in Tables 8 and 9 following.

**Youth**

Schools in Colorado are required by law to implement bullying reporting mechanisms. According to C.R.S § 22-32-109.1, school boards are required to “develop plans and policies concerning bullying prevention, reporting systems for incidents of bullying, and related safety plans.” However, Colorado is a local control state, meaning that control over public education policies is held in local school boards rather than at the state level. Therefore, policies and processes around reporting and investigation vary widely across schools and districts in Colorado. Table 8 shows several existing reporting mechanisms that may be available to youth in school settings.
Table 8. REPORTING MECHANISMS IN YOUTH/SCHOOL SETTINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Personnel</td>
<td>Incidents of bullying can be reported to school counselors, teachers or social workers. However, how these reports are handled varies widely across schools and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEPs</td>
<td>Individualized Education Plan (IEP) personnel may receive and follow up on reports of bullying of students with disabilities. However, the process and what it entails tends to be inconsistent across schools and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe 2 Tell Hotline</td>
<td><em>Safe 2 Tell</em> is a hotline run by a third-party organization that allows students to anonymously report threatening activities or behaviors without fear of retaliation. When a student calls the hotline and makes a report, the program informs the school so that they may conduct an investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBIS Office</td>
<td>Colorado’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) office through the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), can receive reports of bullying from families across the state. The office then follows up with schools as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWIS System</td>
<td>The School Wide Information System (SWIS) is an online reporting system for school personnel to track harassment/bullying behavior. The system allows users to classify incident descriptions by type and to track patterns of problem behavior. The use of SWIS is supported by the Colorado PBIS Initiative. Utilization of the system varies by school and year to year and depends upon school involvement with PBIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDE Investigations</td>
<td>The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) learns of incidents when parents or other individuals file a grievance with the state complaint office about a school district’s handling of a bullying incident. CDE has the authority to investigate through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If CDE accepts a complaint, they send a letter to the parent(s) summarizing what will be investigated. The school district has 15 days to submit a response; the parent then has 15 days to reply to the district response. CDE issues a written decision within 60 days regarding whether or not the school district did indeed violate IDEA in its handling of the incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Civil Rights</td>
<td>States and school districts also have a responsibility under Section 504, Title II, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure free and appropriate education is available to eligible students with disabilities. Parents may report a denial of this right that results from disability harassment. Individuals and organizations can also file complaints with the Office of Civil Rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Adults**

As shown in Table 9 below, reporting mechanisms do exist for adults in residential and other service settings. However, there is a clear gap in available reporting avenues for adults with disabilities who are not connected to certain types of services. For example, the many adults with disabilities who work independently, live independently and/or do not receive case management services, may not have clear access or information for reporting experiences of bullying. Further, there is a lack of available reporting options for adults who experience the more subtle forms bullying (i.e., those that would not meet formal definitions of critical bullying incidents).

**Table 9. REPORTING MECHANISMS IN ADULT SETTINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident Reports of MANE</td>
<td>Systems professionals indicated that reports of bullying can be received and investigated internally at Community Centered Boards (CCBs) and other agencies contracted to provide services to adults with developmental disabilities. These agencies typically have policies for reporting incidents of MANE (Mistreatment, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation) as well. When incidents meet key criteria, CCBs must file an online Critical Incident Report that goes to the CCB state monitoring office at the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). However, only reports determined to be “critical incidents” are reviewed and investigated by the DDD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centered Boards</td>
<td>CCBs also receive complaints directly from youth and adults, and then act as advocates to refer victims to resources or help with next steps. However, this process may not always be consistent across the 20 CCBs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO Office of Civil Rights</td>
<td>The Colorado Civil Rights Office under the Department of Regulatory Agencies is charged with investigating complaints of illegal discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations settings. Although discrimination laws do not specifically mention bullying per say, it could be reasonably argued that such behaviors targeted toward individuals with disabilities constitute discrimination. (See companion document, <em>Bullying and Disability Legal Memo</em> for more information.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
<td>Individuals who have experienced discrimination by an entity covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) can file a complaint with the Disability Rights Section in the Department of Justice. All complaints are processed and reviewed and can take up to 3 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Reporting Options</td>
<td><em>The Bullying and Disability Data Matrix</em> companion document to this report, outlines a number of additional reporting mechanisms that may exist in the public sector to monitor complaints related to discrimination, bullying, or harassment. Some of these include the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity/Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities complaint form and RTD’s Title VI Complaint Form. Processes related to investigations and follow-up likely vary significantly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Tables 8 and 9 show, systems professionals noted the existence of both formal and informal methods of reporting bullying behavior. There are also, however, inconsistencies in the implementation of these methods, in terms of what if any data are captured and what if any next steps will result – even among more formal mechanisms. Further, as the tables illustrate, there are a greater number of avenues for reporting bullying available to in-school youth with disabilities than adults. Moreover, the dominance of official legal procedures at the adult level may make impacted individuals wary of reporting. This may be due to arduous and complicated legal processes and/or disbelief in the process and its results. Adults who experience more covert forms of bullying may also be unsure about whether or not their experience meets legal criteria for recourse.

Among community members, there was wide variation in terms of both awareness and perceptions of the effectiveness of existing processes to report bullying. While a few community members believed there to be effective processes for reporting, others were either unaware of mechanisms or indicated a lack of trust in their safety. This suggests that there may not be enough current education available to community members regarding existing processes and options for reporting, and, that underlying issues with safety and adequacy of follow-up are in need of closer examination.

In conclusion, inconsistencies in the implementation of current reporting mechanisms, lacking awareness of their existence, as well as perceptions regarding their limited effectiveness all impact use by individuals. Further, as discussed in this section, there are already other barriers that people with disabilities may face in reporting bullying behavior, regarding accessibility for example. The number of these barriers that people with disabilities experience greatly limits the information that we have available about these incidents and the ability to design and appropriate interventions.
MONITORING BULLYING: ONGOING DATA COLLECTION AND TRACKING

Individuals with disabilities are entitled to direct and safe avenues to report instances of bullying that in turn lead to appropriate investigation and follow-up processes. Furthermore, greater consistency in reporting processes would improve the information available to inform interventions. Across settings there is also a need to create infrastructures that monitor bullying on a continual basis and on a larger scale (e.g., communitywide, statewide, etc.). Monitoring bullying is critical as it allows for the identification of high-risk communities and trends, as well as for the collection of prevalence data across settings and contexts (e.g., schools, employment, residential, transportation, etc.). In turn, monitoring permits advocacy groups, organizations, and agencies to provide more targeted prevention and intervention services and programs. This section will explore: 1) the nature of current efforts to monitor bullying in Colorado; and 2) challenges and opportunities for ongoing monitoring in both youth and adult settings.

What is the nature of current bullying monitoring efforts in Colorado?

The research team developed a companion document to this report, referred to as the Bullying and Disability Data Matrix, to summarize current data collection efforts and bullying monitoring processes across settings. The matrix provides a snapshot of current bullying monitoring efforts across Colorado (as well as some national efforts) and provides summary information and links to relevant data collection tools, reports, raw data and information about data systems. A review of these data, as well as information gathered from stakeholders, indicates that there are a number of gaps and barriers to ongoing tracking and monitoring of bullying, particularly as it impacts individuals with disabilities.

- **Monitoring efforts are inconsistent**: First, the data matrix highlights that efforts to monitor bullying, particularly of individuals with disabilities, are inconsistent across settings. While there have been a number of single, point-in-time studies to assess bullying prevalence, there are few ongoing data monitoring efforts.

- **Individuals with disabilities are often not the focus of efforts**: Further, most research in this area does not focus on individuals with disabilities as the main population (i.e., it is instead targeted to all school-aged children).

- **Most monitoring occurs at the program or school level**: Additionally, most tracking occurs at the program-level, rather than on a larger community- or state-level. This allows for wide variation in the frequency and nature of data collected.
- **Efforts do not always explicitly monitor bullying:** Generally, monitoring efforts do not refer to bullying explicitly. Data collection tools may ask about indicators of bullying or harassment indirectly (e.g., “Are you scared when you go home?”), rather than about actual incidents of bullying, violence, or harassment.

- **Monitoring adult bullying is further limited:** Finally, data regarding bullying of adults is limited as there is little done to assess the issue in public domains outside of school settings (e.g., employment, residential, transportation or other settings).

### What current systems monitor bullying in the youth population?

There are a number of broad challenges contributing to the inconsistency of current monitoring efforts in youth educational settings. These challenges relate to: 1) inconsistent definitions of bullying; 2) Colorado’s status as a local control state; and 3) data quality issues.

- **Inconsistent definitions of bullying:** First, as noted in the ‘Defining Bullying’ section of this report, the criteria used to identify bullying across settings can be vague and not always agreed upon. While many school districts use the definition outlined in the Colorado House Bill 11-1254 legislation, there can still be confusion and disagreement about what constitutes bullying behavior. Some stakeholders indicated that there may be too much focus in schools on whether or not an incident meets very specific criteria for bullying. They emphasized that greater attention should be on preventing and responding to cruel behavior more generally, regardless of whether it meets a strict definition. Even with the definitions that are in place, schools and districts vary in their processes around which behaviors necessitate follow-up and disciplinary action. This lack of clarity surrounding definitions of bullying in school settings contributes to the inconsistency of ongoing data monitoring.

- **Local control:** Although school districts are encouraged to monitor incidents of bullying, Colorado’s local control status means that the state does not require standardized processes. For example, schools are required to administer a form of a school climate survey which can monitor bullying, but schools choose which surveys to conduct. Data collected across different surveys and other reporting mechanisms, makes it resource-intensive to aggregate data across schools. Moreover, there are further gaps at the aggregate level due to each survey or reporting mechanism collecting different information.

- **Data quality:** There may also be challenges to ensuring data quality when collecting school-level data on bullying. Community members indicated that regardless of the policies that are in place, schools may not always track bullying incidents accurately due to exposure or liability. There may also be a disincentive to investigate bullying reports because of arduous or complicated follow-up processes. School culture and values can also be at play as several key informants cited instances when personnel responses to bullying include statements such as, “kids will be kids” or the perpetrator is “just playing”. Therefore, an
absence or decrease in incidents reported would not necessarily indicate fewer actual incidents. These data quality issues indicate that bullying incidents are likely underreported and that wider monitoring could likely be inaccurate.

In spite of these existing challenges, dialogue with systems professionals and Advisory Committee members revealed a number of systems currently used in the educational setting for reporting instances of bullying (see ‘Reporting Bullying’ section of this report). Some of these systems could also potentially be expanded for use as monitoring systems (e.g., Safe to Tell). Two other mechanisms were noted that are used as monitoring tools but do not serve as avenues for reporting specific instances of bullying - school climate surveys and the collection of disciplinary data by the state. Table 10 following outlines some of the challenges with potential monitoring systems for youth in school settings, as well as opportunities for modification or expansion. See Table 8 in the ‘Reporting Bullying’ section of this report for additional information.
**Table 10: CURRENT YOUTH BULLYING MONITORING EFFORTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Opportunities for Expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Climate/Surveillance Surveys</strong></td>
<td>School climate or other surveillance surveys are administered inconsistently and there are no ongoing processes to track which districts administer which surveys. While some schools administer validated tools, others develop their own surveys. Survey items used to identify experiences of students with disabilities (i.e., relevant demographic items), are not often included.</td>
<td>Stakeholders indicated that knowing which monitoring surveys and demographic items are administered in their schools would be helpful as it would provide an opportunity to support schools in understanding and using their data to inform prevention and intervention programming. Schools could be encouraged to add demographic survey items to learn more about the experiences of youth with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Action Reports</strong></td>
<td>Schools are not required to indicate if a disciplinary action was taken due to bullying behavior, or if the incident involved a student with a disability. The availability of these data therefore will vary from school to school.</td>
<td>Disciplinary action data could more clearly indicate when bullying-specific incidents occur, in order to better monitor statewide incidents and associated disciplinary actions taken. Documentation of incidents that involve a person with a disability as either the perpetrator or the victim could also be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SWIS System</strong></td>
<td>The extent to which SWIS is employed in schools throughout the state depends upon involvement with PBIS. As a result, opportunities to aggregate data and explore bullying across Colorado schools are currently limited.</td>
<td>Efforts to expand the use of SWIS or a similar model for a data collection system could be explored.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued...Table 10: CURRENT YOUTH BULLYING MONITORING EFFORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Opportunities for Expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Education Plan (IEP)</td>
<td>Individual reports of bullying that are specific to disability may surface in IEP documentation but reports are primarily descriptive and may be buried in narrative text. There is no formal system to house these data, making opportunities to extract and aggregate data extremely limited.</td>
<td>There may be opportunities to add data items to IEP forms and processes in order to collect a few key variables for monitoring of bullying. A system to house these data would be essential to ensure utility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe 2 Tell Hotline</td>
<td>Safe 2 Tell implementation processes and marketing strategies vary across schools, and there is currently little known about how widely the hotline is used in relation to overall incident reporting.</td>
<td>Community members indicated that schools should better advertise and more widely encourage the use of Safe 2 Tell as a reporting mechanism. There may be opportunities to monitor Safe 2 Tell data at an aggregate level. More consistent use of the hotline and the development of a system to house and aggregate related data would be needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What current systems monitor bullying in the adult population?

As indicated in the above discussion of efforts to monitor youth bullying, there are several general challenges related to monitoring bullying among adults with disabilities. These challenges relate to: 1) accessible reporting avenues for adults; 2) inconsistency of language; and 3) data quality issues.

- **Accessible Reporting Avenues**: As described in the ‘Reporting Bullying’ section of this report, there are few formal processes in place for adults with disabilities to report instances of bullying. The avenues are primarily limited to structured settings such as employment and residential contexts. For mechanisms that do exist, broader monitoring efforts are minimal. To monitor the scope of the problem on a wider scale, efforts would need to include bullying that occurs in a wide-range of public contexts outside of structured settings.

- **Language**: The extent to which bullying behavior is reported (and therefore monitored) among adults with disabilities may also be due to confusion or an inherent disconnect with the term bullying. Some community members noted that the term bullying is often associated with youth and does not resonate with adults. Further, terms with greater legal consequence such as harassment or intimidation might be more commonly used among adults. Using only these terms, however, could potentially omit the more covert types of bullying behavior. Thus, effective monitoring processes may require a different term for bullying or an expanded definition of the behaviors associated with bullying.

- **Data Quality**: When adults receive services from CCBs or other service providers, there may also be underreporting or data quality issues in monitoring bullying. One reason for this is that there may be disincentives for approved service agencies to accurately track data due to fear of scrutiny from the CCB or the DDD. This issue can be further complicated as community members indicated that bullying-related incidents can at times involve staff members.

In spite of these existing challenges, dialogue with systems professionals and Advisory Committee members revealed a number of potential options that could be explored to enhance monitoring of bullying in the adult population. Data collection efforts, along with related limitations and opportunities for expansion mentioned by systems professionals, are outlined in Table 11 following. For additional information, see also Table 9 in the ‘Reporting Bullying’ section of this report.
In spite of these existing challenges, dialogue with systems professionals and Advisory Committee members revealed a number of potential options that could be explored to enhance monitoring of bullying in the adult population. Data collection efforts, along with related limitations and issues.

What current systems monitor bullying in the adult population?

CCBs receive reports related to bullying. While less severe bullying incidents may be investigated at the agency level, only incidents meeting key criteria constitute the filing of a Critical Incident Report with the state monitoring office at the DDD. The state then investigates, tracks, and reports on critical incident data at an aggregate level.

Processes for investigating and tracking non-Critical Incident bullying behavior within agencies appear to be inconsistent. Only incidents that meet criteria for Critical Incident Reports are reported to the DDD for ongoing monitoring. While bullying behavior that meets criteria may be described in the narrative section of these reports, it is not identified as such for ongoing surveillance. Additionally, efforts to monitor less egregious bullying incidents at a higher level are limited.

CCBs may consider standardizing internal data collection and cross-site monitoring processes, specifically to capture bullying incidents that do not meet the criteria for a Critical Incident Report. Examples of bullying behavior may be needed as part of incident tracking processes. This should be developed with community input to ensure inclusivity of a range of bullying experiences.

The DDD may consider adding fields to Critical Incident Reports for tracking bullying behavior to easily extract bullying-related data for investigation and follow-up.

Point in Time Studies/Surveillance Efforts

There are also surveillance efforts that have been administered directly to individuals with disabilities to assess bullying prevalence and incident-related information. Parents of Adults with Disabilities (PAD-CO) administered an online community survey in 2012, assessing experiences of intimidation and retaliation within service settings. The CCDC also dedicated resources to a 2012 surveillance effort across Colorado, assessing experiences of bullying from participants with disabilities.

To monitor bullying on a continual basis, point in time studies would need to be conducted strategically and repeatedly, over time. This would require that organizations conducting the research have ongoing dedicated resources to support their efforts.

CDDC and/or other funding entities could allocate resources to fund identified community-based organizations for these surveillance efforts ongoing.

Table 11. CURRENT ADULT BULLYING MONITORING EFFORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Opportunities for Expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCB Reviews and Critical Incident Reports</td>
<td>Processes for investigating and tracking non-Critical Incident bullying behavior within agencies appear to be inconsistent. Only incidents that meet criteria for Critical Incident Reports are reported to the DDD for ongoing monitoring. While bullying behavior that meets criteria may be described in the narrative section of these reports, it is not identified as such for ongoing surveillance. Additionally, efforts to monitor less egregious bullying incidents at a higher level are limited.</td>
<td>CCBs may consider standardizing internal data collection and cross-site monitoring processes, specifically to capture bullying incidents that do not meet the criteria for a Critical Incident Report. Examples of bullying behavior may be needed as part of incident tracking processes. This should be developed with community input to ensure inclusivity of a range of bullying experiences. The DDD may consider adding fields to Critical Incident Reports for tracking bullying behavior to easily extract bullying-related data for investigation and follow-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point in Time Studies/Surveillance Efforts</td>
<td>To monitor bullying on a continual basis, point in time studies would need to be conducted strategically and repeatedly, over time. This would require that organizations conducting the research have ongoing dedicated resources to support their efforts.</td>
<td>CDDC and/or other funding entities could allocate resources to fund identified community-based organizations for these surveillance efforts ongoing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While there are a number of opportunities to improve upon the existing systems and processes of monitoring bullying of individuals with disabilities ongoing, many of these systems only capture data on school-aged youth or individuals living and working in structured settings. Efforts to also capture experiences from the many adults with disabilities who live and work independently would be paramount and could include community surveillance efforts. Further exploration is needed to determine the feasibility of expanding monitoring efforts but initial related recommendations are provided in the final section of this report.
ADDRESSING BULLYING: BEST PRACTICES AND POTENTIALLY NEW OR INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Analysis of systems-level and community definitions of bullying sheds light on beliefs about bullying as well as how systems might realistically respond to different types of bullying behavior. Examining the nature of reporting options and efforts to monitor the problem on a larger scale also provides insight into the likelihood that data could be used to drive prevention and intervention strategies. Thus, outlining both formal and informal definitions of bullying, in addition to understanding strengths and limitations of current reporting and monitoring systems, can serve to inform practices for combating bullying of individuals with disabilities.

This section will outline best practices to reduce bullying that were highlighted in the literature, supplemented with potentially new and/or innovative strategies suggested by stakeholders. Prevention and intervention efforts will be explored within three levels commonly delineated in the literature: 1) systems, schools, organizations, and communities; 2) classrooms and small groups; and 3) individuals. Systems-level strategies are necessary for broad social change, group strategies can impact specific contexts in schools and workplaces, and individual strategies focus on personal tools to protect against bullying. Both the research literature and community input emphasize that bullying is generally a problem of the system and that employing multi-level strategies is the recommended approach: focusing solely on individual-level, or small group change, cannot solve the problem. Accordingly, the first and broadest level of systems strategies will be underscored as all information sources focused on community efforts and culture shifting as most critical.

ADDRESSING BULLYING: KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION
- Review of Literature
- Insights from Community Stakeholders
- Insights from Systems Professionals
- Advisory Committee Insights
What are possible systems-level strategies to address bullying?

Systems-level strategies (i.e., those aimed at schools, organizations and communities at large) are discussed extensively in the literature review (See report companion document, Bullying and Disability: an Overview of the Research Literature). Further, the literature review suggests that while research on adult contexts is lacking, the same principles can be applied to making system-level changes in adult spheres, such as housing and employment. First, the literature posits that physical, mental and emotional differences do not become important on their own, but instead when people assign social meaning to them. In other words, differences based on disability are only as significant as the social meaning given to them. Systems-level strategies should keep this principle at the forefront of efforts, with social and cultural change as the ultimate goal.

**Systems change through policies, structures and processes**

Developing sound infrastructure to support change is critical to improving social norms concerning bullying and disability. Systems change is only as effective as the policies, structures and processes that support it. First, the literature highlights that policies must be created which take organizational or systemic ownership of bullying rather than attributing the problem to individuals. Policies should be created with input from stakeholders at all levels to support buy in, and clearly outline standards and guidelines related to bullying. This includes discussion about both expected and unacceptable behavior as well as resultant consequences. It is important to note that excessive punishment can serve to create resentment from perpetrators. Further, no tolerance policies can fail to consider unique circumstances, making individuals with disabilities vulnerable to excessive punishment. With these considerations in mind, structures and processes should be enacted to ensure that policy is implemented effectively and rules are enforced. This includes governing bodies and coordinating committees that can oversee policy implementation. It also includes reporting and monitoring mechanisms that can track the problem and effectiveness of policy application (i.e., accountability). See visual below.

In school settings, this may take the form of implementing school-wide bullying programs with clear oversight groups. In workplace environments, parties that should be neutral such as human resources departments, may take the lead in the development of policy as well as ongoing reporting and monitoring. It is important to recall that some state and federal legislation already exists (see companion document to this report, Bullying and Disability: Legal Memo), specific to bullying and/or disability, which should serve as an essential starting point for all organizational-level efforts. In both school and work contexts, organizational versus individual ownership is the critical commonality, as well as stakeholder input and buy-in at all levels.
Increasing bullying-related awareness and education about disability is discussed extensively in the literature, with the ultimate goal of shifting social norms. Both literature and stakeholder input highlighted that more general community-building and cooperative activities may also strengthen interpersonal understanding and connections. Promoting collaborative and community-building activities can highlight the value of diverse perspectives and contributions of individuals with disabilities as neighbors, colleagues and fellow community members. Community input similarly underscored the necessity of community education efforts. Efforts should focus on generating mutual understanding, respect, and empathy as means for combatting disability stigma and related hostility. The literature also highlights that education can benefit from community building strategies and cooperation. A true paradigm shift related to how disability is viewed and understood must therefore increase values of respect and empathy while also building community through collaboration.

Stakeholder input emphasized that public awareness and community education efforts about disability, should be driven by the disability community. This refers to the development of educational content, identification of target audiences and the facilitation of actual programming. Stakeholders identified high priority groups for initial targeted education efforts including police departments, faith-based organizations, and small businesses, and recommended a broad yet strategic approach for greatest impact.

What are possible group-level strategies to address bullying?

Group level strategies put larger systems and community-level strategies into day-to-day practice. These approaches for addressing bullying are also discussed in the literature reviewed, although mostly as they relate to classroom settings. Some research did outline strategies for work settings which can potentially be applied in contexts such as committees, task forces and other workgroups. Stakeholder input was critical to understanding these findings and discussing examples in practice.
Acknowledgement of the issues
The review of literature suggests making topics of disability and bullying part of classroom learning and workplace training. A few community members also emphasized the importance of raising the issues so that they can be validated and addressed appropriately in group processes.

Cooperative learning and working
The literature review recommended the facilitation of cooperative learning activities that identify common goals and foster a sense of group belonging; these activities can also improve interactions and understanding among group members. Extracurricular activities were shown to strengthen social networks of students with disabilities. This principle could theoretically be applied to professional settings as well, in which team building and social activities outside of work could grow interpersonal connections for group members.

Fostering inclusive values
Both the literature and stakeholder input noted the importance of value establishment. The creation of small group environments which value the inclusion of diverse perspectives and recognize the contributions of all members can be critical to mitigating bullying behavior in these contexts. Establishing these values early on, as well as resultant group norms for expected behavior can help.

Leadership examples
The literature also emphasized that leaders, whether teachers or workplace supervisors, play a critical role in shifting group norms and processes. They should first understand the potential power dynamics at play and offer valued and respected roles for all group members. They serve to model expected group behavior as well.

What are possible individual-level strategies to address bullying?
The literature review emphasizes that individual-level strategies to reduce bullying must be employed in combination with group and systems-level strategies, in order to impact the environments that perpetuate bullying. These broader group and systems strategies should be of primary focus; otherwise the problem is placed on individuals with disabilities rather than on the social sources of the problem. Nonetheless, both the review of literature and community member input highlighted a number of individual-level efforts and tools that could serve to impact bullying.
Insights gleaned from the literature review as well as all stakeholder groups highlight the importance of an intentional, multi-level approach to impact the problem of bullying of individuals with disabilities. A wide range of strategies are highlighted above which can serve as a starting point for determining next steps for Colorado. The final section of this report outlines recommendations for all four key areas of the project including: 1) Defining Bullying; 2) Reporting Bullying; 3) Monitoring Bullying; and 4) Addressing Bullying.
Recommendations

DEFINING BULLYING
Clear Identification and Recognition of the Problem

1. **Ensure definitions of bullying are inclusive of disability**

Findings clearly demonstrate that disability can substantially impact how people experience bullying. Experiences of bullying for individuals with disabilities often fall outside types of bullying considered most common. Many current definitions do not specify bullying behaviors that are frequently directed at individuals with disabilities.

*Definitions of bullying, therefore, should be inclusive of experiences of individuals with disabilities, fully reflecting all forms of bullying that can occur.*

Additional considerations:

- Encouraging the use of the term bullying or a similar broad term (e.g., mistreatment) outside of school settings (e.g., adult settings) may broaden the scope of what is considered unacceptable behavior. For example, individuals experiencing bullying behavior within workplace settings may hesitate to report incidents if the actions do not constitute a legal definition of workplace harassment. Since implementation of a broad definition of bullying in the workplace would include a wider range of behavior, individuals may feel more empowered to report incidents, as well as to seek interventions and resolutions.

- Because the term bullying is typically utilized with youth and/or school settings, applying this language in adult contexts may require thoughtful consideration. The use of additional broad language (e.g., mistreatment) as synonyms for bullying may better resonate and be more appropriate for adult populations.

2. **Expand current definitions to include single instances of bullying**

Key informant interviews and community stakeholder input indicated that both formal and informal definitions often require multiple instances of bullying behavior in order to meet criteria for bullying. A single occurrence of bullying, however, cannot be underestimated in terms of its impact on victims and such behavior should be responded to immediately. Requiring multiple acts of a behavior in order to meet criteria for bullying can delay intervention and exacerbate the impact on bullying victims.

*Definitions of bullying should thus remove standards that require multiple instances of a behavior, and/or explicitly state that a single incident can in fact, constitute a legitimate act of bullying.*
3. Increase community education efforts related to understanding how definitions of bullying interface with disability law and policies

Key stakeholders indicated some uncertainty regarding the lines between general definitions of bullying, and mistreatment or harassment based on disability as it is defined in legislation. Some stakeholders expressed perceptions of disability law being relevant for only the most severe cases, leaving a large range of situations in which a victim may feel there is no recourse. Education regarding relevant policy and legal implications can empower individuals and organizations to take appropriate action when bullying occurs.

Community education efforts should focus on increasing knowledge of commonly utilized definitions of bullying as well as legislation related to disability, including what constitutes bullying and how individuals are protected through relevant legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) IDEA.
REPORTING BULLYING
Assurance of Safe and Effective Reporting Mechanisms

1. **Consider opportunities for the modification and/or expansion of existing reporting mechanisms**

   Systems professionals serving as key informants were able to describe existing options for reporting, while also noting relevant limitations.

   Current systems should be further examined to determine any needed modifications to: 1) ensure that reporting processes are accessible and clear; 2) fully protect the privacy of both reporters and victims of bullying; 3) safeguard against retaliation; and 4) confirm that reporters and victims are provided with information regarding the follow-up process and options for responding to the bullying event(s).

   Existing systems for review and/or expansion may include:
   
   - Expanded use of the Safe 2 Tell Hotline by increasing marketing and education efforts;
   - Integration of a new component of the IEP specific to experiences of bullying behavior, including mechanisms for data extraction and monitoring;
   - Increased utilization of the Critical Incident Reporting process to document less egregious reports of bullying (i.e., those that do not meet current critical incident report criteria) of adults in residential and employment settings; or
   - Explore expanded use of the SWIS (School-wide Information System) or a similar system for the reporting of bullying in school settings.

2. **Consider opportunities for the implementation of new reporting mechanisms**

   Findings indicate that currently available reporting mechanisms are not consistent in terms of the nature of information collected and the follow-up processes they include. They most often require that individuals be somehow connected to formal systems in order to make reports. Individuals who are not connected to key systems (e.g., schools, service provider agencies, etc.) may not have access to a clear avenue for reporting an incident of bullying.

   The possibility of a cross-system, anonymous reporting and referral system that could be accessed by either victims of bullying, advocates, service providers or mandated reporters should be explored. The system would serve to document reports as well as provide reporters with education about the process and options for next steps.

   Community input should be critical to the design and implementation of the system. To ensure utilization and effectiveness, the mechanism would need to meet privacy and accessibility standards determined by community stakeholders.
3. **Increase access for individuals with disabilities to advocates trained in reporting systems and relevant follow-up processes**

Stakeholders emphasized that sufficient access to advocacy related to bullying and mistreatment is lacking for individuals with disabilities. They noted that in order to ensure accessibility to any existing or new reporting system, access to advocacy and support for access would need to be provided simultaneously.

A process for identifying advocate contacts in existing organizations, agencies and groups as well as in employment and other settings should be explored. These contacts/advocates would be briefly trained and equipped to: 1) report instances of bullying or assist individuals with reporting, and 2) educate about options for follow-up.

4. **Initiate community education efforts related to reporting avenues and processes**

Stakeholder input highlighted that in order for reporting mechanisms (either new or existing) to be implemented and utilized effectively, significant outreach efforts would be needed to ensure awareness and knowledge of processes.

Community education efforts should be initiated to: 1) build awareness of available reporting mechanisms; and 2) increase knowledge regarding obligations for agencies receiving reports to maintain confidentiality and protect against retaliation.
MONITORING BULLYING

Establishment of Ongoing Data Collection and Tracking Systems

1. Expand statewide efforts for ongoing, cross-system monitoring of the frequency and prevalence of bullying of individuals with disabilities statewide

A thorough review of data sources and interviews with informants from key systems all indicated that ongoing, consistent data collection related to bullying of individuals with disabilities is lacking. Efforts to assess the problem thus far have: 1) been sporadic and not monitored the issue continuously over time; 2) at times failed to explicitly address the issue (i.e., asked about indicators of bullying experience versus the actual act of bullying); and 3) often omitted key contexts (e.g., adult settings).

Investing in the exploration of strategic, appropriate, cross-system and multi-year monitoring efforts could be beneficial. Employing systematic and ongoing assessments of the problem would generate information that can be used to drive prevention strategies and target intervention efforts.

Enhancing monitoring of bullying of individuals with disabilities is complex as it crosses a range of contexts and cultures. Expertise in content, community experience and rigorous data collection methods is critical. Large scale monitoring efforts would benefit from multi-disciplinary partnerships between community and research organizations. Prior efforts led by community stakeholders and advocacy groups (e.g., CCDC, PAD-CO), should be examined to determine opportunities for expanded ongoing efforts.
ADDRESSING BULLYING
Implementation of Best Practices and New or Innovative Strategies

Community Level Actions

1. **Increase public awareness efforts related to disability**

Both literature review and stakeholder information gathering efforts indicated a need for awareness-raising regarding disability in general. Both emphasized the importance of acknowledging human differences but minimizing the importance of difference when it comes to interactions and relationships.

**Opportunities for more strategic public awareness building should be sought and could include public service announcements, social media campaigns or other public forums.**

2. **Facilitate the representation and meaningful engagement of individuals with disabilities in community building efforts**

Findings from the review of literature and stakeholder meetings underscored that cooperative learning and community building activities may strengthen interpersonal connections and understanding and also reduce some of the risks of bullying. Ensuring meaningful engagement of individuals with disabilities in general community-building efforts could serve to highlight the value of their contributions in their own communities as neighbors, colleagues and fellow community members.

**Efforts should be initiated to encourage the participation and perspectives of individuals with disabilities at general community-building events, action groups, coalitions, etc.; these groups and/or forums need not pertain specifically to disability but should be focused on community-building in general.**

3. **Initiate strategic community education efforts to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the experiences of individuals with disabilities**

Stakeholder input strongly suggested a need for community education regarding disability, driven by the disability community. Through this education, stakeholders hope to impact social norms, and shift the cultural paradigm in which disability stigma is currently perpetuated. Stakeholders identified high priority groups for initial targeted education efforts (e.g., police departments, faith-based organizations, schools, small businesses, etc.) and recommended a broad yet strategic approach for greatest impact.

Community education efforts should be pursued related to understanding disability, accessibility issues and cultural responsiveness in both community and service settings; these educational efforts should be led and facilitated by members and/or community-based organizations from the disability community.
Individual Level Actions

4. **Invest in the creation of needed educational and supportive resources for victims of bullying and their families**

Stakeholders identified several critical resources that would assist victims of bullying and their families in the process of recognizing and reacting to bullying as well as educating others about disability as a more general bullying prevention strategy.

Development and/or modification of existing resources in the following areas should be pursued:

- Individual awareness of unacceptable treatment, knowledge of personal rights and reporting processes
- Parent/caregiver/teacher/service provider awareness of signs of bullying and the way this can differ based on type of disabilities (e.g., students who are non-verbal)
- Intervention strategies for both victims of bullying and their families (e.g., different potential approaches for responding to bullying)
- Communication tools for individuals and families that contain strategies and messaging on how to talk about disability with the community (e.g., parents with other parents, parents with students, students with other students, community members with community members, etc.)
- Forums for victims of bullying to share experiences as well as to seek and offer peer support
Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council.

Special thanks to:

- Fred Pampel, Phd/Sociologist and professor at the University of Colorado’s Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, for leading literature review efforts
- The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People for contributing pro bono legal analysis work
- Community members who shared their personal experiences with bullying and critical insights

Thank you to the following organizations for contributing a range of expertise and resources to the project:

- Arc of Arapahoe/Douglas
- Arc of Aurora
- Arc of Pueblo
- Cherry Creek School District
- Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
- Colorado Department of Education Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) office
- Colorado Department of Education Exceptional Student Services Unit
- Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Colorado Legacy Foundation
- Colorado School Safety Resource Center
- Denver Metro Community Parent Resource Center
- Developmental Disabilities Resource Center
- JFK Partners – University of Colorado School of Medicine
- Peak Parent Center
- Rocky Mountain Down Syndrome Association - Higher Visions for Education Program
- Valley Life for All
References

Arseneault, L., Bowes, L., & Shakoor, S. (2010). Bullying victimization in youths and mental health problems: ‘much ado about nothing’? Psychological Medicine, 40(05), 717-729. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0033291709991383


Pampel, F. and OMNI Institute. (2014). Bullying and Disability: an Overview of the Research Literature. Unpublished literature review. OMNI Institute, Denver, CO


Prepared by OMNI Institute
Appendix A: Community Stakeholder Meeting Agenda

I. Food, Snacks and Introductions

II. Purpose of the Project and Consent
   a. Share purpose of the project and project highlights
   b. Share what we hope to learn and contributions of participants
   c. Share how participant feedback will be used
   d. Share informed consent information

III. Getting Started (work as group or in pairs - offer optional handouts and visuals)
   a. What does “bullying” or “being bullied” mean to you?

IV. Group Experiences with Bullying (group brainstorm)
   a. Where?
   b. By whom?
   c. What happened?
   d. What did you do?
   e. What do you most wish could have happened?

V. Group Ideas for Change (group brainstorm)
   a. What do you think is needed so that people can feel comfortable asking for help when bullying happens?
   b. What do you think should be done about bullying?

VI. Group Ideas for Change: Community Education
   a. What do you think people need to know or understand better about people with disabilities?
   b. How can people be better educated about bullying?

VII. Share Project Information and Resources
   a. Share handout with project progress summary
   b. Share handout with available resources related to bullying
Appendix B: Community Stakeholder Online Survey

OMNI Institute is partnering with the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council (CDDC) and Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to explore the problem of bullying of individuals with disabilities in Colorado. This survey was developed to provide an opportunity for individuals with disabilities, or their family members or supports on their behalf, to share their experience and ideas about this important issue.

The survey is completely anonymous. Your information will be protected. We will be hearing from people with all different types of experiences, ideas and disabilities. We will combine your information with other participants’ responses. Detailed information will be removed so as to protect your identity. All of this means that people reading or hearing about this study will not know who shared certain ideas or experiences.

How we will share your stories and ideas: We plan to take what we learn from the survey participants and share information with CDDC about how people with disabilities experience bullying and important ideas for how to begin solving the problem.

You don’t have to participate. Participating is voluntary which means that you do not have to respond to the questions, and there will be no consequences if you decide not to complete the survey. Some of the questions may be sensitive and could possibly make you feel upset. You can stop at any time.

Your ideas are very important! – Thank you for sharing your experiences and ideas.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Erin Ingoldsby at OMNI Institute

We appreciate you sharing your personal experiences with bullying, or experiences of someone with disabilities who is close to you. Please answer the following questions about the bullying event(s).

1. What does “bullying” or being “bullied” mean to you?
2. Where did the bullying occur?
3. Who bullied you? Please do not include people’s names, but please describe generally who was involved (some examples are “another student,” “a case manager,” “strangers on the bus,” “teenagers in my neighborhood”).
4. What happened?
5. What did you do?
6. What do you most wish could have happened in that situation? How did you think it could have been best handled or addressed?

Thank you for sharing your story with us! We have a few more questions that will help us develop ideas about how bullying can be best addressed.

7. Please tell us anything you would like us to know about your disability.
8. What do you think is needed so that people can feel comfortable asking for help when bullying happens?
9. What do you think should be done about bullying?
10. What do you think people need to know or understand better about people with disabilities?
Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Guide

Introduction(s) from participants

- We would like to first gather a little background information about your position and organization. Could you briefly describe your agency or department’s work with individuals with disabilities, and your specific position and responsibilities?
- How does your or your agency’s work intersect with reporting and/or monitoring of bullying?

Definition of Bullying

- First I want to gather your thoughts about what constitutes bullying/what is considered bullying behavior in your specific context/setting? Is there a working definition/how is it defined?
  - CDDC is interested in exploring data sources reflecting a broad definition of bullying, which includes bullying, intimidation, abuse, neglect, exploitation, seclusion, restraint.

Process for handling reports of bullying

- We would like to gather information about how agencies/departments in your setting handle reports of bullying. Is there a process (are you aware of a process) for collecting information and/or data on incidents of bullying, abuse, intimidation, etc.? What is the process?
  - Are there standardized reporting tools or information gathering tools? (or are there more informal ways of collecting information?)
  - What type of information about incidents are collected, and from whom? (If applicable) How are reports gathered when the individual being bullied cannot express themselves and/or communicate?
  - How is the information or data regarding the incident documented? Is/What information is tracked?
  - What happens with the information gathered about incidences of bullying in this setting? How is the information utilized? Who is it shared with?
- Have you found these data collection processes to be effective? How do you know they are effective?

Methods for monitoring and tracking bullying

- (If not already addressed above) CDDC is interested in learning about methods of monitoring and tracking bullying of people with disabilities at the broader state-level.
  - What strategies are used in the [educational/residential/employment] setting to monitor or track bullying of people with disabilities in Colorado (e.g., at a more aggregated level, to inform quality improvement, etc.)?
    - What are the processes/procedures/protocols used to monitor and track bullying? Are processes standardized? Are/what are the data collected/how is the information documented?
    - How are data examined or applied to address bullying issues?
Challenges and methods of reporting and monitoring bullying of people with disabilities

- What do you think are the most critical challenges to identifying and monitoring instances of bullying of people with disabilities in [your context] setting?
- What are specific challenges associated with collecting data?
- (IF NOT MENTIONED) Are there any challenges or differences based upon regions or cultures?
- What resources would be useful in helping you or others to address challenges?
- What opportunities are there within your organization or setting to share data in order to help CDDC and Colorado achieve a better understanding of bullying among this population? Are there specific data sets, tools, etc.?

Information sharing with participants about current monitoring and assessment efforts

- OMNI scanned available literature and found the following information about statewide and national monitoring efforts:
  - Most research about bullying does not focus on adults with disabilities as the primary population, but rather school aged children; furthermore, there is also more research done in the primary education setting than in residential or employment settings.
  - Local efforts include the CCDC Bullying Project, the Parents of Adults with Disabilities Survey, and the Smart Home Imagine Colorado WIN Partners University of Colorado Denver. These surveys explored how often and in what types of settings bullying occurred for individuals with disabilities, and if they reported it and what happened as a result.
  - National efforts include the Positive Behavior Interventions and Support program, Child Trend Banks, the National Crime Victimization Survey Crime Against People with Disabilities through the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Cyber Bullying Research Network. Data tracked include aggregated incidence rates of bullying and experiences of violence & victimization, & reductions as a result of the program (PBIS).

- Some of the information we have gleaned in our data gathering efforts that are specific to the [education, residential, and employment] settings include:

  **School settings**
  - Reporting and implementing policies/practices to address incidents of bullying are increasing (although unclear among individuals with disabilities as this is not often specifically tracked). Regulated through legislation (CO Safe Schools Act and HB 11-1254 Bullying Prevention – schools “encouraged to ensure” surveys/assessments, identified team and policies, annual reporting on safety incidents, including bullying).
  - Most frequent method of monitoring is through administration of school-wide surveys that typically include questions about a range of topics, including bullying, being bullied, and observing bullying.
A standard tracking system (such as a standardized reporting form and a state-level centralized database) seems not likely to be feasibly implemented at this time, given diversity in school practices.

Schools could benefit from TA (information about best practices in assessing and monitoring bullying, e.g., measurement tools or computer software programs)

**Employment settings**
- Reporting and tracking processes are usually informal and varies across settings. Methods include directly communicating concerns with the “bully”, tracking reports through human resources departments, keeping a diary of incidents, or reporting to a national organization, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as a last resort.

**Residential settings**
- Effective monitoring is typically conducted by an outside party, such a social worker (rather than by the program or institution at which the person is residing).
- Abuse has been measured through identified instances where atypical behavior was reported involving residential staff and inadvertently through quality of life measures.

- In your experience, does this accurately reflect the monitoring efforts in this setting? Share any thoughts about implementation, effectiveness, challenges related to these points.
- Are you aware of any other national, state, or program/setting efforts to support reporting and monitoring of bullying for this population that you think might be applicable in Colorado?

### Assess views on current efforts/feasibility of recommendations moving forward

Given CDDC’s focus on this issue, what would you recommend to them in terms of how they might go about improving data monitoring and tracking?

- What are feasible strategies that could be implemented in your setting or across settings? Can you identify specific resources that would be most helpful?
- What opportunities exist to use existing infrastructures to develop partnerships across systems or agencies to address this issue?

### Assess participants’ views about feasibility of future efforts

As stated above, one of the goals of these interviews is to inform recommendations to CDDC regarding advocacy and policy efforts at the state level. One idea that is being explored is whether it would be beneficial to apply existing models and guidelines that have been implemented in workplace settings to increase reporting and monitoring of sexual harassment, or in educational settings to address bullying – to different contexts such as residential or employment settings. We are interested in your ideas about the applicability, feasibility, and potential effectiveness of this approach.

To provide a more specific example, in the education setting, in 2000 OCR published comprehensive, specific guidelines in a Dear Colleague letter outlining best practice policies and
An Exploration of Bullying and Disability: procedures to address disability harassment in schools, and in 2010 and 2011, published others that were more generally focused on bullying and sexual harassment in schools. Just this August, the US Dept of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) issued a Dear Colleague letter that addressed the need for policies and procedures that was specifically focused on the population of students with disabilities. These guidelines provided blueprints to schools on how to encourage and support safe reporting and appropriately address bullying—indicating that schools hold the responsibility to:

- Develop and disseminate an official policy statement against bullying/harassment
- Establish grievance procedures to address it, including coordinator/compliance officer
- Take immediate action to reduce/eliminate the harassment at the time of the event
- Provide measures to prevent and eliminate harassment
  - Promote awareness
  - Weave issues into curriculum and programs
  - Encourage reporting; create safe reporting environments
  - Publicize policies and procedures, including definitions of what constitutes harassment and that disciplinary action, where appropriate, will be taken
    - i.e. how reporting is handled, consequences of bullying behavior
  - Provide training for individuals to recognize and handle harassment
  - Counseling for the individuals involved (both victim and perpetrator)
  - Implementation of monitoring programs to follow up on issues
  - Regular assessment and modifications to policies and procedures (ensure effectiveness)

OCR also set up on-going technical assistance to schools to support effective implementation. Thinking about your settings:

- Would this type of guideline be beneficial to support better reporting and monitoring in your context? Would it be well-received? Would it be implemented? Why or why not?

Closing - Follow-up requests

- Thank you for your participation!
- During the course of this discussion, some resources were mentioned. [Name] mentioned [specific policy/protocol/data collection measure] – would you be willing to share this with OMNI and CDDC?
Appendix D: Vocational Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about bullying among individuals with disabilities in Colorado. The information gathered will be used to inform recommendations to the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council for their policy and advocacy efforts. This survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. It is anonymous, and your responses will be presented in aggregate form. Please contact Alexa Cares at acares@omni.org if you have questions about this survey or how your information will be shared.

1. What is your job title?
2. Who is your current employer?
3. What is considered bullying behavior in your job context?

For the purposes of this survey, bullying is considered intimidation, abuse, neglect, exploitation, seclusion, restraint, and harassment.

4. On average, how often have you witnessed or heard about bullying of people with developmental disabilities?
   - Never
   - 1-3 times per year
   - 4-6 times per year
   - 7-10 times per year
   - 11-15 times per year
   - More than 15 times per year

If applicable, please generally describe the type(s) of bullying incident(s) that you have witnessed or heard about:

5. Where has the bullying occurred?
6. Who was the bully(ies)?
   *Please do not include people’s names, but please describe the type of person involved, such as “a boss”, “a co-worker”, “a stranger”, etc.*
7. What, if any, follow-up or investigation took place after the incident(s)?
8. How, if at all, was the incident(s) documented?
9. How, if at all, was the incident(s) reported to another person or agency? To whom was it reported?
10. Do you have any recommendations for how the documentation, tracking, and monitoring of bullying incidents can be improved?
11. Do you have any recommendations for implementing or improving existing policies or procedures to address bullying of people with developmental disabilities?

Thank you for completing this survey!