

Recognizing and Overcoming the Mental Health Effects of Being a Bullying Victim

AVON, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- As a society, we've become more aware of bullying as a devastating form of abuse that can have long-term effects on victims, negatively impacting their self-esteem, isolating them from their peers and in more serious cases, leading to depression, anxiety, substance abuse and sometimes suicide. Studies estimate that as many as 160,000 students may stay home on any given day because they're afraid of being bullied and the emotional pain they've caused. With the prevalence of cyberbullying, even more youth and young adults are finding themselves to be a victim of bullying.

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month and Magellan Health Services is calling attention to mental health and bullying for its second annual [Take Mental Health To Heart](#) campaign. Magellan has partnered with The Jed Foundation, the nation's leading organization working to promote emotional health and prevent suicide among college students and young adults, to raise awareness about the mental health effects of bullying and encourage people to take responsibility for building a bully-free community. Throughout the month, Magellan and The Jed Foundation will share information about bullying from the perspective of the victim, the bully, parents and bystanders.

Bullying Comes in Many Forms

There are many types of bullying, all of which can be equally harmful emotionally and physically to the victim. Bullying may be verbal, when the bully uses derogatory or mocking words to attack the victim; social, when a bully or bullies isolate the victim from a social group or cause damage to the victim's reputation; or physical, when a bully actually hurts the victim's body or possessions. A recent study by the U.S. National Institutes of Health found that victims of cyberbullying, an increasingly popular form of bullying that involves the use of Internet, texting and social media to harm and intimidate others, showed more signs of depression than other bullying victims.

"Regardless of one's age, bullying can take a tremendous hit to a person's mental health, and some bullying survivors can carry the experience into adulthood," says Gary Henschen, M.D., chief medical officer for behavioral health at Magellan. "Victims are more likely to suffer from anxiety disorders and depression, and these disorders can also cause difficulties with the victims' family, friends and co-workers in their future."

"Cyberbullying is one of the most challenging aspects of bullying we've ever had to deal with, and it continues to evolve," said Victor Schwartz, M.D., medical director for The Jed Foundation. "It used to be that bullying was confined to the playground, but now youth can be bullied even from the safety of home, and it's out there for everyone to see. As adults, we need to model good online behavior and play a more active role in curbing the use of social media and mobile technology among youth for bullying."

Though we often think of school-aged children when we hear the word, "bullying", it can also occur between adults through workplace bullying. This can include verbal abuse, offensive conduct, and/or non-verbal behaviors which are threatening, humiliating or intimidating. In some instances, these actions may even become illegal.

Watching for the Warning Signs and Creating a Safer Environment

For those falling victim to bullying, the effects can be devastating. Youth who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy, and physical health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement and school participation
- Fear of riding the bus, visiting the school bathroom and being alone in school hallways
- Suicidal thoughts

"Any sudden and unexplained change in behavior could be a sign that a youth is being bullied," said Henschen. "It may be more subtle in adolescents and young adults compared to younger children, but the reactions can vary from acting out to becoming more reserved. It's very important to have an ongoing dialogue about bullying and create a safe place where youth feel they can work through their feelings and experiences."

There are ways everyone can help to prevent bullying. Steps you can take include:

- Helping your school or work community create a pledge promising that bullying in any form is unacceptable
- Encouraging members of your community to call out bullying when they see it—sometimes bullies don't realize they're bullying

- Designating an adult or leader as the go-to person for confidential help when someone is the victim of bullying
- Outlining expectations for respect and acceptance of others in your community
- If you're a parent, talk to your children about bullying, and set expectations for the kinds of behaviors that are not acceptable inside or outside the home

"Planting the Seed" to Stop Bullying

On www.TakeMentalHealthToHeart.com, visitors can learn more about how bullying impacts the victim, bystanders and the bully; find helpful information for parents; take a screener for depression; and discover a variety of other links and resources. Visitors are also encouraged to leave a comment by "planting a virtual seed" on the website that they can share with friends and family to raise awareness about the impact of bullying. As individuals share their pledge to end bullying with others, their virtual seed will grow into a "tree" representing the expansive network of people they have reached with their message. For every virtual seed planted during the month of May, Magellan will donate \$5 to The Jed Foundation, up to \$25,000.

To learn more about bullying and the *Take Mental Health To Heart Campaign*, visit www.TakeMentalHealthToHeart.com.

About The Jed Foundation: The Jed Foundation (TJF) is the nation's leading organization working to promote emotional health and prevent suicide among college students. TJF materials and tools are available to all colleges and universities throughout the United States. Founded in 2000 by parents who lost a son to suicide while he was attending college, the organization has developed several programs, which include: ULifeline, an online resource that gives students access to campus-specific resources and allows them to take an anonymous emotional health screening; the Peabody Award-winning Half of Us campaign with mtvU, which uses online, on-air and on campus programming to decrease stigma around mental illness and encourage help-seeking; Love is Louder, a movement online and in communities to build connectedness and increase resiliency; and a portfolio of nationally-recognized tools, resources and training programs that help campuses effectively promote mental health and protect at-risk students. Learn more by visiting www.jedfoundation.org, www.ulifeline.org, www.halfofus.com, or www.loveislouder.com.

About Magellan Health Services: Headquartered in Avon, Conn., Magellan Health Services Inc. is a leading specialty health care management organization with expertise in managing behavioral health, radiology and specialty pharmaceuticals, as well as public sector pharmacy benefits programs. Magellan delivers innovative solutions to improve quality outcomes and optimize the cost of care for those we serve. As of March 31, 2012, Magellan's customers include health plans, employers and government agencies, serving approximately 33.8 million members in our behavioral health business, 16.1 million members in our radiology benefits management segment, and 6.2 million members in our medical pharmacy management product. In addition, the specialty pharmaceutical segment served 41 health plans and several pharmaceutical manufacturers and state Medicaid programs. The company's Medicaid Administration segment served 24 states and the District of Columbia. For more information, visit www.MagellanHealth.com.

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/cgi-bin/mmg.cgi?eid=50260124&lang=en>

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