Bullying is the most common form of youth violence across the world. Activities:

Bullying, defined as peer-on-peer aggression that occurs repeatedly and results in a power imbalance, is the most common form of youth violence. In the United States, about 30% of all school children has either been a victim or perpetrator of bullying. Bullying is associated with a number of adverse outcomes including poor school performance, depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviors and aggression towards others.

The Injury Prevention Research Center (IPRC) has been involved in research to develop and identify the most effective strategies to reduce bullying.

1. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we are evaluating Iowa’s anti-bullying law. The Iowa law requires schools to develop anti-bullying policies, and implement reporting and response activities. Using a mixed methods design, the IPRC team conducted face-to-face interviews with 47 school and district administrators and surveyed an additional 200 middle school principals to identify successes and challenges in implementing the Iowa law.

2. A second project funded by the National Institute of Justice was designed to understand the contents and social contexts of cyberbullying, the newest form of bullying. For this research, the IPRC is collaborating with sociologists and computer scientists to monitor electronic communications of middle school youth (text messages and social network posts) for cyberbullying content.

3. Last, the IPRC has partnered with performing arts groups (Hancher Performing Arts and Working Group Theater) to develop an intervention based in the arts that includes WGT’s play on cyberbullying, Out of Bounds, and an arts-based toolbox of bullying prevention activities. This spring, the CPH led a service learning course in which the play and activities were implemented in Cedar Rapids middle schools and after school programs.

Impact:

The IPRC has been collaborating with the Department of Education, the Iowa School Nurse Organization, and schools throughout Iowa to understand the problem of bullying and providing scientific evidence for the most effective strategies to prevent bullying and its adverse effects on children.

Population:

Students, staff and parents from schools across Iowa.

“For middle school students, bullying is our largest safety concern,” a school administrator shared with the IPRC research team during a recent interview. “Bullying prevention programs are widely available, but studies have shown mixed effectiveness. Much more scientific evidence is needed to guide schools on best practices for prevention,” says Ramirez.