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## Cyberbullying and its Complications in Policy

*The negative effects of cyberbullying have had serious effects on youths and students within the capital region. There have been many opportunities presented, but many key issues continue to present themselves in the fight against cyberbullying. However there are policies and models that can be used to deter cyberbullies, remediate the harm done, and help prevent future incidents.*

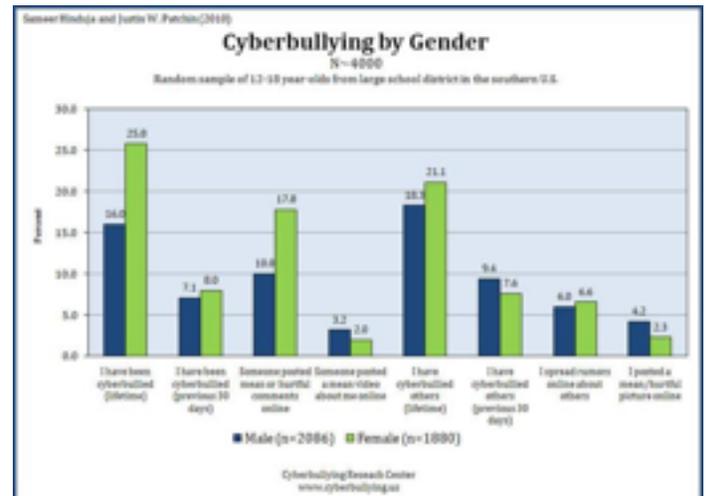
### Scope of the Problem

Cyberbullying is defined as the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating nature. It can be done in the form of text messages, direct messages, emails, and chat rooms. It also comes in numerous forms such as threatening, releasing personal information or photos, spreading rumors, and excluding others from online communication. In recent years, cyberbullying has become increasingly prevalent as children have increased access to electronic devices that allow for anonymous communication.

At all times of the day a child can be assaulted online (Riccardi, 2008). Students from the age of ten and up often have access to their electronics throughout the day, and a student can be bullied during the course of the day at school. There is also the chance of having the bullying continue once school has ended. Overtime, a student experiencing cyberbullying can develop a constant fear and anxiety which can lead to lack of motivation or commitment to school and their work (Woda, 2013). This makes cyberbullying a community and educational problem.

Nearly one in five students are subject to bullying in New York. Of this figure, girls are more likely to be cyber bullied at 13 percent whereas nine percent of boys face this issue (Campanile, 2013). It is hard for schools

and parents to help their children, as anonymity across the internet becomes an issue for tracking bullies. Additionally children may be afraid to tell their parents making it difficult for parents to help their children (Perren et Al., 2012). If the parent doesn't know there is a problem, they will not be able to support their children.



**Figure 1: The graph above shows that within Cyberbullying there is a disparity between males and females.**

Girls are more likely than boys to be victims of cyberbullying in schools. In all forms of cyberbullying, boys lead in one category where harmful ideas are posted about them, but they are also less likely overall to cyberbully others. Many girls are both victims and perpetrators, and lead in both categories overall (Cyberbullying, 2016).



## Policy Options and Model Programs

### Student Involvement

One suggested option in cyberbullying prevention is using training programs aimed towards students. Student to student programs have been deemed more effective than those led by school officials or adults. Those bullied are more likely to listen than act when given strategies by other students such as removing the offensive material online and blocking the user (Kraft et Al., 2009).

### California Cyberbully laws

California penal code prohibits electronic harassment of any kind for minors and adults and has made the act punishable of a misdemeanor leading to a 1,000 dollar fine and/or up to one year imprisonment. This model could prove beneficial to the Capital region in accompanying law "F" as a deterrent to any potential cyberbullies (California Legislative Information, 2016).

### School Jurisdiction

Schools can establish jurisdictional regulation out of school. If the offender in an online forum uses the school emblem or anything in relation to the school in part of their attack on the victim, the school can take action against the student and be constitutionally correct (Magid, 2010). This method was used by the school who apprehended the cohes offender, giving a real life example of this strategy working.

## Key Organizations

- **StopBullying.gov:** StopBullying is a federal government run website that educates and gives strategies on how to combat bullying. It also has an extensive list of information and strategies on combatting cyberbullying and preventing the problem from occurring. It is a nationwide site that gives information on legislation that affects bullying and the best practices in combatting the issue. They also have a constant help line with tips for anyone who calls.
- **End Cyberbullying:** End Cyberbullying is a state certified non-profit in New York that has the mission to raise awareness and provide information, as well as offering services for victims of cyberbullying. This group works in New York to focus on the problems presented within the state.
- **Stomp Out Bullying:** Stomp Out Bullying, a national program, has provided bullying support services since 2005 and has focused on reducing and preventing bullying as well as cyberbullying, involving education against homophobia, racism, and hatred. The education programs produced help prevent the causes of cyberbullying and raising awareness to help those in need.

# Glossary of Terms

**Cyberbullying:** the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

**First Amendment:** Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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## Community Policy Institute

The Community Policy Institute builds capacity surrounding policy within the Capital Region. We provide researched-based policy information to our community partners who use the information to modify best practices and advocate for policies that will further the development and effectiveness of direct community engagement.

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