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Responding to Connecticut's New Anti-Bullying Law Governor's Prevention Partnership offers Trainings for Educators, Tips for Parents

Hartford, CT -- Preparing for back to school means more than just new notebooks and backpacks. During this transition time, young people must not only prepare for the academic challenges of school, but they also must be prepared for the emotional and social pressures that a new school year brings. These pressures have only been amplified in recent months, with the rapid growth of cyber bullying, which now broadens the realm of bullying from the classroom to just about everywhere.

"As leaders in prevention, we take our role as advocates for the state's new bullying law seriously," said Jill Spinetti, President of The Governor's Prevention Partnership. "We're in school communities everyday educating parents, teachers and administrators about the new law and helping them comply with its requirements. It's a win-win situation if we can offer parents useful tips for dealing with their bullied child, and train teachers and other school staff to recognize the signs of bullying early on and help them learn how to act quickly to stop it."

According to the Connecticut Youth Risk Behavior Study, 25 percent of Connecticut high school students, and 35 percent of the state's ninth-graders, report having been bullied or harassed on school property in the past year. The same study also found that Connecticut high school students who report being bullied are more likely to get less sleep, miss school because they feel unsafe, have property stolen at school, carry a weapon to school, experience dating violence, suffer depression, and attempt suicide.

In response, Governor Dannel Malloy recently signed into law Public Act 11-232, an act concerning the strengthening of school bullying laws. This legislation, which now includes cyberbullying, takes comprehensive steps to ensure every child's right to learn in Connecticut public schools without fear of teasing, humiliation, or assault.

To help with this important issue and to ensure that the law is successfully carried out, The Governor's Prevention Partnership is offering training and resources to educators and administrators to ensure they have the necessary tools for addressing bullying.

"The new law gives us the framework to guide the process," said Lisa Tregoning, Program Manager, The Governor's Prevention Partnership. "We help teachers and school staff

understand their role as it relates to the new law. We also work with them as a team to support children who may be involved in bullying situations.”

The Governor's Prevention Partnership offers a new training series beginning in September for school administrators who are looking for practical tools for developing a positive school climate and preventing bullying. The Partnership has also brought the nationally-recognized Olweus Bullying Prevention Program to our state, which is evidence-based and boosts a significant reduction of bullying in schools when implemented with fidelity. For more information and to register for upcoming trainings offered by The Governor's Prevention Partnership, including peer mediation and parent programs, go to www.preventionworksct.org/calendar or call 860-523-8042.

CYBER BULLYING PREVENTION TIPS FOR PARENTS

Cyber Bullying is using the Internet or other digital devices to send or post negative or harmful messages, images or video clips about others. Cyber Bullying can include posting or sending mean or embarrassing comments and/or images on chat rooms, message boards, websites, social networking sites, online gaming sites, cell phones, instant messages or e-mail.

To prevent cyber bullying, here are some tips for parents:

- **Develop and enforce rules.** Work with your child to come up with a clear understanding about the appropriate and inappropriate uses of the Internet, phones and other technology. It is important to set clear rules of when, where, and how computers and cell phones can be used. Make sure to set consequences for misuse and follow through consistently.
- **Educate children about appropriate Internet-based behaviors** and that all rules for interacting with people in real life also apply for interacting online or through cell phones. Discuss with them the problems that can be created when technology is misused, including damaging their reputation with their friends.
- **Maintain an open door policy:** Children are often too scared or embarrassed to report bullying incidents. They may feel guilty or are afraid that telling their parents will lead to their cell phone and Internet privileges being taken away. Be sure to regularly discuss household technology use. Having these frequent conversations will keep the door open for your child to talk to you about bullying incidents they may be experiencing or seeing on the Internet.
- **Monitor Internet Use:** It is important to know who your child is communicating with online and by cell phone. Look into your child's online presence by setting up an alert on Google, or search your child's name occasionally through a variety of search engines. Use filtering and blocking software or an Internet monitoring service. When using the monitoring service watch closely for the warning signs that cyber bullying is taking place.
- **Work closely with your school administrators.** Connecticut's new anti-bullying law requires each school in the state to create a safe school climate plan. If your child is being cyber bullied, it is important to report the incident(s) to his or her school and continue communication to make sure the problem is resolved.

- **Be understanding.** Usually, cyber bullying goes hand-in-hand with in-person bullying, so watch for warning signs such as withdrawal from friends, drop in academic performance and school avoidance or emotional symptoms such as anger or sadness. It is important to let your child know that you are there for support and they are not alone.

For more parent tips and resources, visit www.preventionworksct.org and click on “The Parent Resource Center”.

With a focus on Connecticut’s youth, The Governor’s Prevention Partnership is a statewide public-private alliance, building a strong, healthy future workforce through leadership in mentoring and prevention of violence, underage drinking, alcohol and drug abuse.