



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Parents were more concerned about bullying if their child was in worse health than if their child was in better health.

Parents living in poverty were more concerned about bullying than parents with higher household incomes.

When asked who should do more to address bullying, the most common response was that parents should be doing more to address bullying, followed by teachers and school administrators.

Chicago Parents' Concerns about Bullying

For the past two years, bullying and cyberbullying have been among the top social concerns that Chicago parents had for children and adolescents in the city.^{1,2} Overall, 73% of parents considered bullying and cyberbullying to be a big problem in 2018–19. In this report, we examine parents' concerns about bullying and cyberbullying more closely. We also asked parents who they think should be doing more to address bullying. To do this, researchers at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago teamed up with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) on the 2018–19 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr. to ask parents from all 77 community areas in Chicago about their concerns about bullying and cyberbullying.

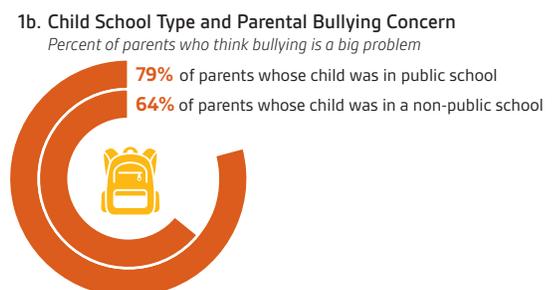
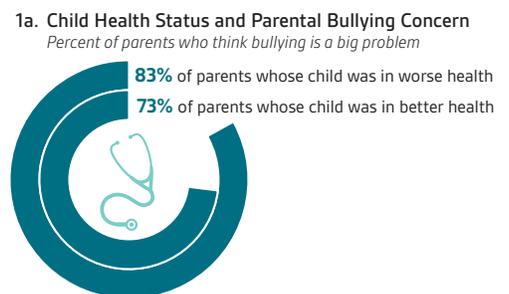
Are parental concerns about bullying related to certain characteristics of their kids?

We examined whether certain characteristics of their children, such as child health, gender, age and type of school they attended correlated with parents' concerns about bullying. To understand whether parent concerns about bullying differed by their children's health status, we asked parents about the health of each of their children using a five-option scale. Children who were reported to be in "excellent" or "very good" health were grouped as having "better" health status. Children who were reported to be in "good," "fair" or "poor" health were grouped as having "worse" health status. When a child was in worse health, parents were more likely to be concerned about bullying and cyberbullying (83%) than when a child was in better health (73%) (Figure 1a). Other research has suggested that children who may be in worse health because they have special health care needs were more likely to be bullied.³

Parents also were more likely to be concerned about bullying if their child attended public school (79%) than if they attended non-public school (64%) (Figure 1b). This is consistent with our findings from last year indicating greater concern among parents of children in public schools than private schools.⁴

We found that the gender of respondents' children was not connected to their concern about bullying — parents of only boys, boys and girls, and only girls were all similarly concerned about bullying. In addition, parents of younger children (e.g., 0–5 years old) and parents of older children (11+ years old) were similarly concerned about bullying.

Figure 1. Proportion of parents who considered bullying a big problem by child health status (1a) and by child school type (1b)



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Children's Hospital of Chicago®

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Which parents are most concerned about bullying?

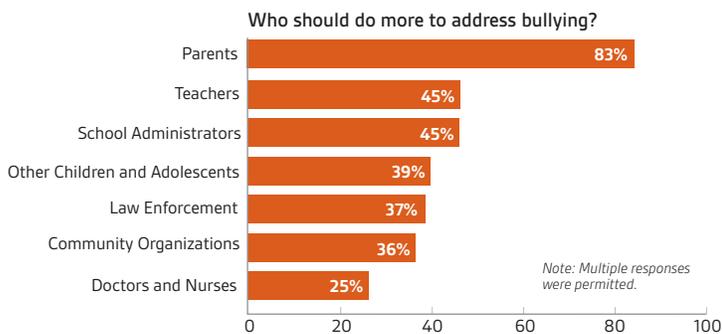
We also examined how certain parental characteristics were associated with concern about bullying and cyberbullying. Consistent with what we found last year,⁴ parents living in poverty (below the Federal Poverty Level [FPL], which in 2019 was \$25,750 for a family of four) were more likely to consider bullying/cyberbullying a big problem (89%) than parents with low to middle income or middle income (100–399% of the FPL) and those with higher income (400% or above the FPL) (68% and 67%, respectively). Other research indicates that children from lower socio-economic status (SES) households are more likely to be victims of bullying than children from higher SES households.⁵ Parents' education level also was associated with concerns about bullying. Parents who had a high school education or below and those who had some college education were more concerned about bullying (80% and 79%) than parents with a college education or above (61%).

Parent race and ethnicity were also connected to concerns about bullying, with the highest concern among non-Latinx Black parents. Specifically, 83% of non-Latinx Black parents considered bullying/cyberbullying to be a big problem, compared with 78% of Latinx parents and 62% of non-Latinx White parents. Additionally, moms were more likely to consider bullying a big problem than dads (80% vs. 61%). Parents who were older (e.g., 45+, 30–44) were about equally concerned about bullying as younger parents (18–29).

Who should do more to address bullying?

Parents who indicated that they considered bullying/cyberbullying to be a big problem were also asked who they thought should do more to address bullying. They were presented with seven options and were permitted to select multiple responses. The most frequent response was that parents should do more to reduce bullying and cyberbullying in Chicago (83%) (see Figure 2 for a full list).

Figure 2. Proportion of parents who said that each group should do more to prevent bullying.



Parents can help to address bullying by understanding the warning signs for bullying victimization and bullying perpetration. Signs of bullying victimization include a sudden loss of friends, not wanting to go to school

and a change in eating habits. Signs of bullying perpetration include increasing aggression, having friends who bully others and getting into physical fights.⁶ Parents can help by talking with their children about their safety concerns.

Signs of cyberbullying include changes in social media use such as avoidance or becoming preoccupied with checking social media activity. Parents can help to address cyberbullying by learning to navigate the social media platforms and technology that their children use, and by considering the internet a powerful tool that requires teaching, monitoring, and limits to access as youth develop a social media presence.^{7,8} Additionally, parents can keep their children's phones and computers in public spaces at home and ask their children for their password for all new social media accounts.

In school settings, educators and administrators can include social emotional learning in their curriculum to promote a bullying-free environment. Fostering social emotional learning helps students better navigate conflict, establish and maintain positive relationships, accept differences and understand their own emotions.⁹

The Illinois attorney general's website has information about cybersafety and cyberbullying for [parents](#) and [youth](#).

Parents and students can read the Chicago Public Schools anti-bullying policy [online](#).

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HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report presents findings from the 2018–19 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., administered by the Chicago Department of Public Health in collaboration with Lurie Children's. The survey was administered via phone interviews from December 2018 through May 2019. The sample consisted of 2,982 adults in Chicago, 740 of whom were the parent, step-parent or guardian (referred to as "parents" in this report) of at least one child under 18 years old living in the household. The survey cooperation rate was 12%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that they are representative of the adult population of the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about health in your community, visit chicagohealthatlas.org.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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This report was developed and published as a partnership:



Nikhil G. Prachand, MPH
 Director of Epidemiology
 Kingsley N. Weaver, MPH
 Senior Epidemiologist
 Emily M. Laflamme, MPH
 Senior Epidemiologist

Stanley Manne
 Children's Research Institute™
 Smith Child Health Research,
 Outreach and Advocacy Center

Matthew M. Davis, MD, MAPP, Director
 Marie E. Heffernan, PhD, Associate Director
 Tracie Smith, MPH, Senior Epidemiologist
 Anne Bendelow, MPH, Data Analyst
 Punreet K. Bhatti, MD, Research Associate
 Colleen Cicchetti, PhD, Expert Contributor

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information on Voices of Child Health in Chicago, contact:

Mary Ann & J. Milburn Smith Child Health
 Research, Outreach and Advocacy Center
 Stanley Manne Children's Research Institute

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
 225 East Chicago Avenue, Box 157, Chicago, IL 60611-2991
voicesofchildhealth@luriechildrens.org

luriechildrens.org/voices

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