

Step Up. Step In.

Stop Sexual Bullying in Georgia

Sample Press Release

<Insert School Name> Joins New *Step Up. Step In.* Campaign to Stop Sexual Bullying

CITY NAME, Ga. (Month X, Year) – <Insert School Name> has joined a statewide campaign led by the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault (GNESA) to stop sexual bullying from occurring between youth. The campaign, called *Step Up. Step In.*, teaches students how to spot sexual bullying and teaches them what to do when it happens. It also helps make sure they aren't doing it to other people.

Sexual bullying can be violent or non-violent. *Step Up. Step In.* defines sexual bullying as: "Any instance when youth use sexual words, acts, images, threats or any other behavior in any manner to distress, harm, taunt, demean, humiliate and/or embarrass other youth who do not welcome, encourage or want to participate in the exchange. Sexual bullying may occur once, or it may occur frequently. It encompasses a wide variety of behaviors and is perpetrated by youth against their peers. It can occur in person, online or digitally. In some instances, such as spreading rumors about a classmate, a victim may not even know it is occurring."

Funded by a grant from the Georgia Department of Public Health, GNESA began examining sexual bullying among Georgia's youth in 2010, conducting 22 focus groups with adolescent males (11 to 14 years old) and the adults who influence them. From rural and urban communities to those in between, findings found, in part:

- Touching and groping, sexual rumors and bullying of perceived LGBT youth were among the most frequently reported acts – with many participants stating this type of behavior was a "daily" or "almost every day" occurrence at their schools.
- Participants overwhelmingly reported the school and school-related venues as the primary location where sexual bullying occurs – and, within schools, occurring most often in specific locations like hallways and cafeterias where groups of students congregate with minimal supervision
- Youth often dismissed sexual bullying – such as touching and groping or picking on a student for his/her perceived sexual orientation – as "not that serious," "joking," and even "flirting"

"We are proud to join the *Step Up. Step In.* campaign and to become a leader in preventing this type of behavior from distracting our students as they pursue excellence in their academics, extracurricular and other activities," says <insert name, insert title,> of <insert school name.> "This campaign will add to our ongoing efforts to continue focusing our school's culture on one that thrives on healthy interactions between students."

Visit GASUSI.org for more information about the campaign, as well as resources that schools can utilize to implement *Step Up. Step In.* to stop sexual bullying.