

Bullying has long-term health consequences

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Childhood bullying can lead to long term health consequences, including general and mental health issues, behavioral problems, eating disorders, smoking, alcohol use, and homelessness, a study by the Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University found.

"What is apparent from these results is that bullying victimization that occurs early in life may have significant and substantial consequences for those victims later in life," said Leana Bouffard, Director of the Crime Victims' Institute. "Thus, the adverse health consequences of victimization are much more far-reaching than just immediate injury or trauma. Understanding these long term consequences is important to assessing the true toll of crime on its victims and on society as well as responding to victims more effectively."

The study, "The Long Term Health Consequences of Bullying Victimization," recommends investing in victim services and effective prevention programs, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, a school based initiative for violence prevention. Programs can help address the immediate trauma, both mental and physical, that victims experience.

"This type of investment may also have the added benefit of reducing the long-term [deleterious effects](#) identified in this and other studies, thus reducing the high cost of victimization born by the victims themselves, the health care system and society in general," Bouffard said.

The current study is based on the National Longitudinal Survey of

Youth, a long term study that tracks a sample of U.S. residents born between 1980 and 1984. Nineteen percent of those surveyed said they had been a victim of repeated bullying.

The study found that those [bullying](#) victims had more negative perceptions of their general health and mental health and higher rates of emotional/mental or behavioral problems that interfered with school or work. They were also more likely to have an eating disorder, smoke, consume alcohol, experience subsequent [violent victimization](#), or be homeless.

"While these are adverse consequences themselves, they may also serve as intermediate mechanism for even more long-term health issues, such as cancer, alcoholism, depression and other serious problems," said Maria Koeppel, co-author of the study.

More information: The full report can be found at <http://www.crimevictimsinstitute.org/publications/>.

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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