

The Hillsborough County Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee is wrapping up its 2017 efforts to curb and eliminate all forms of bullying throughout Hillsborough County, with a special emphasis this year on cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying takes place using cell phones, computers, and tablets, as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites, and can occur at any time, causing a child's traditional safe-haven of home to no longer be one. Mean text messages or emails; rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook; and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles are all forms of cyberbullying.

Current statistics show:

- 25% of teens have experienced repeated bullying on their phones and the internet
- Girls are 2 times as likely to be the victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying
- Only 1 in 10 victims will report their abuse to a parent or trusted adult
- 70% of students report seeing frequent bullying online

Hillsborough County's efforts to spread the anti-cyberbullying message included initiatives that provided specific resources for parents, students and the community. An updated website shares information on what parents need to know to protect their children. Updates on social media apps, including a list of commonly used chat acronyms that parents need to know, infographics on cyberbullying, options for where to go for help, and an online library with the latest research on effective programs and practices are shared in anti-cyberbullying campaign materials, now available at various locations throughout the county, such as public and school libraries, as well as the new website [www.hcflgov.net/bullyfreehillsborough](http://www.hcflgov.net/bullyfreehillsborough) .

"A recent study of Hillsborough County reveals almost one third of Hillsborough County students had been bullied in the previous 3 months", said Dr. Tom Massey, a USF Professor with expertise in organization and effectiveness of behavioral and mental health services in public schools. Dr. Massey currently serves as Chair of the Hillsborough County Anti-bullying Advisory Committee. "Hillsborough County is committed to ensuring that all students and their families are better equipped to react to and report instances of bullying."

On October 04, 2017 Hillsborough County Commissioner Sandra Murman announced the establishment of the Annual Anti-Bullying Recognition Award. Each year the Hillsborough County Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee will examine the significant events and outstanding achievements of a youth or group of youths (ages up to 19) for their outstanding efforts to further eliminate all forms of bullying affecting young people in our community. Each recipient will be recognized for their actions and accomplishments demonstrating significant activist and/or advocacy efforts on behalf of the community to address bullying or cyberbullying here in Hillsborough County.

For additional information, visit the website at: [www.hcflgov.net/bullyfreehillsborough](http://www.hcflgov.net/bullyfreehillsborough)

Or Facebook page: **@ThroughTheirEyes813**