



TERREBONNE PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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News Release

Terrebonne Parish Sheriff's Office DARE officers have seen an increase in bullying complaints from students in local schools this year, Sheriff Vernon Bourgeois said.

Many of the complaints are being directly reported to DARE officers and School Resource Officers that are assigned to various schools throughout the parish. The officers have received specialized training on how to deal with bullying situations and are generally able to handle the incidents through verbal mediations.

Local schools have a "No Bullying" policy and it appears that more students are reporting the bullying incidents as a means of a peaceful resolution. It does not appear that there is an increase in bullying situations, but an increase in actual reporting of the incidents by the students to law enforcement, Bourgeois said. When faced with a bullying situation, DARE officers are trained to discuss the issues with the victims and suspects. The mediations usually result with an end to the bullying.

Bullying comes in many forms. Direct bullying includes physical attacks such as hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting and threatening and teasing. Indirect bullying includes spreading rumors, gossiping and the intentional excluding of a group or individual student. DARE officers also inform students about cyber bullying. With new forms of technology being used by teenagers, bullying is prevalent in telephone texting, computer messaging and communication websites such as Facebook and MySpace.

The DARE program is an educational program that primarily teaches students the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse, however, the program also includes a two-week block of instruction that focuses on dealing with bullying issues. The DARE program aids students with identifying bullying incidents and teaches them how to directly and indirectly help themselves and others when faced with a bullying situation. The program is being taught this year to every sixth grade student in Terrebonne parish in every public and private school. There are three full-time and two part-time DARE officers employed at TPSO.

The Terrebonne Parish Sheriff's Office is asking parents to talk to their children and encourage them to report bullying incidents to a teacher, school administrator or their schools' DARE officer or School Resource Officer. If anyone has any questions concerning a bullying matter, please feel free to contact the TPSO DARE department at 985-876-2500.

Sheriff Vernon Bourgeois