

The Impact of Bullying on Mental Health in the ASD/ IDD Population
Tiffany L. Otero, PhD, BCBA
Tanya Burnett, BS

Session Description:

Bullying is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across various age groups and environments, including schools, workplaces, and online spaces. Individuals with disabilities are at an increased risk of bullying and the negative effects to mental health and well-being. This presentation will explore the different forms of bullying—physical, verbal, social, and cyber—and the profound impact it has on both victims and perpetrators. By examining the psychological, emotional, and social consequences of bullying, we will highlight the long-term effects it can have on mental health and well-being. Additionally, the presentation will address effective strategies for preventing and addressing bullying, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments. Through real-life examples and current research, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of bullying and encourage actionable solutions to combat this harmful behavior in our communities.

Learning Objectives:

1. Provide an operational definition of bullying and describe the various types that can occur
2. Discuss the impact of bullying on mental health and challenging behaviors including withdrawal, avoidance, and suicide risk
3. Describe ways of supporting systems, individuals, and families to understand and address bullying effectively

Tanya Burnett, BA, is delighted to have been one first two Therapeutic Coaches hired for the NM START Program at the UNM Center for Development and Disability. Tanya has her bachelor's degree in psychology and has spent over thirteen years working in the mental health field in varying capacities. Her experience in the field comprises of working as a mental (or behavioral) health tech in multiple inpatient psychiatric hospitals, including UNMH Children's Psychiatric Hospital, and also having worked in residential treatment settings in NM where she specialized in supporting children with Reactive Attachment Disorder. Tanya is passionate about mental health and the rapidly evolving world of psychology as well as helping to improve the lives of those effected by challenges in these areas. Tanya's top 5 strengths are humor, creativity, love of learning and appreciation of beauty and excellence and Judgement.

Tiffany Otero is a licensed psychologist and the Clinical Director of the NM START program at the UNM Center for Development and Disability. She specializes in diagnostic assessment and mental health intervention for individuals with known or suspected developmental differences. She began her career as a behavior analyst and special educator, before pursuing her degree in School Psychology with an emphasis in pediatric neuropsychology. Her research interests include diagnostic evaluation of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, trauma-informed care, and social skills interventions.