



# DAVID'S LAW | *THE UPSTANDERS*

## Overview

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This curriculum is part of a series of interactive activities associated with the documentary film, *The Upstanders*. In line with the mission of David Legacy's Foundation, the curriculum aims to support healthy habits and interactions among young people online. Partaking in these structured conversations opens up lines of communication among parents, caregivers, and their children, as well as within classrooms about the challenges of digital life. Activities in this series are designed to combat the mental health impact of cyberbullying on young people and advocate for inclusive and compassionate peer relationships.

In this activity, viewers of *The Upstanders* will get an overview of David's Law, a piece of Texas legislation that passed in 2017. The law is named after David Molak, who took his own life at the age of 16 after a long period of online harassment and abuse. Among other terms, David's Law requires Texas school districts to include cyberbullying in their bullying policies and notify a child's parents if he or she is a victim or alleged aggressor of bullying.

## Disclaimer

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The activities in this package are provided to support family conversations around the topics shared in *The Upstanders* screening and can be used at your discretion.

If at any time there are concerns about the well-being of a participant, please feel free to discontinue the activity.



## Aims

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Viewers will respond to David's Law using a "tree diagram" to explore how communities make real and lasting changes in response to online abuse.

This series of activities is directed at participants who are 11-18-years-old or those young people who are actively using screens and social media.

## Materials

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- ★ Chart paper or board for writing
- ★ "Overview of David's Law" handout (see below)
- ★ "David's Law: How Laws Can Make Real Changes" handout for advanced and young learners (see below)
- ★ Keating, Caitlin. "Family of 16-Year-Old Boy Who Died of Suicide After Relentless Cyberbullying Speaks Out." *People*, December 21, 2017.  
<https://people.com/human-interest/david-molak-family-speaks-out-after-suicide/>

## Getting Started

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Remind the participants that they viewed a film, *The Upstanders*, which features the story of David Molak. We learned about his family's commitment to changing Texas law so that schools must track, report, and educate about cyberbullying.

Refresh participants' understanding of the Molak family story by viewing a video from *People* magazine, linked in the Materials section above.

## Activities

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- ★ Ask for some initial reactions to the Molak family story:
  - What did you learn about the Molak family?
  - What is David Molak's story? What is your response to learning more about his



- life?
- Why do you think the Molak family felt it was so important to fight for changes in the law?
- ★ Then, tell participants that they will read and respond to David's Law, which they heard a little about during the documentary.
- ★ For advanced learners, pass out copies of "Overview of David's Law." Ask participants to take some time to read the passage silently or with a partner, circling any unknown words or phrases.
- If needed, give participants the following vocabulary list to reference as they read.
  - For additional literacy support, facilitators may wish to read the document aloud and pause to talk about each section.
  - Even more advanced learners can review the one-pager on David's Law created by David's Legacy Foundation, which gives more details about the requirements of the law.  
"SB 179 - David's Law 85th Texas Legislative Session"  
<https://www.dauidslegacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Dauids-Law-One-Pager-R2.pdf>

## VOCABULARY

Advocacy: Giving support to an idea, person, or cause

Aggressor: A person who starts an attack or argument

Alleged: Accused

Baiting: Something that causes another to be drawn in or come near

Collaborate: To work with someone else on a project

Egregious: A very bad or negative quality

Impact: A strong and powerful effect



Law enforcement: A department of a town, city, or state government that makes sure that laws are followed, investigates crimes, and keeps order

Legislation: A law made by a government

Materially: A big effect

Policy: A set of rules or a plan that is used as a guide for action

Prosecutor: Someone who initiates a criminal proceeding against a person or persons

Rehabilitation: To come back to good health or to an otherwise improved state of being

Suicide: The act of taking one's own life

- ★ Gather together as a whole group. Ask if there are any questions about the text, such as words or phrases that the participants do not understand.
- ★ Now, ask participants: *What is David's Law?* Jot down any responses on a board or piece of chart paper.
- ★ Next, pass out copies of "David's Law: How Laws Can Make Real Changes." Tell participants that the "tree" represents what happens when people and communities come together to advocate—or take action—to make an important and lasting change.
  - Note: You can see a "tree" for both advanced and younger learners, in which the prompts are simplified.
- ★ Review the different parts of the tree:

CAUSES <i>[Roots of the Tree]</i>	What caused the Molak family to fight for David's Law?
ADVOCACY AND ACTION <i>[Trunk of the tree]</i>	What do you think the Molak family had to do in order to get their law passed?
CREATION OF LAWS AND	What does David's Law require schools



POLICY [Top of the tree trunk]	to do?
IMPACT ON SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES [Branches of the tree]	What impact do you think David's Law has on schools and communities?
CHANGES IN INDIVIDUALS' ACTIONS [Leaves of the tree]	How do you think individual people might change because of the policies in David's Law?

- ★ Ask participants to jot their ideas for each part of the tree on their handout. If needed, prompt them to do independent research on David's Law.

## Wrapping Up

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- ★ Ask the participants to share one part of their "tree" handout aloud with the group. Alternatively, you could tape the participants' tree handouts around the room and give some time for participants to wander and read each other's work.
- ★ Finally, ask participants to share their final reflections:
  - What is your biggest takeaway about David's Law?
  - How does the Molak family's story help us think about ways that we can actively change our communities?
  - What's one thing you want to do to stop cyberbullying?

## Appendix

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## Overview of David's Law<sup>1</sup>

"David's Law" or SB 179 was signed by Governor Greg Abbott on June 9, 2017, and went into effect Sept 1, 2017.

"David's Law" requires school districts to include cyberbullying in their district bullying policies and notify a child's parents if he or she is a victim or alleged aggressor of bullying.

The law allows schools to combat and prevent cyberbullying by empowering them to investigate and address off-campus cyber-assisted bullying if it materially affects the school environment.

It allows for schools to collaborate with law enforcement when serious or life-threatening cyberbullying situations arise.

"David's Law" gives parents and courts new tools to protect cyberbullying victims and strengthens options for schools and prosecutors in dealing with some of the most egregious forms of cyberbullying, such as suicide baiting.

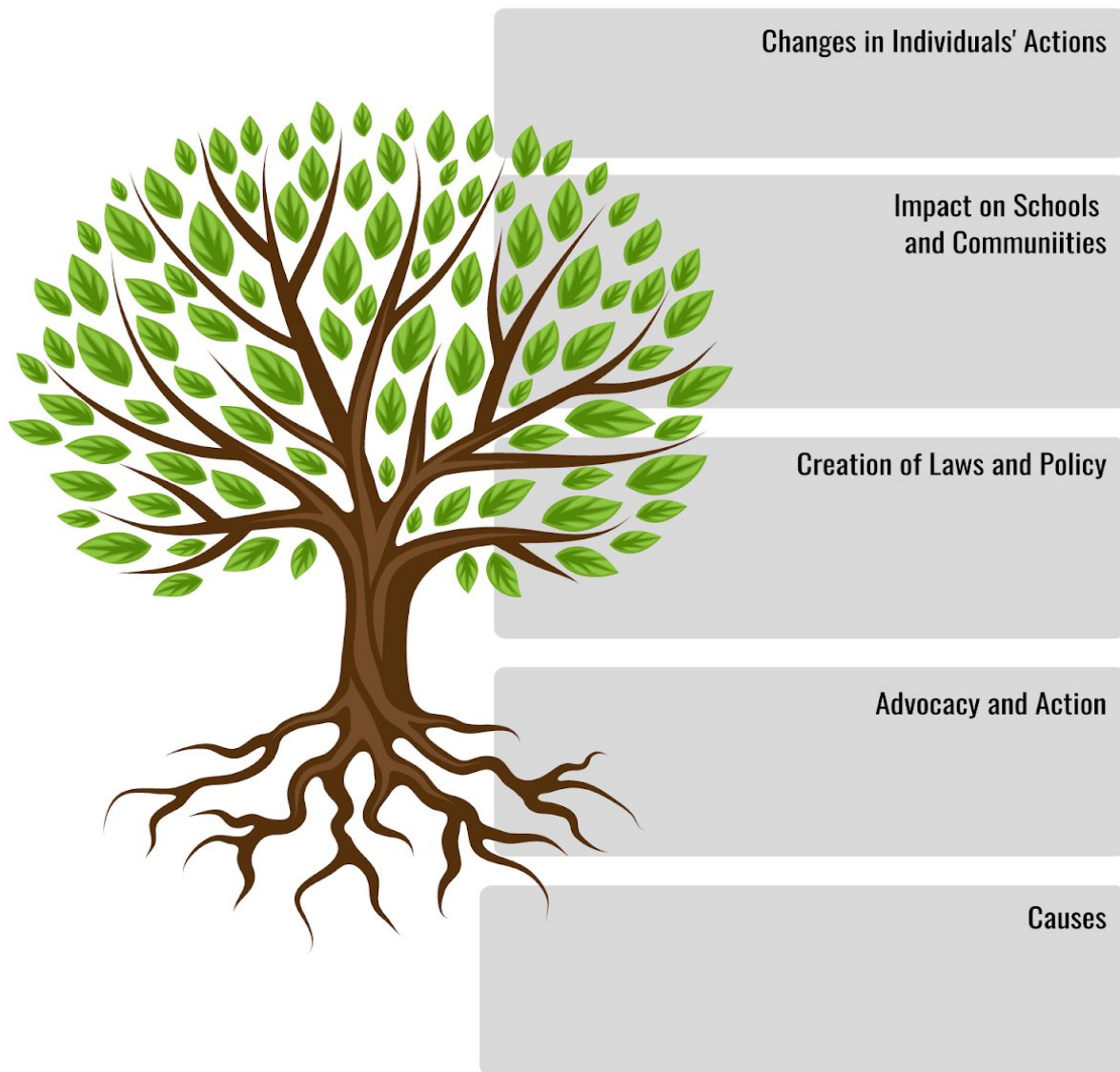
In recognition of bullying as a mental health issue, "David's Law" also encourages schools to invest in counseling and rehabilitation services for both victims and aggressors of bullying.

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<sup>1</sup>Excerpted from David's Legacy Foundation. "Legislation." <https://www.davidslegacy.org/legislation/>

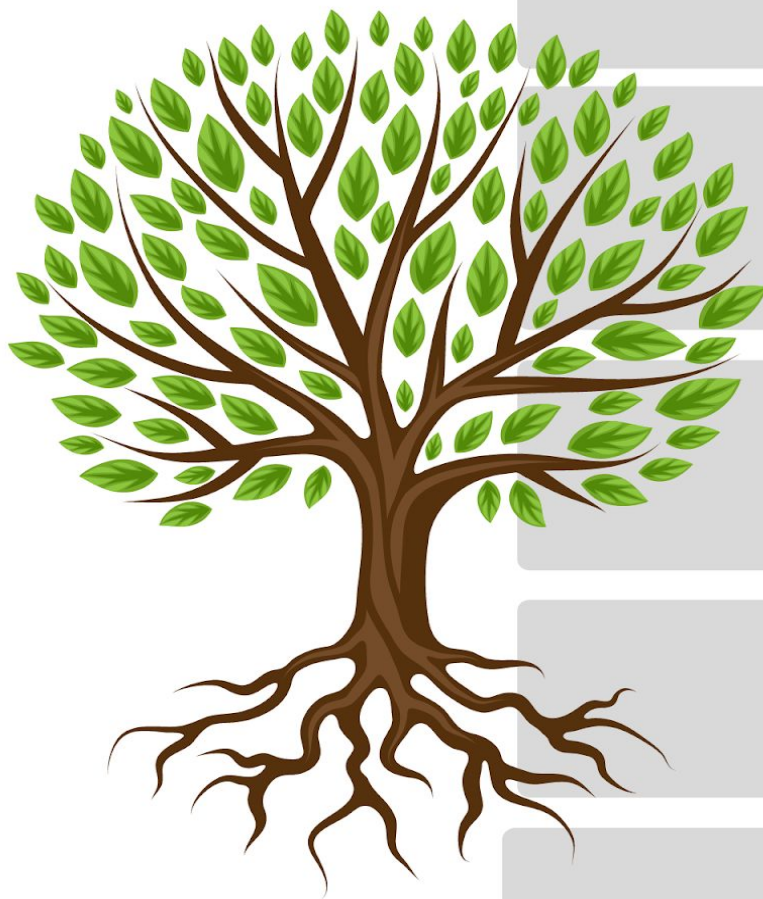
## David's Law: How Laws Can Make Real Changes

For Advanced Learners



## David's Law: How Laws Can Make Real Changes

For Younger Learners



How Will These Actions Change Me?

How Will These Actions Change  
Our Community?

What Can Be Done at Our School  
and at Home?

Why Should We Stand  
Up Against Cyberbullying?

What is Cyberbullying?