

PART I

# The Extent and Costs of Mistreatment and the Outside-In Response

THE CHAPTERS IN PART ONE EXPOSE THE DEPTH AND BREADTH of youth-on-youth mistreatment in schools and after-school settings, the far-reaching consequences of that mistreatment, and what schools are doing to try to stop it. In Chapter One, we describe the problem of mistreatment and how pervasive and increasingly frightening it has become in our schools. As much as possible, in this and other chapters, we bring in the voices of young people to express the reality of their experiences.

Chapter Two illuminates the vast consequences of seemingly small acts of mistreatment as we see how the problem spreads out and affects everyone: the targets, the aggressors, the bystanders, the school staff, and many others. We also take a look at the extensive financial and societal impact of this epidemic. In spite of increased security and stricter policies, many schools are experiencing declining test scores, lower attendance, poor teacher and staff morale, and a pervasive climate of tension and fear.

Chapter Three describes several of the most common strategies being used to address bullying and violence and the strengths and limitations of those efforts. The emphasis on keeping schools safe from the outside in can reduce the use of weapons and some cases of physical violence, but they often don't deal with what causes students to want to hurt each other emotionally and physically or their desire to bring weapons to school in the first place. Many more young people are worried about having rumors spread about them, or being put down, cyberbullied, cast out, or harassed in the restroom than they are about weapons. The less visible incidents of mistreatment can keep the social climate of the school simmering with unease. Because the most common strategies used to try to create safer schools don't fully address the underlying causes, the cycle of mistreatment continues.