

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

A Fact Sheet for Schools

“Our schools need to be safe havens for all students, and it is critical that we provide school leaders with tools and resources to help them become stronger partners in reducing teen dating violence and other forms of gender-based violence... Like bullying, teen dating violence has far-reaching consequences for the health and life outcomes of victims. We need to do everything we can to make sure all students are safe.”

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

What Is Teen Dating Violence?

According to the Office on Violence Against Women at the U.S. Department of Justice, violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim is dating violence. The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:

- the length of the relationship
- the type of relationship
- the frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship

What Is the Extent of Teen Dating Violence in U.S. Schools?

- Research shows that about one in three U.S. teens ages 14 to 20 have been victims of dating violence and about the same number say they have committed relationship violence themselves.ⁱ
- Nationwide, 12% of 9th-12th grade girls have been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.ⁱⁱ
- One in six women was raped before the age of 25; 42% of female rape victims were first raped before the age of 18.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 19% of young women report experiencing completed or attempted sexual assault since entering college. Most of these victims are assaulted by someone they know, primarily an acquaintance or a fellow student.^{iv}
- 43% of college women report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors including physical, sexual, verbal and controlling abuse. 22% have been the victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse or threats of physical violence.^v

How Does Teen Dating Violence Affect Our Schools?

Teen dating violence has serious consequences for victims and their schools. Witnessing violence has been associated with decreased school attendance and academic performance.^{vi} 20% of students with mostly D and F grades have engaged in dating violence in the last year, while only 6% of students with mostly A's have engaged in dating violence.^{vii} Further, teenage victims of dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy dieting (e.g., taking diet pills or laxatives, vomiting to lose weight), engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide.^{viii}

A 2009 study of sixth-grade students found that 25% thought it was acceptable for boys to hit their girlfriends. More than one fourth of the boys with girlfriends said they had been physically aggressive (punching, slapping) with her.^{ix} Although all victims of gender-based violence are affected negatively, research reveals that female victims of dating violence often experience more severe and longer-lasting consequences than do male victims.^{x xi}

What Can My School Do to Help?

Nearly half of students who experience dating violence say some of the abuse took place on school grounds.^{xii} Relatively few schools, however, have written policies governing safety, security, and intervention with students experiencing dating violence. *Research shows that schools can make a difference in preventing teen violence and other forms of gender-based violence.*^{xiii}

Things your school can do:

- Educate your community about prevention and identification.
- Develop locally tailored, appropriate responses to address teen dating violence.
- To provide effective support to traumatized youth or to address the behavior and needs of perpetrators, adopt a comprehensive approach that takes into account the unique challenges that these offenses present (e.g. victim reluctance to report and trauma from sexual violence).

Educating young people about healthy relationships is critical to preventing dating abuse. There are many tools available to help schools get started. Click [this link](http://www.teendvmonth.org/For-Educators) (<http://www.teendvmonth.org/For-Educators>) to learn about examples of resources for schools.

Resources and Publications

[National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline](#)

[Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month](#)

[Break the Cycle](#)

[That's Not Cool](#)

[Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence](#)

[Men Can Stop Rape](#)

[Violence Against Women Online Resources](#)

[National Resource Center on Violence Against Women](#)

[Dating Matters Initiative](#)

[Shifting Boundaries Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program](#)

NOTE: This fact sheet contains resources, including Web sites, created by a variety of outside organizations. The resources are provided for the user's convenience and inclusion does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of the organizations, their products, services, or materials, or any views or claims expressed by those outside organizations. The U.S. Department of Education does not guarantee the accuracy of any information contained on the Web sites of these outside organizations. All Web sites were accessed on August 30, 2013.

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ⁱ "National Rates of Adolescent Physical, Psychological, and Sexual Teen-Dating Violence," Michele Ybarra PhD, MPH, Center for Innovative Public Health Research; Dorothy L. Espelage, PhD University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rohling, PhD, University of South Alabama; Josephine D. Korchmaros, PhD, University of Arizona; Danah Boyd, PhD, New York University; and Kathleen Basile, PhD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance—United States, 2011. *MMWR* 2012; 61(No. SS-4).

ⁱⁱⁱ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

^{iv} Krebs, C. P., Lindquist, C. H., Warner, T. D., Fisher, B. S., & Martin, S. L. (2007). *The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice.

^v Knowledge Networks, Inc. (2011). *2011 College Dating Violence and Abuse Poll*. Liz Claiborne, Inc.

^{vi} Eaton, D.K., Davis, K.S., Barrios, L., Brener, N.D., & Noonan, R.K. 2007. Associations of dating violence victimization with lifetime participation, co-occurrence, and early initiation of risk behaviors among U.S. high school students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 22: 585–602.

^{vii} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009). Unintentional Injury and Violence-Related Behaviors and Academic Achievement. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

^{viii} Silverman, J.G., Raj, A., Mucci, L.A., & Hathaway, J.E. 2001. Dating violence against adolescent girls and associated substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy, and suicidality. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 286 (5): 572-579.

^{ix} Simon, T. R., Miller, S., Gorman-Smith, D., Orpinas, P., Sullivan, T. (2010). Physical dating violence norms and behavior among sixth-grade students from four U.S. sites. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 30(3), 395-409, first published on March 30, 2009.

^x Ackard, D.M., M.E. Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, D. 2007. Long-term impact of adolescent dating violence on the behavioral and psychological health of male and female youth. *Journal of Pediatrics* 151 (5): 476–481.

^{xi} NISVS: 2010 Summary Report.

^{xii} Molidor, C., Tolman, R. *Gender and Contextual Factors in Adolescent Dating Violence*. Violence Against Women. Vol. 4 No. 2, April 1998, 180-194.

^{xiii} Taylor, B., Stein, N.D., Woods, D., Mumford, E. 2011. Shifting Boundaries: Final Report on an Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Program in New York City Middle Schools. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/236175.pdf>.