

# Teen Dating Violence as a Public Health Issue



## Defining Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence is a pattern of controlling behavior exhibited towards one teenager by another in a dating relationship. There are three major types of teen dating violence:

- Physical abuse - hitting, punching, slapping, shoving, kicking
- Emotional abuse - threats, name calling, screaming, yelling, ridiculing, spreading rumors, isolation, intimidation, stalking, and, more recently, using technology to harass or intimidate by texting, calling, and/or bullying or monitoring via social networking sites
- Sexual abuse - unwanted touching or kissing, forced or coerced engagement in sexual acts.

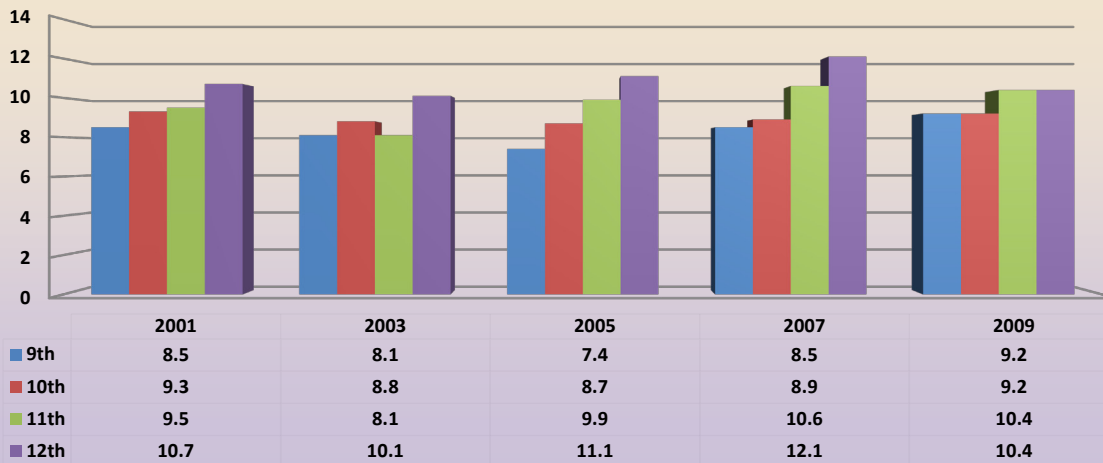
## The Scope of the Problem

Studies have found that teen dating violence affects 9% to 35% of adolescents (National Council on Crime and Delinquency 2008), depending upon differences in the teen populations being studied, how the abuse is defined (physical abuse only or both physical and verbal abuse, for example), whether teens are asked about all of their

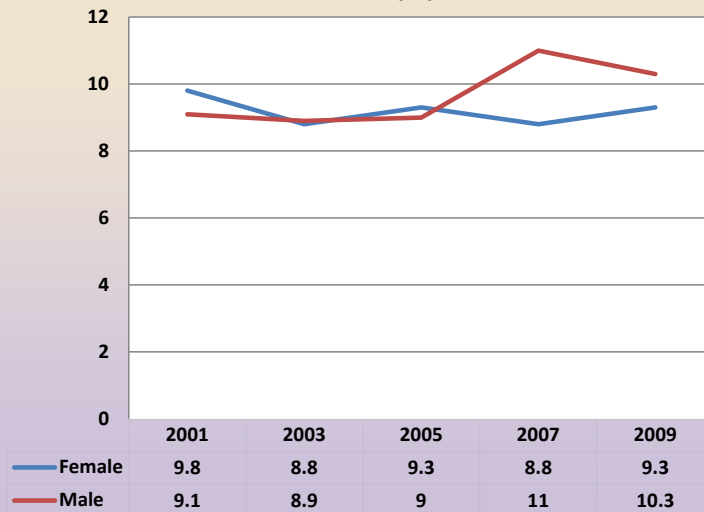
dating relationships or only the current one or one that occurred in the past year, and whether researchers measure exposure to dating violence without distinguishing between victimization and perpetration (O'Keefe 2005). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 25% of adolescents say that they experience "verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year" (CDC 2009). The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, which was administered in 2008 to a nationally representative sample of 4,549 children ages 0 to 17, indicates that 5.6% of 14- to 17-year olds experienced dating violence in the past year and 8.8% of them experienced dating violence in their lifetime (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, and Hamby 2009).

Data from the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), which is a national survey administered to high school students, shows that in 2009 9.3% of female students and 10.3% of male students reported that they were "hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend during the 12 months before the survey."

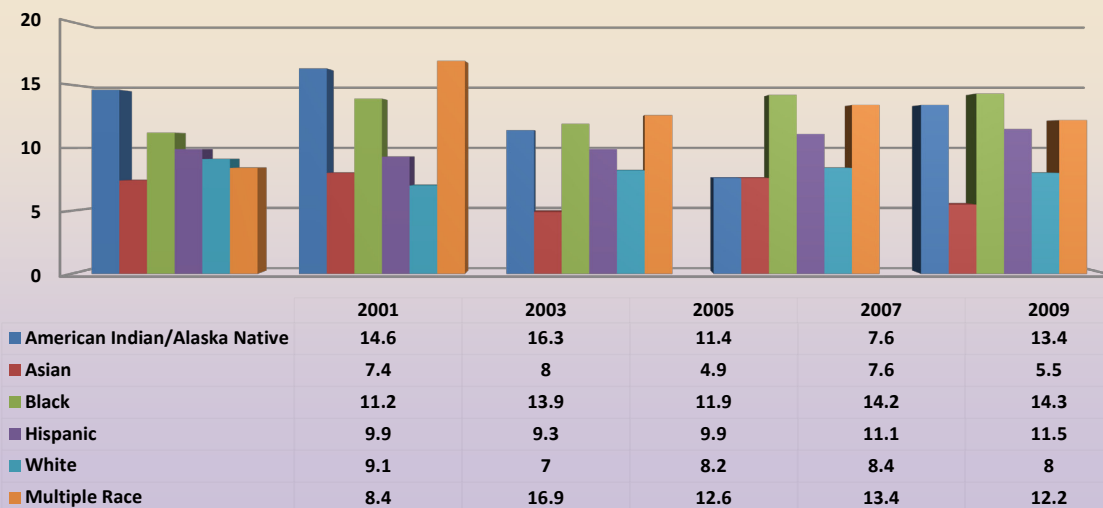
Percentage of High School Students Who Reported Being Hit, Slapped, or Physically Hurt on Purpose By Their Boyfriend or Girlfriend During the 12 Months Before the Survey by Grade, 2001 – 2009



Percentage of High School Students Who Reported Being Hit, Slapped, or Physically Hurt on Purpose By Their Boyfriend or Girlfriend During the 12 Months Before the Survey by Gender, 2001 – 2009



Percentage of High School Students Who Reported Being Hit, Slapped, or Physically Hurt on Purpose By Their Boyfriend or Girlfriend During the 12 Months Before the Survey by Race, 2001 – 2009



## Violence in Teen Dating Relationships

Studies show that girls and boys both use physical violence in dating relationships. While girls initiate dating violence more often than boys (O’Keefe 2005, Mulford and Giordano 2008), they are more likely than boys to experience fear and serious injuries, including sexual abuse, as a result of teen dating violence (National Council on Crime and Delinquency 2008). In fact, girls and young women ages 16 to 24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence (Noonan and Charles 2009).

When asked why they resort to violence, boys and girls cite anger as the main reason. However, girls also give self-defense as a motive for their violent behavior, while boys mention control of their partner as a factor in their use of physical aggression (O’Keefe 2005).

There are significant differences between teen dating relationships and adult intimate partner relationships, so we cannot assume that violence in the first leads inevitably to violence in the second (Mulford and Giordano 2009). To begin with, teens are new to romantic relationships and may lash out at a dating partner due to an “inability to communicate feelings and a lack of constructive ways to deal with frustration” (Mulford and Giordano 2009).

One study found that 7.2% of teens were victims of partner violence both as teens and as adults, while 8.3% were victims only as teens and 24.8% were victims only in young adulthood (Halpern, Spriggs, Martin, and Kupper 2009). Early sexual activity seems to be a factor in the continuation of victimization from the teen to the adult years (Halpern et al.).

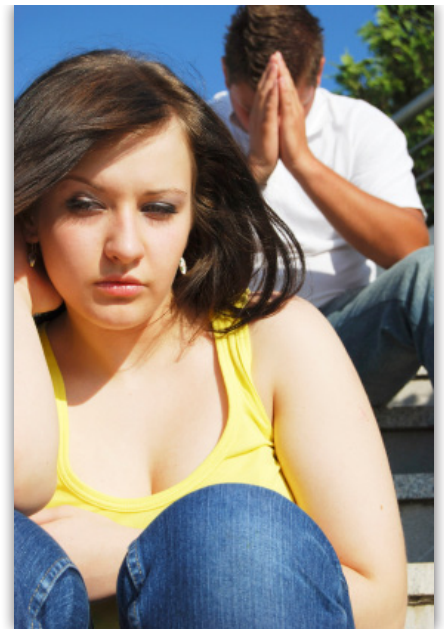
It may also be a factor in the start of teen dating violence, although teens who are involved in abusive relationships at an early age may be forced or coerced into sex. The Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study found that “[a]mong all teens who had sex by age 14, 69% report having gone through one or more types of abuse in a relationship” (Liz Claiborne Inc./Teen Research Unlimited 2008). More than 30% of those who had sex by age 14 said they had experienced physical dating violence. Only 20% of those who first had sex at age 15 or 16 reported this type of abuse, and the number dropped to nine percent among those who were over age 16 when they first had sex (Liz Claiborne Inc./Teen Research Unlimited 2008).

### Risk Factors for Teen Dating Violence

Although there is not complete consensus among researchers, studies have found that the following are risk factors for perpetration of teen dating violence (CDC 2009):

- Poor communication/social skills
- Inability to manage anger
- Belief in traditional gender roles
- Association with friends who perpetrate dating violence
- Being a witness to family violence
- Exposure to community violence
- Acceptance of the use of dating violence
- Use of alcohol and/or drugs

Research has also shown that low self-esteem correlates with dating violence perpetration for boys and with dating violence victimization for girls (O’Keefe 2005).



There is conflicting evidence on the role of demographic factors, such as race/ethnicity, family structure, geographic location, and level of parent education, in teen dating violence. A study in a rural county in North Carolina found that adolescents from minority groups, single-parent households, and homes in which parents have lower levels of education report more physical teen dating violence that is either moderate or severe (Foshee, Karriker-Jaffe, Reyes, Ennett, Suchindran, Bauman, and Benefield 2008). Some studies have found that teen dating violence is more prevalent among African American youth than among other races/ethnicities (Foshee, Reyes, and Ennett 2010; Foshee et al. 2008), although it is not clear whether the greater prevalence is actually due to lower socioeconomic status, to residence in a disadvantaged neighborhood, or to other factors (Offenhauer and Buchalter 2011).

Questionnaires collected from 521 teens at a rally for GLBT youth rights in a Northeast city in 2000 indicate that the prevalence of dating violence among gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens appears comparable to that among their heterosexual peers (Freedner, Freed, Yang, and Austin 2002). In YRBSS surveys during 2001-2009, four states (Delaware, Maine, Rhode Island, and Vermont) and four urban school districts (Boston, Chicago, New York City, and San Francisco) included questions on sexual identity and on whether a student had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend during the 12 months before the survey. Across these sites, dating violence was more prevalent among gay and lesbian students (range: 17.7% to 28.0%), bisexual students (range: 7.7% to 29.9%), and unsure students (range: 7.7% to 29.9%) than among heterosexual students (range: 6.1% to 13.8%). (Kann, Olsen, McManus, Kinchen, Chyen, Harris, and Wechsler 2011) Six states (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin) and five urban areas (Boston, Chicago, Milwaukee, New York City, and San Diego) included questions on sex of sexual contacts and on whether a student had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend during the 12 months before the survey. These surveys found that the prevalence of dating violence was highest among students who had sexual contact with both sexes (range: 26.3% to 39.6%) and that it was higher among students who only had sexual contact with the same sex (range: 16.3% to 26.2%) than with students who only had sexual contact with the opposite sex (range: 11.5% to 17.1%) (Kann et al.). Studies of teen dating violence among GLBT youth are quite limited, however, and more research is needed.



## Correlation between Teen Dating Violence and Risky, Unhealthy Behaviors

Teen dating violence has an adverse impact on both perpetrators and victims. For example, some studies have shown connections between being a perpetrator of teen dating violence, engaging in suicidal behavior, and fighting with peers (Swahn, Simon, Hertz, Arias, Bossarte, Ross, Gross, Iachan, and Hamburger 2008). However, girls who are in violent dating relationships “report greater fear of their partner as a result of the violence, and otherwise suffer a disproportionate share of negative and lasting sequelae.” (Offenhauer and Buchalter 2011). Research shows a correlation between girls’ involvement in violent dating relationships and their involvement in other risky, unhealthy behaviors.

**Unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections** – Young women in abusive relationships have been found to be at higher risk of becoming pregnant or contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, because they may be afraid to negotiate condom use or fear violence if they try to address having safer sex. In one study, condom use was significantly lower among girls who had experienced dating violence during the previous year than among other girls (Silverman, Raj, and Clements 2004). Compared with girls who are not in violent relationships, those who experience both physical and sexual dating violence are more than twice as likely to report an STI diagnosis (Decker, Silverman, and Raj 2005). Adolescent girls in physically abusive relationships are three times more likely to become pregnant than non-abused girls (Roberts, Auinger, and Klein 2005).



**Suicide** – Being in a violent relationship can lead to feelings of hopelessness and to depression, which are risk factors for suicide (Ackard and Neumark-Sztainer 2002). For example, in a study of urban youth, adolescent girls who reported recent dating violence were 60% more likely to report one or more attempted suicides (Olshen, McVeigh, and Wunsch-Hitzig 2007). In an analysis of the YRBSS in Massachusetts, suicidal ideation was six to nine times more common in girls who had experienced physical or sexual violence (Silverman, Raj, and Mucci 2001).

**Substance use (alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs)** – A South Carolina study found that victims with a history of dating violence were significantly more likely to use drugs, smoke, or drink alcohol (Coker, McKeown, Sanderson, Davis, Valois, and Huebner 2000). In another study conducted in both urban and suburban areas, 32.7% of girls who had experienced dating violence drank alcohol, 23% smoked marijuana, and 49.5% smoked cigarettes. Among girls who had not experienced dating violence, 26% drank alcohol, 10.8% smoked marijuana, and 28.2% smoked cigarettes (Ackard, Eisenberg, and Neumark-Sztainer 2007).

**Disordered eating behaviors** – In a statewide survey of more than 80,000 9th and 12th grade students in Minnesota, teens who reported that they had experienced both dating violence and rape were more likely to report that they used laxatives, diet pills, vomiting, fasting, or binge eating to control their weight. In fact, almost 37% of girls and 29% of boys who reported teen dating violence also reported binge eating as compared to 24% of girls and 11% of boys who reported no teen dating violence (Ackard, Eisenberg, and Neumark-Sztainer 2002). The authors of the study hypothesize that these disordered eating behaviors may constitute attempts by victims of teen dating violence and rape to punish themselves for the abuse, to diminish disagreeable emotions connected with the abuse, or to prevent continued abuse by making themselves unattractive (Ackard, Eisenberg, and Neumark-Sztainer 2002). An analysis of the YRBSS in Massachusetts also showed that experiencing dating violence was associated with diet pill use, laxative use, and/or vomiting to lose weight (Silverman, Raj, and Clements 2001).

## Approaches to Preventing Teen Dating Violence

Close to half of adolescents between the ages of 11 and 14 have dated (Liz Claiborne, Inc./Teen Research Unlimited 2008). Since dating relationships begin in early adolescence, prevention programs must start with this age group in order to be effective in deterring teen dating violence.

Other research shows that verbal disputes in a dating relationship can eventually lead to violence, reinforcing the notion that interventions must begin early in order to teach and support constructive coping and communication skills. Given the fact that dating interactions among younger teens are likely to take place in the presence of peers and that peers will often be witnesses to incidents of dating violence, it is critical to teach bystanders to intervene to stop abuse in ways that are safe and effective. Peer educators may also be valuable resources for the prevention of teen dating violence since adolescents generally confide more in peers than in adults (Noonan and Charles 2009).

Three interventions - Safe Dates, the Youth Relationships Project, and the 4th R Curriculum - are promising practices for reducing teen dating violence behavior, although more research is needed before a clear determination of their effectiveness can be made (Whitaker, Morrison, Lindquist, Hawkins, O'Neil, Nesius, Mathew, and Reese 2005; Office of Justice Programs, CrimeSolutions.gov database, accessed July 2011). A fourth intervention, the Ending Violence curriculum, was evaluated by the RAND Corporation and showed promise in that the curriculum had an impact on teens' knowledge of legal resources and their willingness to seek help, although it did not alter their attitudes about "male-on-female violence (i.e., violence in which the male is the perpetrator) or on dating violence exposure or perpetration" (Jaycox, Aronoff, and Shelley 2007). Shifting Boundaries, a school-based intervention implemented in 30 public middle schools in New York City, was evaluated using surveys and focus groups. The evaluation found that a "building only" component of temporary school-based restraining orders, increased security in areas that were deemed unsafe, and posters, as well as the "building-only" component in combination with use of a six-session classroom curriculum, was successful in reducing dating violence (Taylor, Stein, Woods, and Mumford 2011).



**Safe Dates** – Distributed by Hazelden Publishing, Safe Dates is a curriculum designed to be presented in ten 50-minute sessions to middle and high school students. It provides definitions of caring relationships and of dating abuse, discusses the causes of dating abuse, teaches students how to help a friend who is in an abusive relationship, describes the ways in which gender stereotypes impact dating relationships, and explains how to prevent sexual assault. Safe Dates also includes a play about teen dating violence, a poster contest, materials for parents, and an outline for teachers. The curriculum can be implemented in a variety of settings, such as after-school programs, faith-based youth groups, violence prevention programs, substance abuse prevention programs, victim support groups, crisis centers, and juvenile diversion programs. Safe Dates is listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. For more information about Safe Dates, go to: <http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/safedates.page> or [http://www.andvsa.org/v2/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/safedates\\_2pagefactsheet.pdf](http://www.andvsa.org/v2/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/safedates_2pagefactsheet.pdf).



**Youth Relationships Project** – The Youth Relationships Project was developed with funding from the National Health Research Development Program: Health Canada and the Ontario Mental Health Foundation. It consists of 18 weekly, two-hour sessions presented to groups of eight to 15 girls and boys who are between 14 and 16 years of age. The intervention is targeted at youth who have witnessed or experienced violence, although it is not limited to these youth. It focuses on helping at-risk youth to develop an understanding of dating violence and to acquire skills related to personal responsibility, communication, and community participation. The Youth Relationships Project is listed on the Public Health Agency of Canada's Best Practices Portal. For more information about the project, go to: <http://cbpp-pcpe.phac-aspc.gc.ca/intervention/269/view-eng.html>.

**4th R Curriculum** – Begun in Canada, the 4th R Curriculum consists of 21 classroom lessons divided into three units of seven 75-minute sessions. The units are presented to gender-specific groups of boys and girls in the eighth and ninth grades. The units address (1) personal safety and injury prevention, including bullying and youth violence prevention, (2) healthy growth and sexuality, and (3) substance use and abuse. The 4th R Curriculum is listed as a promising practice on the U.S. Office of Justice Programs' [CrimeSolutions.gov](http://www.crimesolutions.gov) database and is also included in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. For more information about the 4th R Curriculum, go to: [http://www.youthrelationships.org/about\\_fourth\\_r.html](http://www.youthrelationships.org/about_fourth_r.html) or <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=207>.

### Ending Violence: A Curriculum for Educating Teens on Domestic Violence and the Law

– Developed by Break the Cycle, a Los Angeles-based non-profit organization, the Ending Violence curriculum is delivered as a three-day program for high school and college students, as well as teens in juvenile detention facilities and community organizations. It relies on a variety of interactive group exercises, including role playing and educational games, to teach teens about dating violence, healthy relationships, and legal rights and responsibilities. To read the report on the Break the Cycle Evaluation Project, go to: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/RP1308.html>. For more information about the Ending Violence curriculum, go to: <http://www.endingviolence.net/index.php>.

Shifting Boundaries – The Shifting Boundaries intervention includes a six-session classroom curriculum on boundaries, state laws concerning teen dating violence, the consequences of perpetrating dating violence, gender roles, and healthy relationships. It also includes a “building-only” component of temporary school-based restraining orders, increased security in areas deemed by students to be unsafe, and posters designed to raise awareness about dating violence and to increase the reporting of dating violence incidents. To read Shifting Boundaries: Lessons on Relationships for Students in Middle School, go to: <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/teen-dating-violence/shifting-boundaries-all-schools.pdf>. To read Shifting Boundaries: Final Report on an Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in New York City Middle Schools, go to: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/236175.pdf>.



## Examples of State Efforts in Teen Dating Violence Prevention

In 2009, the CDC provided grants to six states - California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania - for the reduction of teen dating violence in high-risk urban communities. The grants were made available through Core II of the CDC's Core Violence and Injury Prevention Program under Part C: Teen Dating Violence Initiative as a supplement to the existing Core Capacity Grants for state injury prevention programs. The grant requirements included the creation of a Teen Dating Violence Prevention Team, development of a plan for the coordination of teen dating violence prevention activities, administration of scans and assessments, identification of gaps and needs, engagement of partners at both the state and local levels, and development of recommendations to support teen dating violence prevention programs and policies. The following are brief highlights of state activities related to the teen dating violence prevention grants.

### California

The California Department of Public Health, Violence Prevention Unit (VPU), convened a Teen Dating Violence Prevention Team (TDVPT) of local, state, and national stakeholders to conduct local and statewide assessments and planning for teen dating violence prevention. The project site was Alameda County, an urban area with high rates of violence, but also representing deep community commitment to address social and health issues. The TDVPT met over a 20-month period, identifying key concepts for defining and framing teen dating violence; conducting environmental and policy scans; and developing priority recommendations.

The process led to a common vision: Transformation within communities toward investing in health promotion and youth development for adolescents to support our young people in building healthy relationships, families, and communities. This would be accomplished by coordinated, intergenerational, community-driven actions to address the root causes of teen dating violence and promote sustainable mechanisms that support healthy and equitable adolescent and adult relationships.

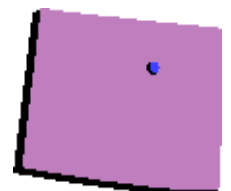
As a final phase, VPU facilitated separate meetings of local and statewide TDVPT members, leading to the development of a specific local teen dating violence plan and a Teen Dating Violence Statewide Coordination Plan. This process also contributed to a subsequent grant for our project site (Alameda County Health Department) by the CDC under its new teen dating violence prevention initiative, Dating Matters(tm): Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships. The funding will aid local health departments in leading their communities in developing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive approach to teen dating violence prevention.



### Colorado

Colorado's Injury, Suicide and Violence Prevention Unit created a Teen Dating Violence Prevention Team (TDVPT) composed of four interconnected sub-teams: an Executive Team, a State Teen Dating Violence Prevention Team, Youth Advisory Committee, and a Denver-Aurora Teen Dating Violence Prevention Taskforce representing the urban area on which the state chose to focus. The TDVPT conducted an environmental scan that included 1) an electronic/paper agency survey using the CDC core environmental scan questions as a base; 2) an assessment of current teen dating violence prevention programming being implemented in the community; and 3) key informant interviews and focus groups to gather more in-depth qualitative data. The TDVPT also conducted a scan of state and local-level policies impacting the health of youth ages 10-19 and organized the results into three main sections: state-level policies, community-based local-level policies, and school-based local-level policies.

Additionally, the TDVPT examined in-depth information on surveillance systems for teen dating violence, its indicators, and current evaluation and data collection. The TDVPT adopted a socio-ecological framework for the development of prevention strategies to address the primary prevention of teen dating violence. Based on the data it collected, the TDVPT developed a set of long-term outcomes and then created recommendations for best practices for strategy development, program and policy recommendations organized by socio-ecological level, teen dating violence intervention recommendations, and capacity recommendations. The Colorado Department of Health and Environment also provided 22 capacity building sessions for stakeholders through a variety of venues, including state conferences and local workshops.





## Florida

Florida conducted an environmental scan that identified teen dating violence prevention programs, activities, policies, evaluation efforts, and capacity in Miami-Dade County, which was the urban area on which the state chose to focus. The scan included an online survey, telephone conversations, and in-person interviews with agencies that provide teen dating violence prevention activities. The state also conducted a policy scan that identified policies related to teen dating violence prevention in Miami-Dade County and statewide that impact the health of youth ages 10-19. The types of policies reviewed included statutes, rules, regulations, mandates, operating procedures, standards, and other guidelines related to effective teen dating violence prevention.

The state strengthened its relationship with the Miami-Dade County Health Department in expectation of collaboration on future projects and for the purpose of coordinating and participating in local and state level teen dating violence prevention team meetings and conference calls. Florida also developed a youth advisory board in Miami-Dade County to mirror the state level youth board.



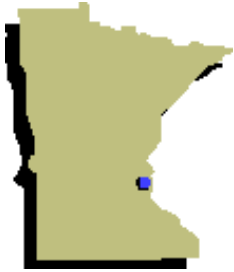
## Massachusetts

Massachusetts assembled a teen dating violence prevention team consisting of staff from the Department of Public Health's (DPH) Injury Prevention and Violence Prevention programs. The team included DPH's Youth Violence Prevention Director, Rape Prevention Education Program Director, and Youth Development Director, as well as Boston's Start Strong Teen Dating Violence Initiative, DELTA PREP Program (Jane Doe State Sexual and Domestic Violence Coalition), and local sexual assault, domestic violence, and youth development programs, specifically including GLBT youth-focused programs. During the grant-funded planning phase, the team met jointly with MassPINN, the State Sexual Violence Prevention Team, and other related groups. The team conducted environmental and policy scans for Boston and the whole state, culminating in a report to the CDC.

The team has worked with: (1) the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to propose revisions and additions to the statewide guidelines to school districts on teen dating violence; (2) a federal teen pregnancy prevention initiative to assess and adapt evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention curricula to ensure adequate content that is trauma-informed, GLBT-inclusive, and addresses healthy relationship skills/content, including teen dating violence and sexual violence prevention; and (3) the Boston Alliance for GLBT Youth (BAGLY) and The Network/La Red to develop trainings for GLBT youth programs to increase their capacity to integrate GLBT-inclusive, healthy relationships/sexuality promotion in their work with youth. With the planning grant now over, the team will be including advocates and others from around the state to move the recommendations from the planning phase forward.



## Minnesota



Minnesota conducted an environmental scan in the Twin City Metropolitan Area, the urban area on which the state chose to focus. The scan was sent to four types of organizations: community-based organizations, schools, local public health agencies, and state agencies — all of which work with teens. In an effort to get as much information about current programs and to aid in the development of a teen dating violence primary prevention state plan, Minnesota included four question sets in the environmental scan regarding programs that assist teens in developing skills needed to prevent teen dating violence. Those programs focus on mentoring, healthy relationship skills, gender equity, and addressing the effects of alcohol consumption.

The state also conducted a policy scan, which inventoried existing policies from the Minnesota Departments of Corrections, Education, Health, and Public Safety and the Minnesota Statute on Underage Drinking. The scan also looked at bullying prevention policies. Other activities included development and administration of a quiz to employees of the Minnesota Department of Health during Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month to address the intersections of sexual violence with other departments.

In focus groups, youth expressed the desire for more positive interaction with nurturing, mentoring adults. Most agreed that alcohol use and drug consumption often lead to erratic behavior, including unwarranted arguments with dating partners and teen dating violence. Youth were also clear that teen dating violence is a real problem in their lives. Education about positive, healthy relationship building needs to start earlier before they start dating.

## Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania assembled a team of key stakeholders in Philadelphia, the urban area on which the state chose to focus. The team included four domestic violence shelters, one rape crisis center, family planning groups, community organizations, representatives from the LGBT community, and personnel from school districts. An environmental scan revealed that, while there is no system-wide approach (i.e., organized and sponsored at the central administrative level) to providing teen dating violence prevention activities in the city's public or Archdiocese schools, a variety of other prevention programs are taking place, including programs in some schools and community-based settings; training for professional staff; community outreach; screening and counseling services; and research and evaluation. The environmental scan also indicated that there are opportunities to work with the school district and Archdiocese on teen dating violence prevention.



To identify local and state policies related to teen dating violence prevention, a policy scan was conducted using a mixed-method data collection process. The process of identifying policies relevant to teen dating violence prevention involved reviews of websites and archival documents, an email Request for Information survey, and interviews with key informants at the national, state, and local levels. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with School District of Philadelphia central administrative staff and key informants at other local, state, and national organizations.



## What One State Is Doing to Prevent Teen Dating Violence

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is addressing teen dating violence by supporting:

- **Be Safe** – Training modules were developed through a partnership among several community organizations, including AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, and the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts. Two modules, each eight hours in length, provide an opportunity for the staff, volunteers, and interns of youth programs to learn how to address the interconnected issues of sexual and mental health, substance use, healthy relationships, and sexual violence.
- **Partner Abuse Prevention Training for LGBTQ Youth Peer Leaders** – Based on the Boston Alliance of GLBT Youth's (BAGLY) peer-facilitated HEARRT (Health Education And Risk Reduction Team) program, an original group level intervention, and The Network/La Red's training curricula, the training focuses on helping LGBTQ youth understand how systems of oppression operate and influence power, violence, and abuse and how to use this understanding as the basis for establishing prevention and bystander intervention norms among their peers.
- **Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)** – PREP provides medically accurate, culturally competent, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education and life skills to support healthy relationships for youth ages 10-19 with a goal of decreasing the teen birth rate in communities with high teen birth rates. The project focuses on populations with the greatest disparities in reproductive health outcomes, including youth who identify as Hispanic, are sexual minorities, or are part of a state system of care. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Teen Dating Violence initiative collaborates with the PREP program to assess each of the chosen curricula for GLBT-inclusive, trauma-informed healthy relationship/sexuality content (including teen dating and sexual violence prevention), and to provide enhancements to curricula and evaluation measures.



## What Can Public Health Professionals Do to Prevent Teen Dating Violence?

### Assess Health Department Role and Relevant State Law and Policies Related to Teen Dating Violence

- Conduct an environmental scan to understand current Department of Health (DOH) involvement and determine its future role in teen dating violence prevention.
- Analyze current state legislation and policies which relate directly to teen dating violence prevention or other legislation which may have a broader focus but address intimate partner violence for all ages to see if teen dating violence is covered or could be covered.
- Identify roles that the DOH can play, especially in relation to training, reporting systems, education, media, and state and community response systems.
- Assess/examine state laws and policies which may relate to teen dating violence prevention and can be integrated into teen dating violence prevention, such as bullying prevention, school health, after-school programs, primary care, school climate, etc.
- Determine what systems and programs are already in place to enforce teen dating violence prevention laws and policies and how DOH is involved.
- Work with state sexual assault/rape prevention programs and other state programs to proactively disseminate information about evidence-based practices, model policies, and other related information to key partners, including policy makers, schools, families, and law enforcement.
- Help coordinate and mobilize partners to support development of teen dating violence prevention laws and policies.
- Become an active member of a state team developing, implementing, and evaluating teen dating violence prevention legislation and policies and promoting the use of a public health approach.
- Help determine which organizations and advocates could serve as effective champions for teen dating violence prevention laws and policies.

### Develop, Implement, and Evaluate Intervention

- Integrate teen dating violence prevention into MCH and other DOH supported programs and initiatives, including children with special health care needs, school health and safety, school-based health clinics, primary care visits, adolescent health, bullying prevention, gang involvement prevention, and community-based child and adolescent programs.



- Develop an MCH Block Grant state performance measure on teen dating violence prevention and include teen dating violence prevention in the state injury prevention plan.
- Incorporate teen dating violence prevention into health education classes.
- Work with the medical community to include teen dating violence prevention a part of anticipatory guidance.
- Provide health and human service providers, including medical providers, with resources necessary for appropriate responses to the victims of teen dating violence.
- Work with Child Death Review teams to ensure that teen dating violence is considered when reviewing adolescent deaths and to identify prevention strategies.
- Develop and conduct public education campaigns that teach families/parents, communities, and adolescents about teen dating violence prevention and what their specific roles are in prevention.
- Identify evidence-based and promising practices and work with internal and external programs to implement and evaluate them.

## Collect, Analyze, and Disseminate Data

- Work with epidemiologists to develop strategies for the surveillance of teen dating violence including assessment of the social climate in schools and communities. Encourage them to provide input on surveys or data collection methods in cases of teen dating violence incidents, which can help schools to understand the causes and consequences of teen dating violence and inform prevention strategies.
- Work with the state Department of Education, school health and safety professionals, and community providers to develop and improve data collection, dissemination, analysis, and use.
- Help coordinate data sources to promote sharing that allows for a comprehensive understanding of the problem and facilitate development of appropriate interventions/strategies to address teen dating violence.



## Provide Technical Assistance

- Provide training and technical assistance on teen dating violence prevention for public health and safety and other education professionals.
- Work with policy makers, families, and others to educate them about teen dating violence prevention.
- Train public health nurses, school health nurses, MCH practitioners, pediatric health providers, mental health providers, nutritionists, and other service providers to identify teen dating violence and respond using appropriate interventions.
- Provide technical assistance and training to community providers, including law enforcement, PTA, teachers, human service providers, after-school providers, families, and sports/recreation programs on recognizing teen dating violence and intervening using evidence-based and promising practices.
- Encourage schools of nursing, social work, medicine, and education to include teen dating violence identification, intervention, and prevention in their curricula.

## Facilitate Collaborations between Relevant Organizations and Professionals

- Participate on state/local task forces and advisory committees related to teen dating violence prevention.
- Partner with schools to become part of the solution by offering ideas to promote social environment change, to understand the role of the bystander, to encourage staff to serve as role models, and to get youth involved as part of the solution (become mentors to younger students, suggest policy changes, become active bystanders, report to adults when teen dating violence behavior is observed).
- Develop and maintain a relationship with the state Department of Education and other state agencies and programs involved in teen dating violence prevention, such as sexual assault/rape prevention programs, adolescent health, teen pregnancy prevention, and programs that work with batterers.
- Create partnerships with private companies, such as health insurance companies and corporations that support violence prevention.
- Develop partnerships with youth-serving organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, and Girls Inc.
- Co-sponsor trainings and education for communities, families, and others.
- Work with local public health to develop comprehensive plans at the local level to address teen dating violence.
- Work with state professional entities such as the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, school psychologists, school-based health centers, school nurses, etc.
- Convene players at the state and local level to facilitate training and education.
- Partner with educators and school nurses in creating, implementing, and enforcing school policies.

## Information and Resources

**National Dating Abuse Helpline** – The National Dating Abuse Helpline is the direct service provider behind [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org), operating the 24/7 phone, text, and chat services. The Helpline, originally known as “loveisrespect.org, National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline,” was launched in February 2007 with help from founding sponsor Liz Claiborne, Inc. It is a national, 24-hour resource specifically designed for teens and young adults. Accessible by phone or internet, the National Dating Abuse Helpline operates from a call center in Austin, TX. The Helpline can assist teens with safety planning, assessing their support systems, getting legal protection, and other issues related to teen dating violence. To learn more about the Helpline, go to: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/about-national-dating-abuse-helpline>. To contact the Helpline, call 1-866-331-9474 or TTY 1-866-331-8453. Seek online support at [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) through the live chat feature, or text ‘loveis’ directly to 77054 to begin a text chat with an advocate.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-SAFE)** – The mission of the National Domestic Violence Hotline is to provide crisis intervention, safety planning, information, and referrals for individuals experiencing domestic violence. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, and assistance is offered in numerous languages. To learn more about the hotline, go to: <http://www.thehotline.org>

**Alianza National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence** – Alianza is a national network of Latina and Latino advocates, practitioners, researchers, activists, and survivors of domestic violence. It has a national directory of domestic violence prevention programs that provide services in Spanish; offers education, technical assistance, and training; and produces fact sheets, informational booklets, position papers, and other publications. For more information, go to: <http://dvalianza.org>

**Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence** – The API Institute works to eliminate violence in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. It provides directories of available programs and offers statistics, tools for community organizing, and publications on numerous topics related to the prevention of domestic violence. To visit the Institute’s website, go to: <http://www.apiidv.org>

**Break the Cycle** – This national, non-profit organization coordinates teen dating violence prevention education and public awareness campaigns, supports policies to promote safe and healthy relationships, and provides tools and training materials for teens, parents, and educators. To learn more about Break the Cycle, go to: <http://www.breakthecycle.org>

- **Hear My Voice** – Developed by Break the Cycle with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime, the Hear My Voice campaign educates LGBTQ teens about healthy relationships and about the signs of abuse, provides safety planning guides, and connects teen dating violence victims to help and legal services. To visit Hear My Voice, go to: <http://hearmyvoice.breakthecycle.org>
- **thesafespace.org** – Break the Cycle created thesafespace.org, which provides basic facts about teen dating violence, including information about the legal rights of victims. The website also has a series of quizzes to help teens evaluate the health and safety of their dating relationships. To visit the website, go to: [www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org)
- **loveisrespect.org** – Break the Cycle and the National Dating Abuse Helpline collaborated to create [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org), an online resource for teen dating violence prevention. The site offers a teen dating abuse awareness toolkit, a presentation entitled Dating Abuse 101, public service announcements, questionnaires to help teens determine if they are in an abusive relationship or are abusers, ways to support a friend who is in an abusive relationship, and a blog with tips and stories about dating abuse. To visit the website, go to: [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

**Choose Respect** - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Choose Respect initiative promotes healthy teen relationships to prevent dating violence. The initiative’s materials are organized into a Playbook, which is in turn organized according to three “zones.” Zone 1 provides information and activities to help teens prevent dating violence in their communities. Zone 2 is targeted at parents and caregivers, while Zone 3 is designed for community organizations, and Zone 4 focuses on policy education and advocacy. To view the Playbook, go to: [http://www.cdc.gov/chooserespect/materials\\_and\\_resources/playbook/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/chooserespect/materials_and_resources/playbook/index.html)

**Casa De Esperanza** – Utilizing a strengths-based approach to mobilizing Latinas and Latina communities for domestic violence prevention, Casa De Esperanza leads the National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities, which provides trainings, policy updates, and action alerts. For more information, go to: <http://www.casadeesperanza.org/about-us>

**Dating Matters - Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships** – Dating Matters is a new teen dating violence prevention initiative from the CDC that includes prevention strategies for individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. The initiative is being implemented in schools and neighborhoods in four cities: Baltimore, MD; Chicago, IL; Fort Lauderdale, FL; and Oakland, CA. To learn about Dating Matters, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/DatingMatters/index.html> and see: [http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/DatingMatters\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/DatingMatters_flyer.pdf).

**Futures Without Violence (formerly the Family Violence Prevention Fund)** – Futures Without Violence works to prevent violence within the home and in the community and to help those whose lives are devastated by violence because everyone has the right to live free of violence. To learn more about Futures Without Violence, go to: <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>

Futures Without Violence leads national teen dating violence prevention efforts, including:

- **That's Not Cool** – In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence against Women and the Advertising Council, Futures Without Violence runs That's Not Cool, a national teen dating violence prevention public education campaign. To visit the campaign's website, go to: <http://www.thatsnotcool.com>
- **Start Strong** – Futures Without Violence coordinates Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that supports community-based models for the prevention of relationship violence. To learn more about Start Strong, go to: <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/content/features/detail/780>
- **Lessons from Literature** – Providing English teachers with lesson plans and resources, Lessons from Literature prepares teachers to facilitate classroom discussions that build awareness about abuse. To learn more about Lessons from Literature, go to: <http://www.lessonsfromliterature.org>
- **Respect! Campaign** – The Respect! Campaign is a national initiative of Futures Without Violence that encourages and equips parents, teachers, coaches, and other role models to teach young people about respect in relationships. For information on the Respect! Campaign, go to: <http://www.giverespect.org/about>

**Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community** – Based at the University of Minnesota, the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community provides publications, webcasts, and conferences on the unique circumstances of domestic violence among African Americans and works to end violence in the African-American community. To visit the Institute's website, go to: <http://www.idvaac.org/index.html>

**National Center for Victims of Crime** – This national resource center has an online Dating Violence Resource Center, which includes fact sheets, articles, posters, a video, and a Teen Action Toolkit: Building a Youth-Led Response to Teen Victimization. To visit the resource center, go to: [http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB\\_DatingViolenceResourceCenter101](http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB_DatingViolenceResourceCenter101). The National Center for Victims of Crime also has a Teen Victim Project, which provides information on the needs of teen victims of crime and guidelines on how to assist them. To learn more about the Teen Victim Project, go to: <http://www.ncvc.org/tvp/Main.aspx>



**National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center** - This resource center raises public awareness about violence committed against Native women and their children and provides technical assistance and training, develops policy, and engages in research activities. NIWRC also holds webinars, maintains a speakers bureau resource list, and produces Restoration Magazine. For more information about NIWRC, go to: <http://www.niwrc.org>

**National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey** - Begun in 2010, the CDC’s National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey is an ongoing, nationally representative random digit dial telephone survey that collects information about experiences of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence among non-institutionalized English and/or Spanish-speaking women and men aged 18 or older in the U.S. To learn more about the NISVS, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs>. To read the NISVS 2010 summary report, go to: [http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS\\_Report2010-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf)

**National Online Resource Center on Violence against Women (VAWnet.org)** – A project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (<http://www.nrcdv.org/index.php>), VAWnet.org offers publications and research on violence against women. It has information on teen dating violence for teens, parents, educators, health care professionals, and domestic and sexual violence service providers. It also provides reports on state laws and pending legislation regarding teen dating violence and a list of national organizations that work to reduce dating violence. These materials are part of VAWnet.org’s special collection of resources on teen dating violence, which features information for young people, parents and care takers, men and boys, teachers and school-based professionals, health care professionals, and domestic violence and sexual violence service providers. For more information about VAWnet.org, go to: <http://www.vawnet.org>. To access VAWnet.org’s special collection on teen dating violence, go to: <http://www.vawnet.org/special-collections/TDV.php>

**Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents** – The Search Institute works with schools and youth-serving organizations to promote healthy youth development. The Institute conducts research and evaluations, has produced numerous publications, and has developed and administered extensive surveys to identify promising and successful approaches to healthy youth development, resiliency, and prevention. The 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents ages 12-18 include external assets related to support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time, as well as internal assets related to commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. To view the 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents, go to: <http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets/lists>. To learn more about the Search Institute, visit: <http://www.search-institute.org>





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CSN is a resource center for MCH and injury prevention professionals in State and Territorial health departments who are committed to reducing injuries and violence among children and adolescents. CSN is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services.

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