

# Intimate Partner Violence and Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Teen dating violence is defined as “physical, sexual, or psychological/emotional violence within a dating relationship, as well as stalking” (CDC, 2012). Teens in unhealthy dating relationships may also experience coerced sex or birth control sabotage, increasing risk of pregnancy. Intimate partner violence (IPV) may involve teens or adults; this tip sheet uses the term IPV because teens may be affected not only by violence involving their dating partner but by IPV that occurs in their home, community, or among friends. This document provides practical guidance for incorporating IPV content and materials into teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) projects.

## Ways to Incorporate IPV Prevention

The following approaches will ensure that your IPV content is based on theory and/or evidence from rigorous research studies, thus increasing the likelihood of effectiveness:

- **Use an evidence-based TPP program that addresses healthy relationships.** Thoroughly review the evidence-based TPP program that you have selected or are considering to determine whether it covers healthy relationships. Be sure to clearly document how you determined whether healthy relationships are covered.
- **Add a program or components targeting IPV prevention.** Add an evidence-based program, specific sessions, or activities from an evidence-based program into your TPP project. Be mindful of how these additions may affect fidelity of your evidence-based TPP program(s). The registries at the bottom of this page and the references at the end of this tip sheet can help you find evidence-based IPV prevention programs.
- **Address risk and protective factors.** Factors include acceptance of violence, awareness of services for victims and perpetrators, gender stereotyping, conflict resolution skills, substance use, trauma symptoms, and parental monitoring and rule setting.

## Key Planning Steps to Address IPV

**Learn about how IPV is affecting teens in your community.** Review existing data and gather new information by collaborating with researchers on surveys, focus groups, or community forums to learn about IPV among teens who your project is targeting, including

- **types of violent behavior** that they experience, such as physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, stalking, or electronic aggression (i.e., harassment or bullying that occurs through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, Websites, blogs, or text messaging);
- **risk and protective factors** for IPV that are most common in your community; and
- **links between IPV and teen pregnancy**, including common risk factors (e.g., poor relationship skills), indirect links (e.g., IPV may be a factor in school dropout, which leads

teens to engage in risky sexual behavior, or vice versa), and direct impacts (e.g., sexual violence may lead to a pregnancy or learning of a pregnancy may lead to violent behavior in a relationship).

**Search registries of evidence-based IPV programs to identify appropriate material:**

- Blueprints for Violence Prevention: <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices: <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/>
- FindYouthInfo Program Directory: <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/program-directory>

Be sure to read any evaluations that have been conducted so you understand the short- and long-term outcomes affected by the program. Determine whether these outcomes are what you want to target in your community. Consider selecting sessions or activities that address risk and protective factors impacted by the program. For instance, the Safe Dates program improved attitudes about IPV and awareness of community services (Foshee et al., 2005), so sessions addressing acceptance of IPV and available community services for victims and perpetrators may have the strongest impacts on IPV. Consider whether the program was successful with all youths or only some subgroups (e.g., boys but not girls).

**Identify staff recruitment and training needs.** Make sure chosen facilitators agree with the messaging you want to promote. Train facilitators to be prepared for disclosures about violence and to remind teens of staff's reporting responsibilities at the beginning of *each* session.

**Identify community partners and referral resources.** Contact your community's domestic violence program or rape crisis center to find out what services are offered to teens. These programs can help teens plan for their safety and offer crisis counseling. To find local programs in your area, go to <http://www.nnedv.org/resources/coalitions.html> and find your state coalition. Inviting outside experts to speak to teens can help teens identify additional trusted adults whom teens can contact about their questions or concerns.

#### Additional Tips for Staff Delivering IPV Content

The following tips may be helpful as you train program delivery staff and prepare to implement IPV-related sessions or activities:

- **Be aware.** Even if your focus is primary prevention (addressing IPV before it starts), youth may have already experienced IPV in a dating relationship or witnessed the abuse of a parent. Facilitators should be prepared for the fact that discussing IPV may generate strong reactions. Facilitators should be familiar with State, Tribal, and/or agency policies on mandated reporting of suspected child abuse or imminent harm.
- **Set ground rules.** Facilitators should encourage confidentiality and trust surrounding group discussions, but ensure that participants understand what facilitators are required to report.

- **Avoid gender stereotypes.** Assumptions about behaviors that are appropriate for girls versus boys are harmful to teens and are associated with IPV. Focus on both girls and boys as potential perpetrators and victims, as supported by research (O’Leary & Slep, 2012).
- **Avoid victim blaming.** Be clear that victims of IPV are never to blame for the violence they have experienced.
- **Be inclusive.** Youth in LGBTQ relationships experience IPV and may have a more difficult time seeking help (Freedner et al., 2002). Use gender-neutral language to describe partnerships and include specific referrals and resources for LGBTQ youth.
- **Be sensitive to cultural issues.** Some cultures do not allow or encourage teen dating or may have strong beliefs about expected gender roles. This can make it difficult for IPV victims and perpetrators to seek help without experiencing negative consequences, such as exclusion or isolation from their family or community or self-blaming as a result of IPV because the teen may have violated cultural norms by engaging in a dating relationship.
- **Materials matter.** Identify or create takeaway materials for teens about warning signs of abuse (e.g., business card-sized handouts that they can inconspicuously put in their pockets). Make sure victims know to keep these materials hidden to avoid further violence.
- **Know the resources.** It is important for staff to be able to refer youth to appropriate community resources, including domestic violence programs, rape crisis centers, or the National Dating Abuse Helpline. If you or someone you know has experienced IPV, free and confidential help is available 24 hours a day through the National Dating Abuse 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.
  - Text ‘loveis’ directly to 77054 to begin a text chat with an advocate.

## References and Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). *Teen dating violence*. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen\\_dating\\_violence.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html)
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