CANADIAN POLICY TO ADDRESS YOUTH DATING VIOLENCE: WHAT EDUCATORS AND CAREGIVERS NEED TO KNOW

OCTOBER 28 PANEL DISCUSSION

MODERATED BY: WENDY CRAIG

PRESENTED BY: DEINERA EXNER-CORTENS, JOANNE CUMMINGS, SUZIE DUNN, AND TAYLOR SULLIVAN
WHAT IS ADOLESCENT DATING VIOLENCE?
Physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and/or stalking experienced within a dating/sexual relationship between the ages of 11-18
CONTINUUM OF ADV

Healthy

unhealthy

Abusive
PREVALENCE
Prevalence of adolescent dating violence victimization in Canada

Exner-Cortens, Baker & Craig, 2020
Correlates of dating violence victimization:

- Age
- Gender
- Family structure
- Food insecurity
- Family affluence

Exner-Cortens, Baker & Craig, 2020
Prevalence of adolescent dating violence perpetration in Canada

Exner-Cortens, Baker & Craig, 2020
CORRELATES OF DATING VIOLENCE PERPETRATION

- Age
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Immigration status
- Food insecurity
- Family affluence

Exner-Cortens, Baker & Craig, 2020
Patterns of adolescent dating violence in Canada

Exner-Cortens, Baker, & Craig, 2021
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Exner-Cortens, Baker, & Craig, 2021
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Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode & Rothman, 2013
ADV Victimization (adolescence) → IPV Victimization (emerging adulthood) → IPV Victimization (adulthood)

ADV = Adolescent dating violence; IPV = Intimate partner violence

Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode, Bunge & Rothman, 2017
Teen Dating Violence Can Lead To Homicide — And Girls Are The Most Common Victims

April 15, 2016 · 11:45 AM ET

RHI TU CHATTERJEE
DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Role of Policy
Teen Dating Violence

LEGAL RESPONSES
Talking to Teen about the Law

- Laws can help young people understand their rights
- Talking to young people about the law can help them feel empowered about what is right and wrong
- For example, knowing that sharing nude images without consent, being threatened, or being physically or sexually assaulted is against the law, can help them stand up for themselves and set boundaries in their relationships
- All conversations about law should be centred on healthy relationships, respect, and autonomy
Informing young people about the law should not be used as a tool to scare them (i.e. if you take/share nude photos you will be charged with child pornography offences and go to jail)

Many teens are afraid to tell adults about their experiences because they are afraid they will get in trouble or that the adult will escalate the situation and make it worse for them

Teens need to feel trusted, respected and have agency in the decisions that are being made about them
In reality, legal remedies are often only used as a last resort, typically in more extreme examples of teen dating violence.

However, those who do choose to report to the police or pursue a civil remedy must be taken seriously by the legal system.

Providing emotional support and having adults help guide them in this system is very important.
Adolescent Dating Violence + The Law: Educators

Where to find the relevant laws/rules:
- Provincial/Territorial acts governing education
- Provincial/Territorial acts governing family services
- School Board Codes of Conduct

What are you obligated to do?
- Report to parents
- Report to a principal
- Report to Child Services
Adolescent Dating Violence + The Law: Parents

Where to find the relevant laws/rules:
- Criminal Code
- Youth Criminal Justice Act
- Certain Provincial/Territorial acts focused on preventing domestic violence

What can you do for your child?
- Apply on their behalf for a:
  - Peace Bond
  - Protection Order
Adolescent Dating Violence +
The Law: Youth

Where to find the relevant laws/rules:
- Criminal Code
- Youth Criminal Justice Act
- Certain Provincial/Territorial acts focused on preventing domestic violence

What can you do?
- Apply for a:
  - Peace Bond
  - Protection Order
Responding to Teen Dating Violence
How do adults become aware?

- Disclosure by teens directly involved
- Witnessing a concerning interaction or pattern of behaviour
- Hearing about TDV from others

Be an “actionist” not a “bystander”
Trade Offs in TDV

- Love of Partner
- Reputation
- Guilt
- Fear
- Self-blame

Balance:

- Safety & Healthy Relationship
Barriers to Disclosure to Formal Sources

- Sense of responsibility for TDV, self-blame, guilt and shame
- Lack of trust in formal sources
- Fear of partner’s anger AND/OR concern that partner will face negative repercussions
- Confidentiality and mandatory reporting requirements
1 - Check-in with yourself

What thoughts, feelings, and reactions are coming up for you in the conversation?
What Makes a Response Supportive?

**Helpful**
- They do not have right to control you or to hit
- The abuse you’re experiencing is not your fault

**Unhelpful**
Let the person know that you are glad that they came to you. 
**Do not judge** - Dating abuse can happen to anyone.

A lot of teens have relationship concerns like yours. I’m so glad you came to me to share this.
Know your limits of confidentiality and communicate them out front

At the beginning of any disclosure or conversation you initiate

“I am here for you, and we will make decisions together. But you need to know that if I am concerned about your safety I will have to report to ___________”

- Provide truthful reassurance about privacy, concerns about gossip, etc.

- Consider risk of harm vs. risk of trust and possibly making things worse
3 - Clarify

**Explain** confidentiality and reporting requirements.  
“This is for everyone’s safety and protection, including you”.

**Ask** the individual what they need.

**Address** concerns about privacy and gossip

**Determine** if you understand correctly.

**Find out** their plan and support them
Respect the student’s right to privacy and personal space while following school/organization protocol on reporting.

Inform the student of available resources.

Connect the student with support and safety resources.

Offer a response that builds on the student’s strengths and choice.
What Makes a Good Referral?

Warm Referrals:
• Get to know referral agencies/people in advance
• Let the student know what will happen if they call/go to for support.
• Would the student like to call the support or referral together with you?
• What feels most helpful for the student?

Consider preparing a list of potential resources in advance so that you know the options.
Inform the student know that you will follow up with them over the coming days.

Ask the student if they have a preference for how you should follow up.

Find a confidential time and space to check-in with the student around how they are doing.
What Schools Can Do.

Develop a confidentiality policy

Develop a dating violence policy and procedure
What Schools Can Do about Organizational Cultural.

Create more inclusive spaces for marginalized groups school

Staff training
Thank you for your participation!

These slides were created collaboratively by:

PREVNet
Centre for Sexuality
sagesse