

# A School Policy to Increase Student Safety

Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence  
Through Improved School Climate



Produced by

**Family Violence  
Prevention Fund**

[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

and

**Break the Cycle**

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**Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships** is the largest initiative ever funded to target 11 to 14 year-olds to promote healthy relationships as the way to prevent teen dating violence and abuse.

**Start Strong** is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in collaboration with the Family Violence Prevention Fund. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and Blue Shield of California Foundation (BSCF) are investing \$18 million in 11 communities across the country to identify and evaluate the most promising pathways to stop dating violence and abuse before it starts. RWJF is funding ten sites around the country and BSCF is funding one site in California. Communities include:

Start Strong Atlanta:  
Emory University

Start Strong Bronx:  
Bronx-Lebanon Hospital

Start Strong Oakland:  
Family Violence Law Center

Start Strong Austin:  
SafePlace

Start Strong Idaho:  
Idaho Coalition Against  
Domestic and Sexual Violence

Start Strong Rhode Island:  
Sojourner House

Start Strong Boston:  
Boston Public Health Commission

Start Strong Indianapolis:  
Clarian Health

Start Strong Wichita:  
Catholic Charities

Start Strong Bridgeport:  
RYASAP – Regional Youth Adult  
Social Action Partnership

Start Strong Los Angeles:  
Peace Over Violence

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***A School Policy to Increase Student Safety - Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence through Improved School Climate*** and **Appendix** provides only general information for educational purposes about the prevention of teen dating violence, does not constitute the practice of law, and should not replace or supplant legal representation. This product does not constitute legal advice and should not be used or relied upon as such. Legal advice is dependent upon the specific circumstances of each situation and upon the law in specific jurisdictions. Do not rely on legal information without consulting an attorney licensed to practice law in your jurisdiction.

This policy does not imply to prohibit expressive activity protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. This policy should not be interpreted as to prevent a victim or accused from seeking redress under any other available law either civil or criminal. If a provision of this policy is or becomes illegal, invalid, or unenforceable in any jurisdiction, that shall not affect the validity or enforceability in that jurisdiction of any other provision of this policy.

**A School Policy to Increase Student Safety:**  
**Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence**  
**Through Improved School Climate<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

XYZ School District recognizes that the development of a student, both academically and personally, reflects not only the educational programs and goals of the district, but also the atmosphere in which the student attends school<sup>4,5,6</sup>. As one in three adolescent girls is a victim of adolescent dating abuse and about 72 percent of eighth and ninth graders report dating, this policy promotes a specific, focused, and integrated system of supports to build a school climate that encourages healthy relationships and addresses all forms of adolescent dating abuse (verbal, emotional, sexual, and physical that can be carried out through technological abuse).

The District shall adopt this policy and assist schools in implementing these guidelines as part of existing policies and other efforts to address bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, or other forms of violence among students. Adolescent dating abuse prevention and intervention strategies can be used in advance of potential state mandates<sup>7</sup> and to meet responsibilities under federal law (see Toolkit). This policy is designed to ensure that every school has a staff that is prepared to recognize,

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<sup>1</sup> This model policy is a product of *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*, a prevention initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Blue Shield of California Foundations focused on 11-14 year olds. In addition to a focus on school policy, the other major components of the initiative are: educating middle school students, engaging parents to support their children's healthy relationships, social marketing to address community and societal norms and involvement of high school students as champions of teen dating abuse prevention and mentors for younger students.

<sup>2</sup> While this is primarily a middle-school policy that covers the spectrum of prevention and early intervention to intervention, it is unique for its development of a primary prevention school policy that can also be applied in high schools to build healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence. To assist administrators with this policy, an electronic version of the policy and the Appendix, as well as additional materials such as protocols, guidelines, and forms can be found at [www.startstrongteens.org](http://www.startstrongteens.org). The Appendix includes documents developed with Break the Cycle, a national nonprofit organization committed to ending dating violence. The Appendix tools may be used by schools to address the continuum of teen dating violence, including intervention and response to serious or escalating abusive behavior.

<sup>3</sup> While teen dating violence is the common public term, this policy uses the term "adolescent dating abuse," defined as the use of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or technological abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person in a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature, regardless of whether that relationship is continuing or has concluded or the number of interactions between the individuals involved.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, Terrance M., Nelson, C. Michael, and Liaupsin, Carl J. (2001). "Effective Instruction: The Forgotten Component in Preventing School Violence." *Education & Treatment of Children*, 24(3). Special issue: Severe Behavior Disorders of Children and Youth. pp. 309-322.

<sup>5</sup> Geierstanger, S. P., Amaral, G., Mansour, M., & Walters, S. R., (2004). "School-Based Health Center and Academic Performance: Research, Challenges and Recommendations." *Journal of School Health*, 74(9): 347-352.

<sup>6</sup> Roeser, Robert W. and Eccles, Jacquelynne S. (1998). "Linking the Study of Schooling and Mental Health: Selected Issues and Empirical Illustrations." *Educational Psychologist*, 33(4): 153.

<sup>7</sup> As of April 2010, at least nine states have laws that recommend or require school boards to develop curriculum and/or policies on teen dating violence and many more states are considering similar requirements. See: [www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=17582](http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=17582).

respond to, and intervene effectively in incidents and reports of violence and to prevent abusive behaviors by engaging staff, parents and students in promoting healthy teen relationships<sup>8</sup> and to direct follow up when incidents are reported and/or occur.

A positive school climate and culture require the active promotion and modeling of individual healthy behavior and skillful early intervention in unhealthy behavior by the entire school community of teachers, staff members, parents, and students. District policies and school practices that recognize the full continuum of prevention, early intervention, corrective guidance, and a protocol for active intervention when violence or harassment occurs are required to maintain a school environment that is free of violence, including adolescent dating abuse in all its forms.

While adolescent dating relationships have not been the focus of the Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) model<sup>9</sup>, or school climate improvement efforts<sup>10</sup>, it is well established that antisocial behavior (including bullying) presents serious impediments to school success and life adjustment.<sup>11</sup> These behaviors are interconnected and fit within the aims of PBIS to create a “host environment” that helps staff be more aware of abusive behavior and harassment and make prevention and early interventions more effective. In alignment with the PBIS framework, this policy supports administrators, faculty and staff, parents, students and community members in reinforcing good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship and academic success in order to promote a positive school culture.

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<sup>8</sup> Healthy relationships rely on several skills that are learned and require practice through an evidenced-informed curriculum approach:

- Communication, which involves learning to listen as well as to express oneself effectively;
- Recognizing and setting boundaries, which involves being able to identify an individual’s comfort level about relationships issues, and to navigate and negotiate those boundaries with a partner;
- Critical thinking to analyze the motivations for one’s own actions and the actions of others;
- Assertiveness to address and withstand peer pressure as well as pressure within a dating relationship and skills to enter and exit relationships safely and respectfully;
- Empathy and capacity to respond to and to intervene and help friends in unhealthy situations and relationships;
- Responsible use of technology and social networking.

<sup>9</sup> The procedures that define PBIS are organized around three main themes: Prevention; Multi-Tiered Support and Data-based Decision Making. Investing in prevention of a problem involves: (a) defining and teaching core behavioral expectations (b) acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behavior (e.g., compliance to school rules, safe and respectful peer to peer interactions) and (c) establishing a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior.

<sup>10</sup> The National School Climate Council recommends using a survey of all stakeholders – school leaders, teachers and other staff, students and parents - to forge a common vision for a school. Survey questions should seek stakeholders’ views on healthy relationships and interpersonal safety as well as intellectual, ethical, civic and other aspects of student life. National School Climate Council (2007). *The School Climate Challenge: Narrowing the Gap Between School Climate Research and School Climate Policy, Practice Guidelines and Teacher Education Policy*. See [www.schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php](http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php).

<sup>11</sup> Biglan, A., Holder, H. D., Brennan, P. A., & Foster, S. L. (2004). *Helping Adolescents at Risk: Prevention of Multiple Problem Behaviors*. New York: Guilford.

**Section A. The following shall be required of the District and schools within the District, to be implemented with support from the District:**

1. The District shall designate one person as the primary contact for this policy (“Prevention Coordinator”) within one year of enactment. The Prevention Coordinator is responsible for integrating this policy with existing policy and programs, and for collaborating with families and community stakeholders to educate students and school personnel on violence prevention (including adolescent dating abuse).<sup>12</sup>
2. Each school shall designate at least one person (“Prevention Liaison”) to assist the Prevention Coordinator in the dissemination of prevention methods, intervention, and curricula addressing adolescent dating abuse and other issues that affect school culture. The Prevention Liaison will serve on existing teams that address school safety and school climate, such as threat assessment teams and Safe and Drug-Free School Teams, and will have the expertise to provide training to other personnel on healthy teen relationships and prevention of and response to adolescent dating abuse.
3. **Prevention Education for Students:** School-wide, universal prevention education will be provided for students on the following topics:
  - Characteristics and skills of healthy relationships and how to promote them;
  - Defining abusive and unhealthy adolescent relationships;<sup>13</sup>
  - Early warning signs of unhealthy relationships;
  - Responsible usage of technology, such as refusing to send or distribute text messages, pictures, or messages through social networking sites that are sexually explicit or of a private or potentially embarrassing nature;
  - Youth-led awareness and prevention activities; and
  - Early interventions with students in response to incidents of dating abuse and technological abuse.

The Appendix contains information on evidence-based prevention curricula and best practices. Successful prevention programs rely on multiple exposures to the topic. To the extent possible, schools shall use multiple prevention strategies such as classroom lessons, youth-led projects, parent education. Prevention curricula can be embedded into one core subject or spread across subject areas and grade levels. Districts are strongly encouraged to consult with local organizations

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<sup>12</sup>In some large school districts, this provision can also be applied at the school level.

<sup>13</sup> Abusive behavior is defined as intentional use of emotional, verbal, physical, or sexual abuse against a peer or intimate partner, including bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, dating violence, sexual violence, or technological abuse.

specializing in dating violence or sexual assault prevention to identify age-appropriate and culturally-sensitive prevention curricula.

**4. Training for Staff:** All staff shall participate in ongoing professional development to promote healthy teen relationships and prevent adolescent dating abuse. Training will address, at a minimum:

- Strategies to foster healthy relationships among youth;
- Understanding the potential life-long health effects of adolescent dating abuse (such as increasing youths' risk of suicide, substance abuse, unsafe sexual behavior, unintended pregnancy, and eating disorders);<sup>14</sup>
- The health and behavioral indicators of adolescent dating violence;
- Implementation guide for District's policy for promoting healthy teen relationships and preventing and responding to students who engage in abusive behavior; identification, assessment, and appropriate referral of students who have experienced abuse;
- Safe and age-appropriate interventions for targeted students and accused students;
- Importance of adults being a positive role model and effective upstander.

Districts are strongly encouraged to use local organizations specializing in dating violence or sexual assault prevention to provide professional training until that expertise is developed internally.

**5. Parent/Caregiver Engagement:** Districts shall engage parents in opportunities to learn how to help their child(ren) build healthy relationships<sup>15</sup>, including through:

- Small group discussions, guest speakers, and opportunities for youth and adult conversations regarding adolescent dating and technological abuse;
- Dissemination of information, including referrals to internal supports and community-based resources. via the District school website, open houses, and parent/school newsletters;
- Targeted sessions for parents/caregivers of students transitioning from elementary to middle school and/or middle school to high school, since they often have specific concerns regarding their child's relationships as they begin middle or high school.

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<sup>14</sup> For health consequences of teen dating violence, view [www.endabuse.org/userfiles/file/Teens/Teens\\_Sept\\_09\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.endabuse.org/userfiles/file/Teens/Teens_Sept_09_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> For advice for parents, view [www.startstrongparents.org](http://www.startstrongparents.org).

**6. Response to Suspected or Actual Dating Abuse and Abusive Behavior:** School administrator or designee will respond to incidents or complaints of dating abuse by:

- Implementing a protocol for response to complaints, initiated by students, school personnel, parents, friends or others;<sup>16</sup>
- Documenting incidents and complaints;
- Treating complaints as confidential (limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation);
- Implementing reporting procedures and disciplinary procedures specific to these incidents, in accordance with the confidentiality limitations;
- Creating accommodations<sup>17</sup> such as school-based stay away agreements to preserve targeted students<sup>18</sup> safety;
- Following procedures to implement protection orders;
- Referring targeted students and alleged offenders to school and/or community resources for services such as counseling, as appropriate; and,
- Impose appropriate consequences and restitution, and make provisions for treatment for alleged offenders.

See Appendix for suggested disciplinary guidelines/matrix, reporting procedures and forms for intervention in dating violence incidents.

**7. Reporting Incidents:** District faculty and staff shall report in writing to the principal/designee or appropriate area/district administrator any incident where school staff witness or become aware of an incident of adolescent dating abuse, including technological abuse, on school grounds, while traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, during the lunch period (whether on or off campus), and during a school-sponsored event. Failure to report shall result in appropriate disciplinary action.

**8. Monitoring Program:** The District shall establish and implement tools to monitor and assess adolescent dating abuse prevention activities, incidents and responses, including:

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<sup>16</sup> The accompanying Appendix outlines the preferred reporting protocols, but as students may not feel comfortable talking to school personnel about the issue or if the act involves a school employee, schools may consider using an Anonymous Report form that may be posted on the District's website. Formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous form.

<sup>17</sup> Accommodations are laid out in the Appendix.

<sup>18</sup> "Targeted Student" is a term being used instead of "victim" to describe the student who is experiencing abusive behavior as defined in this policy. The legal definition for a victim should follow state and federal law.

- At least every three years, evaluations, using data-based outcomes, to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the services;<sup>19</sup>
- An annual report to the community about campus safety;<sup>20</sup> and
- Where appropriate, surveys (such as integrating adolescent dating abuse questions in a school climate survey or locally-adapted national surveys),<sup>21</sup> tracking systems, or other mechanisms that provide to useful information for the school community.

**9. Notice to Parents and Students:** The District shall provide annual written notice to parents/caregivers and students of this policy in multiple languages and prominently display it in school common areas and classrooms with contact information for the prevention liaison, counselors, hotline numbers and service organizations, including domestic violence service providers or social and emotional learning (SEL) experts. Districts shall include a copy of the policy in district and school handbooks. The District shall also inform parents/caregivers about how to make a complaint or help their child make a complaint of dating abuse if necessary.

## **Section B**

**To the extent possible, the District shall:**

**1. Encourage schools to:**

- Create a “host environment” that serves to reduce school discipline and student behavior problems by adopting a school-wide behavioral supports system, such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)<sup>22</sup> curriculum.
- Engage youth as leaders in supporting the goals of the policy and educating the entire school community. Schools are encouraged to develop leadership for promoting healthy relationships and preventing adolescent dating violence by engaging existing youth leaders on campus and/or establishing a new leadership class or club. Youth are encouraged to

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<sup>19</sup> To gather important baseline data, large schools districts can implement their own Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey, see [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/participation.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/participation.htm), and add questions on the complexities of adolescent dating abuse. Also, the CDC School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) is administered every six years (next administration is in 2012), and that requires participation at the district and school levels. In 2012, a new question will be added asking about the presence of a dating violence prevention program. Districts are encouraged to participate in SHPPS once this policy and accompanying program are adopted.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix section related to Community Reporting.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix for survey questions added to the 2008 California Healthy Kids Survey that may serve as examples for other surveys.

<sup>22</sup> Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) incorporates coordinated and comprehensive pro-social education (e.g. evidence-based social emotional learning, character education and developmental assets related instructional efforts), risk prevention and health and mental health promotion efforts.

- develop innovative projects, events, campaigns or other strategies of their choosing to promote healthy relationships and prevent violence among their peers. Youth leadership activities, which may be conducted during or after regular school hours, may fulfill students' service learning requirements for certain classes and membership organizations.<sup>23</sup>
- Provide opportunities for affected youth to participate in peer support groups. Support groups may be provided on campus by school personnel or community organizations specializing in the prevention of sexual and domestic violence. Support groups can increase social support for vulnerable youth and provide an emotionally safe and confidential setting for youth to learn and practice healthy relationship skills. At no time should targeted youth and alleged offenders be placed together in the same support groups.<sup>24</sup>
  - Provide positive after-school programs and environments that engage youth in building healthy relationships. After-school programs can incorporate prevention curricula into regular programming or provide opportunities for youth to utilize creative arts to promote healthy relationships in their school or community.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Encourage students to:

- Take an active role in developing a positive school climate/culture. Youth may be encouraged to recognize, respond to and prevent dating abuse in their own lives and among their friends. Opportunities for leadership on campus may include youth-led project, events, and campaigns to address dating abuse or related issues of concern to youth.
- Learn and practice the skills involved in creating and maintaining healthy relationships and being a positive role model or upstander.
- Participate in the development of a new Student Code of Conduct or additions to an existing Code of Conduct that sets forth positive expectations for how all members of the school community should be treated and should treat each other.
- Immediately report incidents of adolescent relationship violence to school personnel.

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<sup>23</sup> For youth engagement/leadership programs, see the Appendix's Resource List.

<sup>24</sup> For examples, see SafePlace's Expect Respect Support Group Curriculum at [www.safeplace.org/expectrespect](http://www.safeplace.org/expectrespect).

<sup>25</sup> Examples of theater programs, resiliency-building programs, engaging men and youth programs, and other community projects done in Start Strong communities can be found at [www.startstrongteens.org](http://www.startstrongteens.org).

## Section C

### **Definitions<sup>26</sup>**

Definitions referring to the threats or acts of abusive behavior are below, but the District's discipline code may instead focus on remediation of specific behaviors, including a pattern of such behaviors. The larger goal of providing these definitions to schools is to positively impact their climate and culture and to improve students' educational and developmental experiences.

Abusive Behavior: Intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse against a peer or intimate partner, including bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, dating violence, sexual violence, or using technology to cause abuse.

Accommodation: A change or modification to a student's school enrollment, participation or environment, which increases access to meaningful education or safety for a student who is experiencing abuse or violence.

Adolescent Dating Abuse: The use of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or technological abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person in a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature, regardless of whether that relationship is continuing or has concluded or the number of interactions between the individuals involved.

Alleged Offender: An individual who is accused of or has committed any act or threat of abusive behavior as defined in this policy.

Bias-based harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying: Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act that a student or group of students directs at another student or students which:

- (1) Is based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or disability; and,
- (2) Substantially interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program, school sponsored activity or any other aspect of a student's education; or,
- (3) Creates a hostile, offensive, or intimidating school environment; or,
- (4) Otherwise adversely affects a student's educational opportunities.

Bias-based harassment, intimidation and/or bullying may take many forms and can be physical, verbal or written. Written harassment, intimidation and/or bullying include electronically transmitted acts,

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<sup>26</sup> Policy elements should be matched to local, state, and federal law. Some of these definitions may differ by state.

e.g. via Internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant, or wireless handheld device. Such behavior includes, but is not limited, to:

- Physical violence;
- Stalking;
- Threats, taunts, teasing;
- Aggressive or menacing gestures;
- Exclusion from peer groups designed to humiliate or isolate;
- Using derogatory language;
- Making derogatory jokes or name calling or slurs;
- Written or graphic material, including graffiti, containing comments or stereotypes that are electronically circulated or are written or printed.

Bullying: Written, oral, physical, emotional, verbal, or nonverbal conduct that causes harm or injury to another student, physical damage to the property of another student, or subjects another student to physical confinement or restraint. The person who bullies has and exercises power inappropriately over the targeted student or victim.

Technological Abuse: The behavior used to harm, threaten, intimidate, control, harass, monitor, coerce, stalk, or victimize, except as otherwise permitted by law, that is perpetrated through the internet, social networking sites, spyware or global positioning system (GPS) tracking technology, cellular phones, or instant or text messages. Technological abuse can include, but is not limited to, monitor, unwanted, repeated calls or text messages, non-consensual access to email, social networking accounts, texts or cell phone call logs, pressuring for or disseminating private or embarrassing pictures, videos, or other personal information.

The jurisdiction of the District policy limits technological abuse through the use of any electronic device or data while on school grounds or on a school bus, computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of the XYZ District.

Dating Partner: Any person, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, involved in a relationship with another person, where the relationship is primarily characterized by social contact of a sexual or romantic nature, whether casual, serious, short-term, or long-term, or as defined by either person.

Upstander<sup>27</sup> (“Positive Bystander”): A student or adult who witnesses or is aware of an incident of abusive behavior and intervenes safely or seeks help for the victim/targeted student. The intervention can take many forms and can take place both on-line and in person. An upstander makes comments or expresses disapproval of harmful actions that help defuse the situation by talking to others, expresses caring about the target both to the target and to others, helps remove the target from the group of aggressors when in person, or finds an authority figure to intervene. Upstanders can gain substantial power by turning to each other and joining together to take constructive action. After an incident, upstanders can talk to their peers about why the incident was wrong, ask people to stop rumors, and reach out periodically to the target to see if she/he is safe physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Protection Order: A civil or criminal court order issued in any jurisdiction for the protection of a victim of dating abuse or sexual violence that restricts the conduct of an individual toward the victim.

School Climate<sup>28</sup>: Refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes:

- Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;
- People are engaged and respected;
- Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision;
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning;
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

Sexual Harassment: Harassment that is severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school.

Student-to-student sexual harassment is conduct and/or communication by a student directed against another student. It consists of unwelcome and uninvited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors,

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<sup>27</sup> An ‘upstander’ is a term used by the National School Climate Center (formerly, the Center for Social and Emotional Education): [www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstanderbehavior.php](http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstanderbehavior.php).

<sup>28</sup> School Climate is a term developed by the National School Climate Council and used by the National School Climate Center (formerly, the Center for Social and Emotional Education), [www.schoolclimate.org/climate/learning](http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/learning).

sexually motivated physical conduct and other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature which is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent to:

- (1) Substantially interfere with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program, school-sponsored activity, or any other aspect of a student's education; or
- (2) Create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating school environment; or
- (3) Otherwise adversely affect a student's educational opportunities.

Such behavior can constitute sexual harassment regardless of the gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any of the students involved.

Sexually harassing behavior may take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Engaging in physical conduct of a sexual nature such as patting, pinching, grabbing, brushing up against another person in a sexual way;
- Making sexual comments, remarks, insults, and/or jokes;
- Displaying or distributing sexually oriented or suggestive objects, pictures, drawings; making obscene gestures;
- Pressuring for sexual activity;
- Spreading rumors of a sexual nature;
- Engaging in sexually violent or coercive behavior (assault, rape).

Sexting: The sending or sharing of nude, semi-nude images, or sexually explicit messages electronically.

Sexual Violence: Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise control a person's sexuality using coercion, force and/or duress, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim.

Stalking: Conduct that would cause a reasonable person to: (1) fear for his or her safety or the safety of a third person; or (2) suffer emotional distress. This conduct could include, but is not limited to the following: unwanted phone calls, texts, or emails; vandalism; monitoring a victim's habits and whereabouts.

Targeted Student: The student who is experiencing abusive behavior as defined in this policy.

Victim: A person who has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, or stalking.



# Toolkit

to the  
**School Policy to Increase Student Safety:  
Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence  
Through Improved School Climate**

Produced by  
**Family Violence Prevention Fund,  
the National Program Office for  
*Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*  
and  
Break the Cycle**

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## I. Introduction

This Appendix serves as a supplement to *A School Policy to Increase Student Safety: Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence through Improved School Climate*. It is designed to assist Districts in creating plans of action for the promotion of healthy teen relationships and the prevention of and response to adolescent dating abuse. The accompanying policy can be adopted independently or integrated into existing efforts to reduce and prevent other forms of abusive behavior, including sexual harassment and bullying. These documents were written primarily as a guide for *Start Strong* communities. The Policy and Appendix are intended to help build respectful and peaceful school communities in both middle and high schools.

This Appendix provides procedures and suggestions for achieving the following key goals:

1. Provide prevention education and training to students, parents, staff, faculty and administrators on recognizing, responding to and preventing teen dating violence.
2. Establish a protocol for responding to warning signs of violence and incidents of teen dating violence and abusive behavior, focusing on early intervention strategies.
3. Implement guidelines to respond to incidents of dating violence and abusive behavior, and where appropriate, implement reporting procedures and disciplinary procedures specific to these incidents.

### A. Establishing an Environment that Promotes Positive Behavior

A prevention approach focuses on establishing a positive social climate, in which positive relationships are expected and reinforced by adults and youth on campus. Investing in the prevention of violence in schools requires (1) defining and teaching core behavioral expectations and skills utilizing evidence-based curricula, (2) acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behavior, (e.g., compliance to school rules, and safe, respectful peer-to-peer interactions), and (3) establishing a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior. These basic principles are consistent with existing school-wide interventions, such as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports and Positive Youth Development that aim to improve school discipline.<sup>29</sup>

School interventions that focus on creating a positive school environment, measuring school climate and using this data to promote safer, more supportive and engaging schools show increases in academic achievement increases, reduced dropout rates, and an increase in teacher retention rates. In addition, a

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<sup>29</sup> Osher, D., Bear, G., Sprague, J., & Doyle, W. (2010). "How Can We Improve School Discipline?" *Educational Researcher*, (39):48-58.

significant decrease in the rates of violence (social and physical), including teen dating violence were shown.<sup>30,31</sup> Tracking school climate encompasses the measurement of norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching/learning and leadership practices that shape the quality and character of school life. Interventions involving school-wide behavior management strategies also result in further reductions of antisocial behavior including 1) vandalism, 2) aggression (including peer to peer harassment such as bullying), 3) later delinquency, and 4) risk health behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.<sup>32</sup>

This document offers a framework for faculty, staff and the entire school community to engage students in creating safe and healthy school environments. Students will learn to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationship behavior, choose respectful and safe relationships, feel secure in speaking to their peers when they witness an incident as a positive bystander, and engage in raising awareness among their peers and younger students.

## **B. Why Address Adolescent Dating Abuse in Schools?**

Many children and young people are exposed to and influenced by violence in relationships, families, and communities. Adolescent relationship abuse can impede students achieving their academic goals, compromise their health<sup>33</sup>, and in extreme circumstances, result in severe injury on and off campus.<sup>34</sup>

While school administrators may see fights, bullying, sexual harassment as presenting problems, the underlying context for the problem behavior may stem from emerging romantic or dating relationships. Dating in early adolescence often occurs in the context of peer relationships. As the January 2010 case of Phoebe Prince in Massachusetts tragically illustrated, for young adolescents, dating violence can involve more than a single couple. Young adolescents may utilize group settings and outings to try out romantic interactions in the social safety of a group of friends. “Hanging out” with friends at the mall or the movie theatre is a form of dating. The term “relationship” is used throughout this document to encompass definitions of adolescent relationships including group and couple’s activities that may evolve and change as adolescents mature.

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<sup>30</sup> Cohen, J., McCabe, E.M, Michelli, N.M & Pickeral, T. (2009). “School Climate: Research, Policy, Teacher Education and Practice.” *Teachers College Record*, 111(1): 180-213. (Available on: [www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15220](http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15220).)

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, J., Pickeral, T., & Levine, P. (2010). “The Foundation for Democracy: Social, Emotional, Ethical, Cognitive Skills and Dispositions in K-12 Schools.” *Inter-American Journal of Education for Democracy*, 3(1): 73-94. Available on: [scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ried/index](http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ried/index).

<sup>32</sup> Metzler, C.W., Biglan, A., Rusby, J.C., & Sprague, J.R. (2001). “Evaluation of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Program to Improve School Wide Positive Behavior Support.” *Education and Treatment of Children*, 24(4), 448-479.

<sup>33</sup> [www.endabuse.org/userfiles/file/Teens/Teens\\_Sept\\_09\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.endabuse.org/userfiles/file/Teens/Teens_Sept_09_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> One example is Ortralla Mosley, a 15 year-old, who was killed by her ex-boyfriend, another sophomore, on school grounds. The perpetrator had a previous history of physical abuse with another student in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. [abcnews.go.com/2020/Health/story?id=630874&page=1](http://abcnews.go.com/2020/Health/story?id=630874&page=1).

Prevention and early intervention with youth can have lasting effects on their future relationships. Teaching the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships as well as the skills to navigate and promote healthy relationships helps youth develop a positive framework for future relationships. Too often, young people are unfamiliar with what a healthy relationship looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Providing age-appropriate, universal prevention strategies, creating a baseline understanding of the specific behaviors and characteristics of adolescent dating abuse, and teaching the skills necessary for healthy and respectful behaviors are the essential elements of effective violence prevention programs. In cases where students do not respond to “good first teaching,”<sup>35</sup> teachers are also prepared to sensitively and respectfully facilitate discussions. By using a variety of teaching methods, teachers can support change and engage students in acquiring skills to communicate, cooperate and resolve conflicts without using violence, and impart knowledge about how to prevent future incidents.

### **C. Linking to other Anti-Violence Policies and Activities**

Policies and initiatives to promote healthy teen relationships and prevent and respond to adolescent dating abuse will link appropriately with similar efforts related to other forms of peer-to-peer violence, particularly bullying and sexual harassment. Recent research suggests important associations between the quality of peer and dating relationships and a continuum of interpersonal violence ranging from bullying to teen dating violence. Boys and girls who used power and aggression in their peer relationships, as evidenced by bullying behaviors or conduct problems, were also more likely to sexually harass same- and opposite-sex peers and were more likely to be physically aggressive with their dating partners.<sup>36,37,38</sup> As a result, developmentally-appropriate prevention education will address bullying, sexual harassment, gender roles, and dating violence and their interconnections.

## **II. Prevention Education and Training**

### **A. Universal Training**

As outlined in the policy, basic training for students and school personnel, including staff, faculty, and administrators, addresses two core objectives:

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Good first teaching’ is based on the belief that all children can learn with the support of basic minimum conditions such as appropriate materials, adequate instructional time, and investment in professional development. Fountas, I.C. and Pinnell, G.S. (1996) *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

<sup>36</sup> Pepler et al., 2006. “A Developmental Perspective on Bullying.” *Aggressive Behavior*, 32:376-384.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, & Laporte, 2008. “Risk Models of Dating Aggression Across Different Adolescent Relationships: A Developmental Psychopathology Approach.” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 76(4): 622-632.

<sup>38</sup> Brengden, M., Vitaro, F., Tremblay, R., & Wanner, B., (2002). “Parent and Peer Effects on Delinquency-related Violence and Dating Violence: A Test of Two Mediation Models.” *Social Development*, 11(2): 225-244.

**1. Promoting Healthy Teen Relationships**

- Characteristics of healthy and caring relationships and how to promote them
- Modeling respectful behavior toward girls and other youth in daily life
- Recognizing gender equity and gender norms and their effects on young people's ability to make and implement decisions regarding their relationships
- Learning communication and other skills essential to healthy relationships
- Providing opportunities for youth-developed and youth-led strategies to promote positive relationship norms

**2. Preventing and Responding to Adolescent Dating Abuse**

- Defining dating violence and abusive behavior
- Recognizing the early warning signs of violence and teen dating abuse
- Identifying and proposing alternatives to abusive behavior
- Understanding the negative health effects of dating and sexual violence
- Preparation to fulfill their responsibilities under school policy regarding responding to incidents and reports of abusive behavior
- Familiarity with in-school and community services
- Federal and state confidentiality and reporting requirements

**B. Additional Training for Prevention Coordinators/Liaisons**

The model policy requires that one current employee serve as Prevention Coordinator on the District or school level, depending on the size of the District. Each school will designate a Prevention Liaison to assist the Prevention Coordinator in disseminating materials and to serve on existing teams that address acts of violence and school safety. The prevention staff, who may be the Violence Prevention Coordinator, school health coordinator or a school safety staff member, will facilitate training for school personnel and educational activities for youth, work with colleagues when a student exhibits early warning signs of being a targeted student or alleged offender, provide a specialized response to abusive behavior on campus, act as a liaison between the school and students who are experiencing abusive behavior, and act as a liaison to community resources and law enforcement.

The school and/or district employee(s) holding the Prevention Coordinator and Prevention Liaison roles shall receive advanced instruction and ongoing continuing education which may be available from a local domestic violence or sexual assault center, state-level coalition or online training resource.

In addition to the two core educational objectives listed above, trainings for the Prevention Coordinator will include:

- Descriptions of their role promoting healthy relationships including collaborating with the administration, health educators, social services, counselors, school nurses, school resource officers<sup>39</sup> and youth organizations;
- Theories and dynamics of bullying, dating abuse, digital abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence, including reproductive control;<sup>40</sup>
- The interconnections between bullying, sexual harassment and dating violence, and other school safety issues;
- Effective strategies for responding to targeted students of abusive behavior, including crisis intervention, safety planning, and referrals to community resources;
- Barriers to teens leaving abusive relationships and seeking help from adults;
- Strategies to engage parents in prevention education;
- Dating abuse in special populations, including LGBTQ teens and parenting teens;
- Cultural competence and its relationship to dating abuse and sexual violence;
- Use of data to track implementation and effectiveness;
- Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS)<sup>41</sup> or other academic intervention models such as Response to Intervention (RTI).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> An SRO is a certified law enforcement officer who is permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or a set of schools. The SRO is specifically trained to perform three roles: law enforcement officer; law-related counselor; and law-related education teacher. The SRO is not necessarily a DARE officer (although many have received such training), security guard, or officer who has been placed temporarily in a school in response to a crisis situation but rather acts as a comprehensive resource for his/her school (Center for the Prevention of School Violence).

<sup>40</sup> Miller, E., Decker, M.R., McCauley, H.L., Tancredi, D.J., Levenson, R.R., Waldman, J., Schoenwald, P., & Silverman, J.G. (2010). "Pregnancy Coercion, Intimate Partner Violence and Unintended Pregnancy." *Contraception*, 81(4): 316-322, (DOI: 10.1016/j.contraception.2009.12.004).

<sup>41</sup> The procedures that define PBIS are organized around three main themes: Prevention, Multi-Tiered Support, and Data-based Decision Making. Investing in prevention of a problem involves (a) defining and teaching core behavioral expectations, (b) acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behavior (e.g., compliance with school rules, safe and respectful peer to peer interactions), and (c) establishing a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior.

<sup>42</sup> Response to Intervention (RTI) is based on a problem-solving approach that considers environmental factors as they might apply to an individual student's difficulty, and provides services/intervention as soon as the student has demonstrated a need. Focused primarily on addressing academic problems, RTI has emerged as a new way to consider both disability identification and early intervention assistance for the "most vulnerable, academically unresponsive children" in schools and school districts. Fuchs, D., & Deshler, D. D. (2007). "What We Need to Know About Responsiveness to Intervention (and Shouldn't Be Afraid to Ask)." *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 22:129-136.

### C. Education of Students

Classroom education about healthy relationships and prevention of adolescent dating abuse may be provided using specialized curricula delivered in health, science, language arts or physical education programs, and/or tied into existing school safety, bullying and sexual harassment education. The National Health Education Standards outline important instruction and assessment practices and can provide supportive alignment to healthy relationship and adolescent dating abuse prevention education and activities. Students shall also receive education regarding their rights under the school district's policy and information on how to make a complaint of dating abuse or other forms of harassment or abuse.

The following topics are recommended for classroom education as well as other prevention activities<sup>43</sup>:

- Skills for effective communication;<sup>44,45</sup>
- Defining and communicating about personal boundaries;
- Concepts of healthy relationships, including helping youth explore what they deserve and expect in an intimate relationship, such as trust and support, respect, shared responsibility, honesty and accountability, negotiation and fairness, communication and equality;<sup>46</sup>
- How to be an upstander<sup>47</sup> and help a friend who is a targeted student of bullying, dating abuse, digital abuse, or sexual violence;
- The roles that alleged offenders<sup>48</sup>, targeted students<sup>49</sup>, and upstanders play in abusive, harassing incidents and exploring how each group can de-escalate and/or resolve conflict;
- Appropriate social skills training to help students avoid isolation and interact in a healthy manner;

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<sup>43</sup> American Cancer Society (2007). National Health Education Standards (2007). [www.cancer.org/Healthy/MoreWaysACSHelpsYouStayWell/SchoolHealth/national-health-education-standards-2007](http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/MoreWaysACSHelpsYouStayWell/SchoolHealth/national-health-education-standards-2007).

<sup>44</sup> Wolfe, DA., Crooks, CV., Hughes, R., & Jaffee, P. (2001). Youth Relationships Program Featuring the Fourth R for Healthy Relationships. London, ON, Canada: CAMH Centre for Prevention Science. ([www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)) (Health and Physical Education, English and After-School programs available).

<sup>45</sup> Foshee, V., & Langwick, S. (2004). Safe Dates: An Adolescent Dating Abuse Prevention Curriculum. Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation. ([www.hazelden.org](http://www.hazelden.org)).

<sup>46</sup> Greene, T., & Austin, E. (2009). Be Strong: From the Inside Out, An Asset-Based Promotion and Violence Prevention Curriculum Empowering Young Women Ages 13-19. Los Angeles, CA: Peace Over Violence.

<sup>47</sup> Upstander is a term used by the National School Climate Center (formerly, the Center for Social and Emotional Education). It is defined in the context of bully-victim situations, as someone who recognizes the situation and does something to make it right. [www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstanderbehavior.php](http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstanderbehavior.php).

<sup>48</sup> The term "alleged offender" refers to an individual who is accused of or has committed any act or threat of abusive behavior as defined in this policy. The word is used to replace "offender" in an effort not to label young people prematurely.

<sup>49</sup> The term "targeted student" refers the student who is experiencing abusive behavior as defined in this policy. The word is used to replace "victim" to enable students to better identify with the policy. It should not be interpreted as replacing the term victim for legal or supportive services.

- Identifying and challenging school and societal norms that support name-calling, harassment, abusive behavior and discrimination based on gender, race and sexual preference;
- The role of media in supporting stereotypes and how these stereotypes, if believed, may trigger bullying, abuse or violence in relationships, including sexual violence;
- Creative youth-developed and led social marketing/public education activities and events to educate and engage their peers, school community, and parents.

To raise awareness of the policy, schools may encourage students to produce materials announcing the policy in contemporary youth language, e.g. create brochures and posters to be placed around the school or a webpage to be featured on the school's website; hold poster competitions, put on plays on the topic, or produce assemblies speaking out on healthy relationships; and wage an educational campaign by featuring the issue in a variety of activities within a specific time period such as National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, usually observed in February.

#### **D. Parental/Caregiver Awareness**

Parents and caregivers shall be engaged and educated to the fullest extent possible about their role in contributing to a positive school climate, talking to their youth about healthy relationships, and addressing signs of adolescent dating abuse. Schools are encouraged to utilize strategies that will most successfully reach the diversity of parents in their school community.

Districts interested in engaging parents and caregivers may conduct prevention education activities at a range of events that reach parents, including PTA meetings, Parent-Teacher conferences, Parent Support Counselor visits, Back to School programs, programs for transition to middle and high school, and student performances related to the topic. Short, interactive (5-15 minutes) and longer (30-75 minutes) educational programs may be appropriate depending on the environment and participants. Parent awareness workshops address the importance of parents having conversation with their children about healthy relationships and teen dating violence, skill-based exercises about how to talk with their child, the importance of modeling respectful behavior in their own adult relationships, understanding warning signs and knowing what to do if they suspect their child is in an abusive relationship or witnessing one.

Research indicates that parents want to prepare their youth but feel unprepared themselves for how to conduct this conversation. Equally important, the research indicates that workshops addressing parents' more immediate concerns related to their preteen children are more successful in engaging parents to talk about healthy relationships.<sup>50</sup> Workshop topics may include:

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<sup>50</sup>Hart Research Associates (2009), unpublished. *Start Strong Initiative: Communicating with Parent/Caregivers - A Report on the Findings from Focus Groups and Survey Research*. Contact the Family Violence Prevention Fund - [info@endabuse.org](mailto:info@endabuse.org) (415-252-8900).

- How to prepare your pre-teen or early adolescent, before s/he starts dating, to develop healthy relationships;
- How to parent in a digital age;
- How to teach your child to be a good friend by speaking up with peers and friends when unhealthy behaviors occur.

Programs may include guest speakers such as pediatricians, adolescent specialists/academics, school counselors, school nurses and/or health teachers, domestic violence/sexual assault experts and/or testimonials of older youth that have overcome violent relationships. It is also important to make available to parents a list of community-based resources that provide assistance when these behaviors are evident.

### III. Early Intervention

Teachers, staff, and other school personnel respond to inappropriate behavior throughout the day, but may not recognize some abusive behavior as adolescent dating abuse until further inquiry occurs. Through professional development, school staff gains clear policy guidance on how to recognize and intervene when a student or group of students displays early warning signs of adolescent dating abuse such as pressuring, controlling or threatening behavior or obtaining inappropriate photographs by coercion. Students are encouraged to refrain from participating in unhealthy relationship behavior (such as egging on harassing behavior) and take action to report or interrupt unhealthy behavior that they witness among peers, when they can do so safely. Upstanders are encouraged to report to a staff member or other trusted adult about the behavior. Depending on the seriousness of the aggressive behavior or whether the student has displayed an early warning sign, school employees can employ a variety of early intervention methods to effectively meet the needs of students. Staff members and others who suspect that a student is at risk of becoming a targeted student or an offender of abusive or violent behavior will consult with the Prevention Liaison at the earliest opportunity to determine an appropriate strategy as an early intervention effort.

#### A. Early Warning Signs

Many districts already look for early warning signs of violence to self and others — certain behavioral and emotional signs that, when viewed in context, can signal a troubled youth who needs help. But early warning signs are just that — indicators that a student may need help. Studies show that people who harm their dating partners are more depressed and are more aggressive than peers.<sup>51</sup>

Early warning signs can trigger responsible efforts to get help for the youth before problems escalate. Teachers, administrators and other school support staff are on the front line when it comes to observing

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<sup>51</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Understanding Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet 2009*, [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/TeenDatingViolence2009-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/TeenDatingViolence2009-a.pdf).

troublesome behavior and are encouraged to make referrals to the prevention coordinator and/or appropriate professionals, such as a school psychologist, school nurse, school counselor, or outside professionals such as social workers, counselors, and teen dating violence specialists.

Examples of warning signs for potential offenders or targeted students of dating violence may include:<sup>52</sup>

- Poor social skills;
- Inability to manage anger and conflict;
- Belief that using dating violence is acceptable;
- Witnessing violence at home;
- Alcohol use;
- Having behavior problems in other areas;
- Having a friend involved with dating violence;
- Witnessing violence in the community.

Other warning behaviors may include:

- Threats of bullying;
- Excessive feelings of jealousy;
- Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone;
- Feelings of being picked on and persecuted;
- Expression of violence in writings and drawings.

## **B. Early Intervention Strategies**

In accordance with a PBIS approach, schools are encouraged to employ a tiered approach in improving campus safety and climate: (1) Universal approaches include student assemblies, parent education opportunities, or community awareness campaigns; (2) If specific areas of need emerge, targeted intervention tools, such as parent conferences, counseling, mentoring, behavior contracts; and finally (3) referrals to community-based organizations can be provided to students with at-risk behavior.

Parallel to the PBIS approach, the following four efforts are important to creating a positive school climate that prevents and responds early to relationship violence:

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

**1. Violence Prevention and Intervention Team, School Health Coordinator and/or Prevention Liaison:**

Schools can identify the most appropriate team in place that addresses discipline or behavior concerns, and expand their role to identify students who may require early intervention for dating violence and/or who may pose a threat to other students. The team will include the Prevention Liaison, school health coordinator, teachers, administrators, professional staff such as a behavioral health specialist, a parent representative, and if age-appropriate, one or more students. The purpose of the team is to provide an opportunity for school employees to combine their knowledge and information in a way that provides schools with the fullest view of students' needs with regard to prevention of and interventions for abusive behavior. Schools should take care to keep all team discussions and records confidential to the extent allowed or mandated by law.<sup>53</sup>

**2. Teachable Moments:** Teachable Moments are situations that occur either among students, in the media, or in the community, which can be turned into educational opportunities to promote healthy, respectful relationships.

The following is an example of using a teachable moment to handle behavior that has not yet reached the level of an early warning sign of violence: A teacher just noticed disrespectful or damaging behavior.

While teachers cannot stop youth from making hurtful comments in general, they CAN stop kids from making hurtful comments in their presence. Teachers can stop hurtful comments in their presence with three easy steps: Say it, claim it, and stop it.

**1. Say it:** I just heard you call Natalie a slut. (This makes it really clear to the student and to everyone else exactly what the teacher is addressing)

**2. Claim it:** The word slut is personally offensive to me and it is an offensive term in general. It is inappropriate to use that kind of language in my classroom. (The teacher makes it clear that this is my personal space, I'm in charge, and it offends ME)

**3. Stop it:** Please don't ever use that word in this classroom or in my presence again. (That's pretty clear.)

Then continue with the lesson. When teachers consistently respond this way to harmful language, the space where discrimination and verbal abuse live gets smaller. In schools where all teachers respond this way to abusive language, the space for discrimination is almost nonexistent.

**3. Youth Leadership Training:** In order to change social norms, schools can identify a set of students who can help influence social norms and educate others. These may be students in existing leadership clubs or classes who receive specialized educational sessions that teach them

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<sup>53</sup> Adapted loosely from the IMPACT Team model at Austin Independent School District, 2009 Start Strong Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA: July 29-31, 2009, "One District's Experience for Addressing Student-on-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools."

to be role models, peer educators or peer leaders on preventing bullying, sexual harassment, and adolescent dating abuse. Participants in youth leadership training may be encouraged to develop a youth-led project or campaign to promote healthy relationships among their peers. A youth leadership program could be provided in schools or in a community setting.<sup>54,55</sup>

4. **Student Support Groups:** Student support groups, led by a school counselor or other trained school staff or community-based organization, can provide venues where youth learn and practice healthy relationship skills. With confidentiality of attendees protected, effective groups are small and meet regularly for at least 12 weeks. In these groups, students define types of abusive behaviors; discuss the social context for bullying, dating violence, and sexual violence; and build conflict and communication skills for healthy relationships. At no time should schools place targeted students of dating abuse in the same group with alleged offenders. Schools may also choose to separate students into different groups based on the type of abusive behaviors exhibited.<sup>56</sup>

#### IV. School Response to Serious or Escalating Incidents of Abusive Behavior

While some abusive behavior falls within the early intervention protocol in this model school policy, the protocol outlined below is designed to apply to any physical, sexual, or serious or escalating incidents of abusive behavior, including adolescent dating abuse. These serious incidents, such as verbal/emotional/psychological abuse, physical contact, using a weapon, stalking, sexual comments/gestures, or rape/ attempted rape, can appear without a corresponding intimate relationship. While some of the disciplinary consequences to these behaviors may be triggered under existing policies, it is important to recognize when the behavior is part of an adolescent dating abuse relationship, and then use different documentation, protocols, and safety measures.

##### A. Documentation

The policy gives the primary responsibility for responding to abusive behavior to the school administrator or designee (otherwise, referred to as the Administrator), however, the Prevention Liaison, who received additional training on adolescent relationship abuse and response protocols, may serve as a valuable consultant. Administrators' files shall contain written documentation of every action taken by a school official in response to a student's abusive or violent behavior. School employees who take any action on behalf of a student experiencing abusive or violent behavior are expected to

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<sup>54</sup> SafePlace's Expect Respect Program, has an 8 session program training students as role models and peer educators on issues including bullying, sexual harassment, and dating abuse prevention, [www.safeplace.org/expectrespect](http://www.safeplace.org/expectrespect).

<sup>55</sup> Break the Cycle has a Speak Act Change Youth Advocacy kit, a youth activism, service-learning and peer leadership program to help youth become advocates for healthy relationships while promoting their positive development, see [www.respect-works.org](http://www.respect-works.org).

<sup>56</sup> Adapted from SafePlace's Expect Respect Program, [www.safeplace.org/expectrespect](http://www.safeplace.org/expectrespect).

document the action in writing and provide the documentation to the Administrator. If available, schools are encouraged to use the same documentation protocol used by the school's Title IX coordinators to minimize additional work by school employees when problem solving around an individual or group of individuals.

School personnel can use office referral data to determine what instruction or interventions have already been considered or utilized and their effectiveness.

Administrators are encouraged to keep their files in a secure, locked filing cabinet or password-protected computer. In situations where further security is necessary, files may be identified by a number coding system without visible student names. Records of complaints and investigations regarding abusive behavior shall be kept in a file separate from academic records, in order to prevent inadvertent disclosure of confidential information. Access to student files, including by parents, is governed by federal and state laws; nothing in this policy or Appendix will be construed to alter existing school policies on access to student files.

Documentation of incidents of abusive behavior, whether witnessed by school employees or reported by a student, shall include the following elements:

- Description of incident(s), including acts by alleged offender, location, date and time, and witnesses (include original complaint form, if available);<sup>57</sup>
- Information about targeted student and alleged offender, including class schedules, group and club memberships, and school activities;
- Requests for accommodation<sup>58</sup> or services by targeted student;
- All evidence gathered during the investigation;<sup>59</sup>
- Report of findings, including disciplinary and accommodation recommendations;
- Response actions taken with both targeted student and alleged offender, including safety planning, referrals for services and counseling, and disciplinary actions;
- Follow-up actions, including response to disciplinary actions, alleged offender compliance, utilization of referrals for services, reviews of safety plans, and status reports from the targeted student, including further referrals for services.

In addition to the information specified above, schools shall track and archive aggregate, annual data on the incidence, types, and prevalence of abusive behavior.<sup>60</sup> In accordance with existing local, state and

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<sup>57</sup> Incidents documented should include any incidents, whether they occurred on or off campus.

<sup>58</sup> Accommodation is defined as a change or modification to a student's school enrollment, participation or environment, which increases access to meaningful education or safety for a student who is experiencing abuse or violence. A sample Request for Accommodation form can be found within *Break the Cycle's District of Columbia Public School District Dating Violence and Sexual Violence*.

<sup>59</sup> Corroboration of witnesses and/or physical evidence should not be required to find that an abusive incident took place.

federal reporting requirements, it is the duty of the Administrator to compile such data at the close of each school year and include in a safety report compiled for the community.

Effective prevention efforts often generate student disclosures of abusive behavior or victimization, increasing the number of needed interventions. Annual reports may include the following, which will also help capture these emerging trends:

- Number and type of requests for accommodation;
- Number of accommodation requests granted and denied;
- Effectiveness of interventions;
- Number of serious incidents of abusive behavior.

In addition, this report will include a statement describing what remedial action has been taken to address incidents while ensuring the confidentiality of individual cases.

#### **B. Protocol for Responding to Serious Incidents**

When a student discloses an incident of abusive behavior to a school employee, or if a school employee witnesses an incident that he/she believes is abusive behavior, the school employee shall take the following actions, or make a timely referral to the Administrator who shall take the following actions, as soon as possible:

- Separate the targeted student from the student who is the alleged offender or who has engaged in abusive behaviors;
- Speak separately with the targeted student, the alleged offender, and any witnesses;
- Let the students know that you will be contacting their parents to set up a meeting with the Prevention Liaison and with the Administrator to discuss the incident and school response;<sup>61</sup>
- Inform the targeted student of this policy and his/her rights under the policy, including his/her right to ask for accommodations, file charges or pursue a legal protective order<sup>62</sup>, and/or to request a school-based stay away agreement;

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<sup>60</sup> In some cases this requirement would be set by the state education agency and therefore beyond the reach of this policy.

<sup>61</sup> When notifying the parent, student safety may be in danger if there is violence in the home. It is important to speak with the student regarding whether notification of parents might further jeopardize the student's safety. For example, if a student is homosexual and has not informed his/her parents, parental notification may cause unintended serious consequences for the student, such as expulsion from the home.

<sup>62</sup> For information about civil protection order laws in your state, see [www.breakthecycle.org/content/teen-dating-violence-state-law-report-cards](http://www.breakthecycle.org/content/teen-dating-violence-state-law-report-cards).

- Encourage the targeted student to use any available on-campus resources such as a school counselor or school nurse that has been trained in dealing with adolescent dating abuse;
- Provide specific permission for the alleged offender and targeted student to leave the classroom to speak with a counselor or administrator at any time;
- If desired by the targeted student, create a safety plan that addresses on- and off-campus protection, including the option of a school-based stay away agreement (See *Section on School-Based Stay Away Agreements on pages 17-18*);<sup>63</sup>
- Administer appropriate immediate consequences to the alleged offender, including, if appropriate, initiating disciplinary procedures (see *Chart of Recommended Disciplinary Actions on pages 22-23*);
- When desired by the targeted student, issue a school-based stay-away agreement to the offending student in a meeting with the student and his/her parent(s);
- Assist the alleged offender with resources for counseling services;
- Assist with monitoring and enforcement of legal protection orders and/or school-based stay-away agreement, as defined by this policy;
- Offer ongoing assistance and advocacy to the targeted student and increase supervision of the alleged offender as necessary.

These duties are in addition to any steps the school employee is required to take pursuant to state law or individual school policy, including mandatory reporting.

### **C. Protocol for Student Accommodations in Response to Serious or Escalating Incidents of Abusive Behavior**

When a student is the targeted student of abusive behavior, s/he needs immediate attention. Depending on the severity of the abusive behavior, the targeted student may need immediate attention from a law enforcement officer or health care provider. A District may choose to use an existing complaint form and follow standard response protocols. A Request for Accommodation allows a targeted student of abusive behavior to ask the school to implement changes necessary to ensure his/her continued safety. Accommodations affect the school enrollment, participation, or environment of the targeted student only, not the alleged offender. Other accommodation options include school transfers for the alleged offender and school-based stay away agreements.

After a request for discipline is made, the school is responsible for determining the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken against the alleged offender of abusive behavior. The school may choose

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<sup>63</sup> For sample safety planning workbooks, see [www.thesafespace.org/stay-safe/need-help/safety-planning/](http://www.thesafespace.org/stay-safe/need-help/safety-planning/).

from a range of consequences, such as educational consequences or disciplinary actions which may vary with individual circumstance, including repetition, age, and the impact of the abusive behavior on the targeted student. Schools should make complaint forms available to all students at any time through any counselor or administrator. Counselors and administrators may be asked to offer students assistance in filling out the forms.

Retaliation against a complaining student, an alleged offender, or potential witnesses is strictly prohibited and will be subject to disciplinary action. Any student who knowingly makes a false complaint against another student will be subject to disciplinary action.<sup>64</sup>

The content of accommodation requests is strictly confidential. In the context of accommodations, confidentiality means that school employees shall only share confidential student information to the extent necessary to implement an accommodation or to protect the student's safety.

Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Change of class seat assignment;
- Change of locker assignment;
- Change of class schedule;
- Permission to leave class to see a counselor, social worker, or healthcare provider;
- Early or late dismissal;
- Private space for meeting with counselors and school employees regarding abusive behavior, and related academic, mental health, or health issues;
- Excused absence for classes missed due to abusive behavior, such as physical or mental health appointments, fear of violence due to threat thereof or court appearances;
- Makeup class work, including homework, quizzes, tests, and any other graded work, for classes missed due to abusive behavior or threat thereof;
- Alternative education plan for complaining student;
- School transfer for complaining student;
- School-based Stay Away Agreement.

The Administrator shall document the resolution of the complaint. A resolution requiring changes to the complaining student's school enrollment, participation, or environment will not be considered final unless it is agreed to by the targeted student and the school. Transfer of the targeted student shall

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<sup>64</sup> It is important to note that if a claim cannot be verified, that does not equate to "knowingly falsifying" the claim. Assertion that a claim is falsified must require a higher standard or finding that the incident did not in fact occur and the student intentionally falsified the record.

receive the consent of the student, the student's parents, and the school. A denial to a request for accommodation will include the reasons for the denial and an explanation of the established formal appeals process. The Administrator is responsible for notifying the student's teachers when an accommodation affects their classrooms.

All accommodations under this policy are voluntary; the student may choose to decline or rescind any accommodation at any time by notifying the Administrator. The student shall not be subject to any retribution or disciplinary action for such decision and shall not lose the right to request and receive future accommodations.

Any ensuing disciplinary hearings will be conducted according to the school's disciplinary procedures.<sup>65</sup> In any hearing conducted as the result of a complaint of abusive behavior, a student who is a targeted student of abusive behavior has the following rights, to the extent allowed by the hearing process and permitted by law:

- The right to express his/her wishes regarding resolution to the hearing officer;
- The right to have his/her safety considered and respected at all stages of the process;
- The right to be notified of time, location, status, and outcome of the hearing in a timely manner;
- The right to be present during the hearing;
- The right to have an advocate present during the hearing process, including a Prevention Coordinator, parent, or community-based advocate;
- The right to present a targeted student impact statement which will become part of the record;
- The right to have accommodations addressed in any resolution;
- The right to meet with the school employees representing the school in the hearing process.

#### **D. Protocol for Working with Targeted Students and Alleged Offenders**

##### **1. Working with the Targeted Student**

In working with the targeted student, schools shall make every reasonable effort to protect the due process rights of the alleged offender and ensure the safety of the targeted student. Schools shall consider adopting the following methods of intervention with the targeted student:

- Conference with the targeted student and parent/guardian;

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<sup>65</sup> Best practice dictates that the targeted student and alleged offender be heard separately in any administrative proceeding or hearing room, and that safety issues are carefully taken into account.

- Identify immediate actions that can be taken to increase the targeted student's safety and ability to participate in school without fear or intimidation, including positive behavior support interventions;
- Provide referrals for counseling, support and advocacy;
- Inform the student and parent/guardian of school and community resources as needed, including their right to file charges or seek legal protection;
- Encourage the student to report further incidents;
- Inform the targeted student of his/her right to request a School-based Stay-Away Agreement, a plan for increasing safety for the targeted student at school. A School-based Stay Away Agreement can be used to implement or support a legal protective order at school or offered to a targeted student when he/she is unwilling or ineligible to obtain a legal protective order. A School-based Stay Away Agreement may only be issued to the offending student upon the targeted student's request. Violations of the School-based Stay Away Agreement by the offender shall be brought to the school's attention immediately. If the targeted student declines to request a School-based Stay Away Agreement, this is also documented on the complaint form;
- In situations also involving sexual harassment, inform the targeted student of his/her right to file a complaint alleging sexual harassment directly with the Title IX Coordinator;
- Monitor the targeted student's safety as needed. Assist the targeted student with safety planning for the school day and for after-school hours;
- Document the meeting and any action plans on the complaint form. If the targeted student or parent/guardian declines to document the incident, note this on the complaint form;
- Store all complaint forms in a separate, confidential file and document subsequent follow-up actions and complaints on a complaint form. Administrators may provide the targeted student with the right to have a support person present during all stages of the investigation.

## **2. Working with the Alleged Offender**

Schools shall make every reasonable effort to protect the due process rights of the alleged offender and the safety of the targeted student. Schools shall consider adopting the following methods of intervention with the alleged offender:

- Conference with the alleged offender and parent/caregiver;
- Allow the alleged offender an opportunity to respond verbally or in writing to the allegations;
- Emphasize expectations for positive behavior;

- Provide referrals for counseling, support and advocacy at school or in the community;
- Identify and implement disciplinary and other actions and consequences that will be taken to prevent further incidents, including: verbal warnings, education, suspension, dangerousness assessments, the opportunity for transfer, and/or report to law enforcement;
- When desired by the targeted student, issue a school-based stay away agreement to the offending student in a meeting with the student and his/her parent(s) and inform them of other supportive services available in the community;
- Address the serious consequences of retaliation against the targeted student for reporting the incident or cooperating with the investigation;
- Increase supervision of the alleged offender as needed;
- Document the meeting and action plans on the complaint form.

#### **E. Enforcement of Protection Orders**

Enforcement of court-issued protection orders is critical to ensuring safety for students experiencing dating abuse or sexual violence. Schools have a duty to take any and all steps necessary to enforce a protection order held by a student. The Administrator can work with the protected student to create an enforcement plan regardless of whether the restrained individual is a student. In addition, the Administrator shall provide the protected student with information about reporting violations of the protection order, assist him/her with reporting any violations, and again, provide him/her with a list of campus and community resources.

If the restrained individual is a student, the school will schedule a separate meeting with that student and the student's parents. The school shall make any necessary changes to the restrained student's school enrollment, participation, or environment in order to comply with the protection order and ensure the protected student's safety. In addition, the Administrator will work with the protected student and the school to make any changes to the protected student's school enrollment, participation, or environment to which he/she consents and which are necessary to ensure his/her safety.

Changes to the restrained student's school enrollment, participation, or environment that are made pursuant to a valid protection order do not require a written complaint by the protected student. The restrained student may file a complaint using the procedures set forth in this policy to challenge any changes made to his/her school enrollment, participation, or environment to enforce a protection order.

Campus security and administrators may call law enforcement if they have a reasonable belief that there has been a violation of a protection order on the school campus, in the immediate proximity of the school campus, or during a school-sponsored event. Campus police shall promptly respond to claims of a violation of a restraining or protective order. Campus police failure to respond promptly will be reported to law enforcement's complaint department by the Administrator. If the school district does

not have campus police officers, local law enforcement can be contacted to report a violation of a restraining or protective order.

#### F. School-based Stay Away Agreements<sup>66</sup>

Schools are encouraged to use a School-based Stay Away Agreement (see attached *School-based Stay Away Agreement* on page 19-20) at the request of a targeted student who is unwilling or ineligible to obtain a legal protection order as a form of accommodation. Schools may also use this form as a tool to implement court-issued protection orders.

A school-based stay away agreement provides a list of conditions to be followed by the alleged offender while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities. Failure to meet the conditions can have school-based consequences such as suspension and expulsion as well as other disciplinary measures. A school-based stay away agreement is designed to promote the safety of the targeted student and can be helpful for addressing a wider range of abusive behaviors, especially at the middle school level. Stay away agreements are most appropriately developed and signed in a conference with the alleged offender and his/her parent/caregiver(s). If the parent/caregiver is unavailable or unwilling to attend the conference, the school may note this on the agreement. A school-based stay away agreement may include the following elements:

- A description of the relationship between the targeted student and alleged offender;
- A list of behaviors that the offender may not do (e.g., talking to the targeted student, sitting near the targeted student, sending notes to the targeted students);
- Schedule changes for the offender, including classes, lunch period, arrival and dismissal times, locker location, and extracurricular activities;
- Actions the alleged offender will take if the agreement is unknowingly violated (e.g., if the alleged offender unknowingly comes too close to the targeted student);
- Notes on other disciplinary actions taken;
- Disciplinary consequences if the offender violates the stay away agreement;
- Dates during which the stay away agreement is valid;
- Date when the stay away agreement will be reviewed;

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<sup>66</sup> The School-based Stay Away Agreement is one component of the Austin Independent School District's policy concerning bullying, sexual harassment and dating violence. The Stay Away Agreement is issued, upon request of the targeted student, by the administrator to the offending student and his or her parent in order to prevent further incidents. The efficacy of this instrument has not been tested. It should not supplant or replace legal protective orders or the consultation with and representation of a licensed and experienced attorney.

- Signatures of parent/guardian, alleged offender, and Administrator.

### **G. Extremely High Risk**

In an abusive relationship, the frequency and severity of violence may increase over time. There is also an increased risk for violence during or after a break up, even when a partner has not previously been violent. It is important to recognize serious incidents and threats and to be responsive to students who are having difficulty ending a relationship.

A few examples of extremely high risk behaviors that require greater resources and level of attention may include:

- Threats or attempts to choke or strangle;
- Threats or attempts to hurt one's self or others;
- Incidents or threats involving a weapon;
- Forced sexual contact;
- Incidents of physical violence against people and/or animals;
- Constant or violent jealousy.

In response, tell students they are in danger of being seriously injured and you are concerned for their safety. Let them know that you will be contacting their parents about the danger, set up a meeting with their parents (if this is safe and in the best interest of the student) and Prevention Coordinator or other appropriate school personnel, and link them to an appropriate community agency for further assistance. Let them know that if they feel afraid for themselves or others, they should call 911, and give them the number of the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, 866-331-9474.

## **V. Duties and Requirements under Title IX**

### **A. Right to be free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment**

Schools that receive federal funds can be liable under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 for failing to adequately respond to abusive behavior against students. Title IX guarantees that “[n]o person in the United States shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”<sup>67</sup> Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Such harassment consists of unwelcome sexual conduct including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal,

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<sup>67</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a) (2007).

nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.<sup>68</sup> Sexual violence is an extreme form of sexual harassment. Adolescent dating abuse can be a form of sexual harassment because it often involves unwelcome touching, sexual demands, verbal abuse, and physical coercion of a sexual nature.

### **B. School liability for adolescent dating abuse**

School districts are liable for student-on-student sexual harassment, and accordingly acts of adolescent dating abuse that constitute sexual harassment, when: (1) a student has been sexually harassed, (2) the school has actual knowledge of the harassment, (3) the harassment was severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive, (4) the harassment caused the student to be deprived of access to educational opportunities or benefits, and (5) the school is deliberately indifferent to the harassment.<sup>69</sup>

Deliberate indifference is found in two circumstances. First, a school district that fails to affirmatively act to protect students can be found to be deliberately indifferent.<sup>70</sup> Second, a school district that knows or reasonably should know that its actions to protect students are ineffective or inadequate can be found to be deliberately indifferent.<sup>71</sup>

### **C. Required school district policies and protocols**

Title IX regulations require that each educational institution has a written policy and protocol for responding to sexual harassment.<sup>72</sup> Failure to adopt and implement policies on sexual harassment and adolescent dating abuse that qualifies as sexual harassment exposes school districts to civil liability under Title IX.<sup>73</sup>

#### **1. Duty to Provide Equal Protection of the Laws**

The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment mandates that no state shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction equal protection of the laws, “which is essentially a direction that all persons similarly situated should be treated alike.”<sup>74</sup> Federal courts have held that a school district’s

<sup>68</sup> 5 C.C.R. § 4916(a) (2007).

<sup>69</sup> *Davis v. Monroe County Bd of Ed.*, 526 U.S. 629, 651 (1999) (The United States Supreme Court has held that a student who is subjected to sexual harassment by another student can sue a school district to recover monetary damages arising from the district’s failure to respond to student-on-student sexual harassment.)

<sup>70</sup> *Doe v. Petaluma City Sch. Dist.*, 949 F. Supp. 1415, 1426 (N.D. Cal. 1996).

<sup>71</sup> *Monteiro v. Tempe Union High Sch. Dist.*, 158 F.3d 1022, 1034 (9th Cir. 1998); See 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b) (2007).; *Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties*, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (January 2001) at 12; *Vance v. Spencer County Public Sch. Dist.*, 231 F.3d 253, 261 (6th Cir. 2000).

<sup>72</sup> See 34 C.F.R. § 106.31 (2007).

<sup>73</sup> There are no national guidelines regarding Title IX and teen dating violence. Please note that not all adolescent dating abuse qualifies as sexual harassment under the law.

<sup>74</sup> *City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Ctr.*, 473 U.S. 432, 439 (1985) (internal quotations and citations omitted).

deliberate indifference to peer sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination, can constitute evidence that the district violated a student's constitutional rights under the Equal Protection Clause.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, failing to respond to adolescent dating abuse that qualifies as sexual harassment exposes school districts and their officials to civil liability under the Equal Protection Clause.<sup>76</sup>

## **2. Duty to Train Employees on Sexual Harassment Policies**

School districts can be liable for failing to train employees on sexual harassment, and accordingly acts of adolescent dating abuse that constitute sexual harassment. Federal courts have held that school districts have a legal duty to train employees when (1) the need for training is obvious and (2) it is highly foreseeable that a student's constitutional rights will be violated if the district fails to conduct such training.<sup>77</sup>

## **3. Duty to Promote School Safety**

School districts that receive funds under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, must have a plan that promotes school safety.<sup>78</sup> Because abusive behavior poses serious safety concerns, school safety plans should include abusive behavior.

## **4. Duty to Track Adolescent Dating Abuse**

In addition, school districts that receive Safe and Drug-Free School and Communities Act funds must track incidents of violence and crime on campus which includes tracking incidences of abusive behavior that occur on campus. Each state must forward this information to the United States Department of Education on an annual basis.<sup>79</sup>

## **5. Unsafe School Choice Option**

The Unsafe School Choice Option of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that each state that receives federal funding offers to the parents of each student who attends a "persistently dangerous" public school, or "who becomes a victim of a violent criminal offense" while on school grounds the option to attend a safe public school.<sup>80</sup> This requirement permits victims to transfer to another school after experiencing an on-campus violent or threatening incident of adolescent dating abuse or sexual violence.

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<sup>75</sup> *Flores v. Morgan Hill Unified Sch. Dist.*, 324 F.3d 1130, 1135 (9th Cir. 2003).

<sup>76</sup> *Annamaria M. v. Napa Valley Unified Sch. Dist.*, 2006 WL 1525733 (N.D. Cal. 2006) (citing *Flores*, 324 F.3d at 1135).

<sup>77</sup> *Plumeau v. School Dist. No. 40*, 130 F.3d 432, 439 n.4 (9th Cir. 1997); *Flores*, 324 F.3d at 1136.

<sup>78</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 7161(3)(B) (2007).

<sup>79</sup> 20 U.S.C. §§ 7102, 7132 (2007).

<sup>80</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 7912 (a) (2007).

## 6. Notice of Policy

To ensure notice of the school district's building healthy relationships policy, the policy shall be published in all school and school district handbooks, or other publications on the school's or school district's website that sets forth the rules, procedures, or standards of conduct for students at school. A summary of the learning goals of the policy along with the name of the designated Prevention Coordinator(s) shall be posted in each classroom.

Each school district shall inform all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, and parents of the school district's healthy relationships policy and the protocol on how parents and students can file complaints. Upon request, the school district shall provide the parents or caregivers with the school district's healthy relationships policy and relevant information. The District will treat the *Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence: A Policy to Increase School Safety and Improve School Climate* as a living document that will be updated annually to ensure its continued relevance to the District and its schools. At a minimum, it will be reviewed as other disciplinary policies are updated.

To raise awareness about the policy, the district, an individual school, school club, student government, or an individual classroom can disseminate the policy through regular outreach efforts as well as through creative strategies specifically designed to engage youth and the school community. Schools can also incorporate dissemination of this policy into their school wide approach to violence prevention.

## 7. Community Reporting

Schools shall distribute an annual campus safety report to the community, which will help in evaluating the policy. This report shall include a summary of the school employee training and student prevention education efforts and aggregate data on the incidence, types and prevalence of abusive behavior. Administrators may use additional means to evaluate changes in school climate and culture as a result of this policy, such as annual surveys related to school environment and safety.

# Appendix

to the  
**School Policy to Increase Student Safety:  
Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence  
Through Improved School Climate**

Produced by  
**Family Violence Prevention Fund,  
the National Program Office for  
*Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*  
and  
Break the Cycle**

Support for this policy, toolkit and appendix was provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*



**Example of SCHOOL-BASED STAY AWAY AGREEMENT<sup>81</sup>**

The intent of this agreement is to increase safety for students who have been the target of repeated bullying, sexual harassment or dating violence. It is to be administered by the Principal or the Principal’s designee in a conference with the offending student and his or her parent.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of most serious incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Description of behaviors involved in incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Date of assessment by Principal or designee: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Parent Notification: \_\_\_\_\_

This agreement is being administered because (name of school) has found that (name of alleged offender) has committed an abusive act.

In order to protect the rights and safety of all members of our school community, you are required to stay away from (name of targeted student) at all times during the school day and at any school-sponsored event. This means that you may not approach, talk to, sit by or have any contact with (name of targeted student) at school or on school property, school busses and bus stops.

In addition, the following actions are effective immediately (list schedule changes, disciplinary and or restitution actions)

Current Schedule	New Schedule

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>81</sup> Austin Independent School District, Texas: Notice of Parent and Student Rights: Bullying and Harassment.

**Cont. Example of SCHOOL-BASED STAY AWAY AGREEMENT**

Other Disciplinary Actions:

Violations of this agreement and acts of retaliation directly or indirectly toward the target or the target’s friends or family members will be taken seriously and will result in further disciplinary actions. Your compliance will be monitored by (Name and Title of School Staff).

Agreement is valid from \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

This Agreement will be reviewed on \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

**Signatures**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This document will be shared with all staff, faculty and administration of (name of school).

## CHART OF RECOMMENDED DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS FOR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR<sup>82</sup>

The purpose of this chart is to provide administrators with examples of actions and consequences that may be appropriate given certain violations. While discipline must be consistent, we strongly recommend against the rigid enforcement of any discipline plan including the one below. Rather, we encourage schools to frequently monitor the effectiveness of those supports to determine whether (a) the intervention is working and is no longer needed, (b) the intervention is working and should be continued, or (c) the intervention is not working and therefore a different (and perhaps more intensive) intervention should be implemented. Data are used to guide these decisions. Interventions are commensurate to a student’s demonstrated need and should be changed or intensified if they are found ineffective.

Offensive Action	Consequences	Contact Administrator	Contact Parent / Caregiver	Referral
<b>Verbal / Nonverbal / Written / Emotional or Psychological Abuse</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of put-downs, insults, name calling, swearing, or offensive language</li> <li>• Screaming or yelling at another</li> <li>• Making threats, being intimidating or getting friends to threaten or scare another</li> </ul>	<b>First Offense</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal warning</li> <li>• Education, teaching positive behavioral expectations</li> </ul>	May Inform	May Inform	If appropriate, dating violence prevention counselor or other violence prevention counselor
	<b>Repeat Offense</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher student conference</li> <li>• Social skills classes, individualized behavior interventions</li> <li>• Send to office/Detention</li> </ul>	Inform	Inform	Dating violence prevention counselor or other violence prevention counselor
<b>Physical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hitting, punching, pinching, pushing, shoving, grabbing, slapping, kicking, chocking, pulling hair, biting, throwing things, arm twisting</li> </ul>	<b>First Offense</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detention / Education / In-school Suspension</li> <li>• Must Inform Parent</li> <li>• Conference</li> </ul>	Must Inform	Parent Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dating violence prevention counselor or other</li> <li>• Violence prevention counselor</li> </ul>

<sup>82</sup> Adapted from Massachusetts Department of Education, *Sample Written Policy Chart* [www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/tdv/guidelines/polich.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/tdv/guidelines/polich.html).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimidation, blocking exits, punching walls, knocking things around</li> <li>• Damaging or destroying another’s property</li> <li>• Restraining, pinning someone to the wall, blocking their movements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Repeat Offense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detention plus Diversion Program</li> <li>• Suspension</li> <li>• Dangerousness Assessment</li> </ul>	Must Inform	Parent Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School security</li> <li>• Police</li> </ul>
<b>Using Weapons</b>	Suspension	Must Inform	Must Inform	Police
<b>Stalking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension</li> <li>• Mental Health intervention</li> </ul>	Must Inform	Must Inform	Police
<p><b>Sexual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling, such as slut, bitch, fag</li> <li>• Cat calls or whistling</li> <li>• Spreading sexual gossip or graffiti</li> <li>• Comments about a person’s body or unwanted verbal or written sexual comments</li> <li>• Staring or leering with sexual overtones, sexual gestures</li> </ul>	<p><b>First Offense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detention / Suspension</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	Must Inform	Parent Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual harassment counselor</li> <li>• Dating violence prevention counselor or rape prevention counselor</li> <li>• School Security</li> <li>• Police</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Repeat Offense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension</li> <li>• Psychological Assessment</li> </ul>	Must Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must Inform Parent</li> <li>• Conference before admittance to new school or re-admittance</li> </ul>	
<b>Forcing obscene materials on others</b>	Suspension	Must Inform	Must Inform	Police
<b>Pulling off or lifting clothes to expose private parts</b>	Suspension	Must Inform	Must Inform	Police
<b>Rape or attempted rape</b>	Suspension	Must Inform	Must Inform	Police

Scorecard

Measuring Implementation of School Policy to Increase Student Safety

Goals	Not Yet Established 1	In Progress 2	Partially in Place 3	Fully in Place 4
<p><b>Positive and welcoming school climate</b></p> <p>1. All district and school-based employees define and promote mutual respect, healthy communication and acceptance among students, staff, and the school community.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral expectations are established through codes of conduct and are posted, taught and modeled</li> <li>• Students and staff can articulate behavioral expectations and explain their meaning</li> <li>• Regular communications and activities engage students, staff, parents and school community as evidenced by letters to parents, website content, resources made available by school and community partners</li> <li>• School environment is welcoming and encourages a positive school identity and culture.</li> <li>• The school respects the diversity among staff, students, and their families as contributing to a school culture of connectedness.</li> <li>• Students, staff, parents/caregivers and community members have opportunities to participate in shaping school policy</li> <li>• Administrators discuss with and engage staff in all aspects of the promoting healthy relationships and preventing teen dating violence policy.</li> <li>• School employees respond quickly to incidents of derogatory or discriminatory language among students.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Professional development about healthy relationships</b></p> <p>2. The district provides specific training for all school employees and encourages employees to increase their knowledge of and ability to respond to abusive behavior among students.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District has designated a Prevention Coordinator who is responsible for implementing the policy and integrating it into existing policy and program</li> <li>• Each school has designated a Prevention Liaison who receives specialized annual training and is provided an opportunity to train faculty and staff at least annually</li> <li>• Targeted, annual trainings are mandated for administrators, teachers, behavioral health professionals, coaches, and school safety officers.</li> <li>• School staff is trained on how to promote healthy relationships and respond to unhealthy or abusive behaviors</li> <li>• The district partners with community-based organizations to provide annual trainings to school employees.</li> <li>• The district allows approved community-based organizations to promote additional training opportunities and provides space for trainings.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Prevention education for students</b></p> <p>3. The district educates students about healthy relationships and the prevention of abusive behavior.  <i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curricula in a range of subject matters incorporates youth development, resiliency and prevention lessons</li> <li>• Students are provided multiple exposures to curricula about healthy relationships and prevention of abusive behaviors</li> <li>• The district partners with community-based organizations to offer additional education programs for students, both during the school day and after school</li> <li>• Teachers take advantage of opportunities to incorporate prevention education and healthy relationship lessons into all lessons.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Parent/caregiver engagement in adolescent dating abuse prevention</b></p> <p>4. The district engages parents and caregivers in their prevention efforts and provides educational programming targeted to parents and caregivers.  <i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the beginning of the school year, parents, guardians, and caregivers are provided with a</li> </ul>				

<p>description of the violence prevention program and the name of the district’s Prevention Coordinator and the school’s prevention liaison. The names of the Prevention Coordinator and all Prevention Liaisons are sent to parents and caregivers at the beginning of each school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Prevention Coordinator and Prevention Liaisons are available to speak to parents at school open houses and events.</li> <li>• The school or district provides educational workshops for parents at least once per school year on topics related to promotion of healthy relationships and prevention of abusive behavior.</li> <li>• District administrators work closely with parents’ organizations to keep parents informed of the school’s prevention work.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Response plan for early warning signs of abusive behavior</b></p> <p>5. The district and all school employees have a plan of action to respond quickly and appropriately to early warning signs of abusive behavior.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School has worked with community organizations to develop a referral system.</li> <li>• School employees receive training on early warning signs of adolescent dating abuse, bullying, sexual harassment, and other abusive or violent behavior.</li> <li>• School employees use data as indicators of effectiveness of programs and trends in behavior both positive and negative.</li> <li>• The district notifies all school employees of the protocol for responding to early warning signs.</li> <li>• School employees utilize a variety of intervention methods tailored to the needs of individual students.</li> <li>• Prevention Liaisons are knowledgeable about community resources and refer students to community-based organizations when appropriate.</li> <li>• Prevention Liaisons and administrators communicate regularly about early interventions that occur on campus and the need for future interventions.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Response plan for serious incidents of abusive behavior</b></p> <p>6. The district and all school employees respond quickly and appropriately to serious incidents of abusive behavior on campus.</p>				

<p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has clear, strong enforcement protocols and all staff is trained to respond to incidents of violence.</li> <li>• The district has established a protocol for responding to serious incidents of abusive behavior on campus, including documentation of incidents, intervention during incidents, investigation of incidents, and referrals to law enforcement, when necessary.</li> <li>• The district has clear and well-publicized student complaint procedure, including age-appropriate complaint forms and assistance filling out forms.</li> <li>• School employees receive training on intervening in incidents of abusive behavior and working with targeted students and alleged offenders.</li> <li>• The district has a policy on upstanders, including disciplinary consequences.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Provision of resources and referrals</b></p> <p>7. The district and all school employees provide accessible resources for targeted students.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district has a well-publicized accommodations protocol.</li> <li>• The district works with students holding civil protection orders to enforce their orders on school grounds.</li> <li>• Targeted students of abusive behavior are guaranteed rights in any disciplinary hearing against their offender, incorporating safety measures to protect the targeted student</li> <li>• Prevention Liaisons are knowledgeable about community resources and refer students to community-based organizations when appropriate.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Public notification of policy</b></p> <p>8. The district notifies students and parents of the district’s healthy relationships policy.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district distributes a copy of the healthy relationships policy to parents and caregivers at the beginning of every school year using methods that will reach the most people.</li> <li>• The district notifies students, using age-appropriate</li> </ul>				

<p>methods, of the healthy relationships policy at the beginning of every school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The healthy relationships policy is included in all student handbooks or similar publications.</li> <li>• Information on the policy, including the name(s) of the school’s Prevention Liaison(s) is posted in every classroom.</li> <li>• The healthy relationships policy is reviewed regularly, on the same schedule as other disciplinary policies.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Annual safety report</b></p> <p>9. The district produces and distributes an annual campus safety report which includes school climate survey results.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators track the number and type of incidents of abusive behavior on campus.</li> <li>• Administrators track the number and type of student complaints and requests for accommodation.</li> <li>• In-school youth surveys include questions on protective factors and resiliency factors, and those results are shared with the community.</li> <li>• Administrators, the Prevention Coordinator, and Prevention Liaisons track the district’s school employee trainings and student prevention education programs.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Collaboration with community organizations</b></p> <p>10. The district works in partnership with local community organizations to provide a comprehensive response to abusive behavior among students.</p> <p><i>A four means that the following practices are in place:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Prevention Coordinator and Prevention Liaisons maintain a current list of approved national or local community-based organizations with expertise about adolescent dating abuse, bullying, sexual harassment, and other abusive or violent behavior.</li> <li>• The district utilizes approved community-based organizations to provide school employee trainings, student prevention programs, and referrals.</li> </ul>				



## Definitions<sup>83</sup>

Definitions referring to the threats or acts of abusive behavior are below, but the District's discipline code may instead focus on remediation of specific behaviors, including a pattern of such behaviors. The larger goal of providing these definitions to schools is to positively impact their climate and culture and to improve students' educational and developmental experiences.

Abusive Behavior: Intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse against a peer or intimate partner, including bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, dating violence, sexual violence, or using technology to cause abuse.

Accommodation: A change or modification to a student's school enrollment, participation or environment, which increases access to meaningful education or safety for a student who is experiencing abuse or violence.

Adolescent Dating Abuse: The use of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or technological abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person in a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature, regardless of whether that relationship is continuing or has concluded or the number of interactions between the individuals involved.

Alleged Offender: An individual who is accused of or has committed any act or threat of abusive behavior as defined in this policy.

Bias-based harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying: Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act that a student or group of students directs at another student or students which:

- (1) Is based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or disability; and,
- (2) Substantially interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program, school sponsored activity or any other aspect of a student's education; or,
- (3) Creates a hostile, offensive, or intimidating school environment; or,
- (4) Otherwise adversely affects a student's educational opportunities.

Bias-based harassment, intimidation and/or bullying may take many forms and can be physical, verbal or written. Written harassment, intimidation and/or bullying include electronically transmitted acts, e.g., via Internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant, or wireless handheld device. Such behavior includes, but is not limited, to:

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<sup>83</sup> Policy elements should be matched to local, state, and federal law. Some of these definitions may differ by state.

- Physical violence;
- Stalking;
- Threats, taunts, teasing;
- Aggressive or menacing gestures;
- Exclusion from peer groups designed to humiliate or isolate;
- Using derogatory language;
- Making derogatory jokes or name calling or slurs;
- Written or graphic material, including graffiti, containing comments or stereotypes that are electronically circulated or are written or printed.

Bullying: Written, oral, physical, emotional, verbal, or nonverbal conduct that causes harm or injury to another student, physical damage to the property of another student, or subjects another student to physical confinement or restraint. The person who bullies has and exercises power inappropriately over the targeted student or victim.

Technological Abuse: The behavior used to harm, threaten, intimidate, control, harass, monitor, coerce, stalk, or victimize, except as otherwise permitted by law, that is perpetrated through the internet, social networking sites, spyware or global positioning system (GPS) tracking technology, cellular phones, or instant or text messages. Technological abuse can include, but is not limited to, monitor, unwanted, repeated calls or text messages, non-consensual access to email, social networking accounts, texts or cell phone call logs, pressuring for or disseminating private or embarrassing pictures, videos, or other personal information.

The jurisdiction of the District policy limits technological abuse through the use of any electronic device or data while on school grounds or on a school bus, computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of the XYZ District.

Dating Partner: Any person, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, involved in a relationship with another person, where the relationship is primarily characterized by social contact of a sexual or romantic nature, whether casual, serious, short-term, or long-term, or as defined by either person.

Upstander<sup>84</sup> (“Positive Bystander”): A student or adult who witnesses or is aware of an incident of abusive behavior and intervenes safely or seeks help for the victim/targeted student. The intervention can take many forms and can take place both on-line and in person. An upstander makes comments or expresses disapproval of harmful actions that help defuse the situation by talking to others, expresses

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<sup>84</sup> An ‘upstander’ is a term used by the National School Climate Center (formerly, the Center for Social and Emotional Education): [www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstanderbehavior.php](http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstanderbehavior.php).

caring about the target both to the target and to others, helps remove the target from the group of aggressors when in person, or finds an authority figure to intervene. Upstanders can gain substantial power by turning to each other and joining together to take constructive action. After an incident, upstanders can talk to their peers about why the incident was wrong, ask people to stop rumors, and reach out periodically to the target to see if she/he is safe physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Protection Order: A civil or criminal court order issued in any jurisdiction for the protection of a victim of dating abuse or sexual violence that restricts the conduct of an individual toward the victim.

School Climate<sup>85</sup>: Refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes:

- Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;
- People are engaged and respected;
- Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision;
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning;
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

Sexual Harassment: Harassment that is severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school.

Student-to-student sexual harassment is conduct and/or communication by a student directed against another student. It consists of unwelcome and uninvited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical conduct and other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature which is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent to:

- (1) Substantially interfere with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program, school-sponsored activity, or any other aspect of a student's education; or
- (2) Create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating school environment; or

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<sup>85</sup> School Climate is a term developed by the National School Climate Council and used by the National School Climate Center (formerly, the Center for Social and Emotional Education), [www.schoolclimate.org/climate/learning](http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/learning).

(3) Otherwise adversely affect a student's educational opportunities.

Such behavior can constitute sexual harassment regardless of the gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any of the students involved.

Sexually harassing behavior may take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Engaging in physical conduct of a sexual nature such as patting, pinching, grabbing, brushing up against another person in a sexual way;
- Making sexual comments, remarks, insults, and/or jokes;
- Displaying or distributing sexually oriented or suggestive objects, pictures, drawings;
- Making obscene gestures;
- Pressuring for sexual activity;
- Spreading rumors of a sexual nature;
- Engaging in sexually violent or coercive behavior (assault, rape).

Sexting: The sending or sharing of nude, semi-nude images, or sexually explicit messages electronically.

Sexual Violence: Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise control a person's sexuality using coercion, force and/or duress, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim.

Stalking: Conduct that would cause a reasonable person to: (1) fear for his or her safety or the safety of a third person; or (2) suffer emotional distress. This conduct could include, but is not limited to the following: unwanted phone calls, texts, or emails; vandalism; monitoring a victim's habits and whereabouts.

Targeted Student: The student who is experiencing abusive behavior as defined in this policy.

Victim: A person who has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, or stalking.

## Online Resources

### ***Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships***

[www.startstrongteens.org/](http://www.startstrongteens.org/)

*Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships (Start Strong)* is a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in collaboration with the Family Violence Prevention Fund. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Blue Shield of California Foundation are investing in 11 Start Strong communities across the country to identify and evaluate the best practices in prevention to stop teen dating violence and abuse before it starts. It is currently the largest funded national initiative aimed at preventing relationship violence and abuse among young people by promoting healthy relationship behaviors.

[www.startstrongparent.org/](http://www.startstrongparent.org/)

This website provides advice to parents about how to talk to their teens, especially younger teens, about healthy relationships and teen dating violence. Information is also provided in Spanish.

### **American Academy of Pediatrics: Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure**

[www.aap.org/ConnectedKids/](http://www.aap.org/ConnectedKids/)

AAP's Connected Kids offers child healthcare providers a comprehensive, logistical approach to integrating violence prevention efforts in practice and the community. A program for use in well-child visits for all children from birth to age 21, Connected Kids includes a clinical guide and 21 handouts for parent and teen topics such as bullying, discipline, interpersonal skills, parenting, suicide, and television violence.

### **American Bar Association: Steering Committee on Unmet Legal Needs of Children Division for Public Education: [www.abanet.org/publiced/teendating.shtml](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/teendating.shtml)**

In an effort to bring more public awareness to a problem confronting today's teens, the American Bar Association's National Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative developed and distributed teen dating violence awareness and prevention toolkits. On their website, you will find this toolkit along with a variety of materials on teen dating violence and recommendations for parents, school personnel, health and mental health professionals, the legal and law enforcement community and domestic violence agencies. Toolkit elements can be integrated into curricular or extracurricular programming plans.

### **American Psychiatric Association: *Love Doesn't Have to Hurt - Teens***

[www.apa.org/pi/cyf/teen.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/teen.pdf)

Developed by the American Psychological Association with consultation from the Partners in Program Planning in Adolescent Health (PIPPAH), the *Love Doesn't Have to Hurt - Teens* Brochure provides information and resources for victims, aggressors, and friends. It includes tips for addressing difficult situations and discussion of issues particular to disabled youth, same-sex relationships, and cultural beliefs.

**A Thin Line**

[www.athinline.org](http://www.athinline.org)

A Thin Line is a campaign developed by MTV to empower youth to identify, respond to, and stop the spread of digital abuse in their lives and amongst their peers. The website includes facts about boundary-defying activities, a space for you to ask questions and/or share your story, information on how to support others, and resources where you can get help.

**Break the Cycle**

[www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)

Break the Cycle is a national organization focused on engaging, educating and empowering youth to build lives and communities free of domestic violence. They have countless resources for parents, educators, policy makers, and advocates including a school policies and a comprehensive list of state laws. Break the Cycle also updates maintains a site for National Teen Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, [www.teenDVmonth.org](http://www.teenDVmonth.org), and has launched Respect WORKS!, [www.respect-works.org](http://www.respect-works.org).

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – National Center for Injury Prevention & Control (NCIPC) – Division of Violence Prevention**

[www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention)

This website has a large collection of publications, fact sheets, and materials for youth serving agencies, schools, public health programs, parents, and teens including PSA's. NCIPC is a resource for research on youth violence prevention and intervention. Specifically their *Choose Respect* ([www.chooserespect.org](http://www.chooserespect.org)) program is a national effort designed to help adolescents form healthy relationships and motivate them to challenge harmful beliefs about dating abuse. CDC recently unveiled *DATING MATTERS* a free online course available to educators, school personnel, youth leaders and other working to improve the health of teens.

**Committee for Children**

[www.cfchildren.org/programs/ssp/overview/](http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/ssp/overview/)

Committee for Children is a non-profit that has developed and published programs and curricula around social skills, bullying, and sexual abuse for children from preschool through middle school. They've also developed an emergent literacy program for young children. *SECOND STEP* is their violence prevention program integrates social and emotional learning with academics. The website features a program overview, research findings, and a variety of resources such as their toolkits that include teacher guides, lessons, posters and interactive DVDs.

**Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM)**

[www.coaches-corner.org](http://www.coaches-corner.org)

The Coaching Boy into Men (CBIM) campaign (developed by the Family Violence Prevention Fund) invites men to be part of the solution by teaching boys that violence never equals strength. CBIM engages coaches through the Coaches Leadership Program to help shape the attitudes and behaviors of

young male athletes encouraging them to practice respect towards themselves and others. The *Coaches Corner* website provides coaches with access to program materials (i.e. playbook, toolkit, etc) and tips from fellow coaches on how to implement the program in their own communities.

#### **Fourth R / Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships**

[www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)

Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships is a consortium of researchers and professionals dedicated to promoting healthy adolescent relationships and reducing risk behaviors. Their *Fourth R* curriculum is a comprehensive school-based prevention program designed to include students, teachers, parents, and the community in reducing violence and risk behaviors. It uses best practice approaches to target multiple forms of violence, including bullying, dating violence, peer violence, and group violence. The curriculum is rigorously evaluated and found to be highly effective.

#### **Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project**

[www.avp.org](http://www.avp.org)

AVP works with LGBTQH people dealing with domestic violence and provides counseling and advocacy services, works with victims to safety plan and document the violence committed against them. In addition, AVP offers support groups for victims, assists in obtaining orders of protection, and helps locate shelters and emergency housing options. They run a hotline: (212) 714-1141.

#### **Love is Not Abuse**

[www.loveisnotabuse.org](http://www.loveisnotabuse.org)

Love is Not Abuse is a step-by step guide to teaching high school students about the issue of teen dating violence. Using literature and poetry, this program provides teachers with the tools to teach about this sensitive subject and is intended to be taught in either Health or English/Language Arts classes.

#### **Love Is Respect**

[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

Loveisrespect.org is the online home of the National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline. The helpline offers one-on-one service from trained peer advocates and is specifically designed for teens and young adults. It operates 24 hours a day and can be accessed by phone or the internet. The website also includes resources for teens, parents, friends and family, peer advocates, government officials, law enforcement officials and the general public.

#### **Moms and Dads for Education to Stop Teen Dating Abuse (MADE)**

[www.loveisnotabuse.com/made/index.html](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/made/index.html)

MADE is a national coalition of parents, teachers and concerned citizens who are advocates for ensuring that every middle school and high school in the country is teaching a curriculum on preventing dating relationship violence and abuse. The website includes toolkit, fact sheets, curricula, and information on how to advocate in your area. It also includes tips, resources, and stories for teens.

**Men Can Stop Rape**

[www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org)

Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR) is an international organization that mobilizes male youth to prevent men's violence against women. MCSR builds young men's capacity to challenge harmful aspects of traditional masculinity, to value alternative visions of male strength, and to embrace their vital role as allies with women and girls in fostering healthy relationships and gender equity. MCSR resources include their primary prevention program for male youth, "Men of Strength (MOST)" as well as their public education campaign, "Strength Mediaworks" and their leadership training for youth service professionals, organizations and schools.

**National Center for Victims of Crime - Youth Initiative**

[www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB\\_YouthInitiative158](http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB_YouthInitiative158)

The National Center for Victims of Crime is an advocacy organization providing resources for crime victims and those who serve them. Their youth initiative builds the nation's capacity to support youth victims while working to advance their rights and ensuring youth leadership on issues that affect youth. The resource center includes their Teen Tools series that explains how to recognize a crime, what emotions to expect and how to receive or give help. It also includes a guide book for reaching and serving teen victims, a teen action toolkit, video shows and other outreach materials.

**National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center**

[www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center is a Federal resource for communities working to prevent violence committed by and against young people. NYVPRC provides key leaders in communities—local government leaders and community leaders—with dynamic resources to help support their efforts to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate effective youth violence prevention efforts. The website includes stats and data on youth violence, best practices and effective programs, funding resources, as well as tools for taking action and publications.

**No Means Know**

[www.nomeansknow.com](http://www.nomeansknow.com)

No Means Know is an Idaho Teen Dating Violence awareness and prevention project. The website includes the facts and warning signs around teen dating violence. It also includes information on qualities that make up a healthy relationship, ideas for how to get involved, program materials for communities and provides resources for help.

**Office on Violence Against Women**

[www.ovw.usdoj.gov/](http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/)

The mission of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) is to provide federal leadership in reducing violence against women, strengthening services to and administering justice for all victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Through their *Teen Dating Violence Prevention Project* ([www.teendvmonth.org](http://www.teendvmonth.org)), coordinated by Break the Cycle, they work to bring national focus to the issue of teen dating violence, highlight the need to educate youth about healthy relationships, raise awareness among those who care for them and provide communities with a critical opportunity to work together to prevent this devastating cycle of abuse. The website includes a listing of national and local campaigns designed to raise awareness, teen dating violence factsheets, and a variety of materials around policy, curricula, programming, and help resources.

**Respect WORKS!**

[www.respect-works.org](http://www.respect-works.org)

Respect WORKS! is a unique partnership launched between Hazelden and Break the Cycle. The Hazelden Foundation, the leading publisher of evidence-based violence prevention programs and Break the Cycle have joined forces to create a comprehensive model of teen dating violence prevention programming. Together they are offering resources and training that will help schools and community organizations address all aspects of this serious issue.

**Safe Dates Prevention Program**

[www.hazelden.org/web/go/safedates](http://www.hazelden.org/web/go/safedates)

Safe Dates is an evidence-based curriculum being implemented and evaluated under Start Strong in several communities in an effort to prevent teen dating violence and abuse. Rigorous research shows that *Safe Dates* is effective in both preventing dating violence and in reducing dating violence among teens already using violence against their dates. It also meets many of the national standards for health education and life skills.

**The Safe Space**

[www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org)

Thesafespace.org is Break the Cycle's online comprehensive resource for teens to learn about dating violence. It includes a space to ask questions and tips on how to stay safe, speak out, and take action. Thesafespace.org is the most comprehensive online resource about teen dating violence.

**ThatsNotCool.com**

[www.thatsnotcool.com](http://www.thatsnotcool.com)

That's Not Cool is a national public education campaign designed to prevent teen dating violence. Developed by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, in partnership with the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women and the Advertising Council, That's Not Cool uses digital examples of controlling behavior online and by cell phone to encourage teens to draw their own line about what is, or is not, acceptable relationship behavior. That's Not Cool has launched a new campaign

tools website ([www.thatnotcool.com/tools](http://www.thatnotcool.com/tools)) for anyone to use in their community to prevent teen dating abuse. It includes all campaign marketing materials as well as background information and instructional documents for immediate download and use.



For further information contact:

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