

Examples of Model School Policy Language that Promote Collaboration with Parents/Caregivers, Youth, Service Providers, School Personnel & Influencers, as well as Law Enforcement and the Judicial System

The following examples of model school policy language are adapted from *A School Policy to Increase Student Safety: Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence Through Improved School Climate*, produced by Futures Without Violence and Break the Cycle, in order to give an overall understanding of what collaboration looks like within policy.

Example of Parent/Caregiver Engagement: Districts shall engage parents in opportunities to learn how to help their child(ren) build healthy relationships 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 or 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

Example of 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.

Example of 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;
- 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, sexual assault, and stalking behaviors.



Example of Policy on Training for School Staff and Influencers: All staff shall participate in ongoing professional development to promote healthy teen relationship and prevent adolescent dating abuse, sexual assault, and stalking behaviors. 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);
- The health and behavioral indicators of adolescent dating abuse;
- Implementation guide for District's policy for promoting healthy teen relationship and preventing and responding to students who engage in abusive behavior; identification, assessment, and appropriate referral of students who have experienced abuse, as well as referrals for students who are engaging in abusive behaviors;
- Safe and age-appropriate interventions for targeted students and accused students;
- Importance of adults being a positive role model and active bystander.

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

Example of Policy on 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/caregivers, friends or others;
- 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 such as school-based stay away agreements to preserve targeted students safety;
- Following procedures to implement protection orders;
- Referring targeted students and alleged offenders to developmentally appropriate school and/or community resources for services such as counseling, as appropriate; and,
- Impose appropriate consequences and restitution, and make provisions for treatment for students who are alleged to be engaging in abusive behaviors.

Example of Policy on 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, sexual assault, or stalking, 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.

Example of “Encourage” policies to engage and collaborate with students, parents/caregivers, service providers:

- 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 abuse, sexual assault, and stalking by engaging existing youth leaders on campus and/or establishing a new leadership class or club. Youth are encouraged to develop innovative projects, events, campaigns or other strategies of their choosing to promote healthy relationships and prevent abuse 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.

- 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 youth that have experienced abuse and youth who have engaged in the abuse be placed together in the same support groups.
- 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.
- 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, sexual assault, and stalking 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, sexual assault, and stalking 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 bystander.
 - 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 dating abuse, sexual assault, and stalking to school personnel.

No Need to Re-Create the Wheel

In addition to the examples above, policy makers may hesitate to work on a policy addressing healthy relationships and adolescent dating abuse, sexual assault, and stalking because they simply do not know where to start. Sample policies, while not always comprehensive, provide a good starting place for policy makers. There are many model policies and existing policies already available that policy makers can tailor to meet their school, district, or state needs, which also include ways in which to promote collaboration as a comprehensive approach to addressing adolescent dating abuse, sexual assault, and stalking. Readily available sample policies include:

- *Safe Schools Model Policy: A Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Dating Violence and Sexual Violence in District of Columbia Schools*, produced by Break the Cycle. This policy was developed for high schools and takes a holistic approach to dating abuse on and off-campus. Available at <http://www.breakthecycle.org/how-we-help> under the "Policy Programs" hotlink.
- *A School Policy to Increase Student Safety: Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence Through Improved School Climate*, produced by Futures Without Violence and Break the Cycle. This policy was developed for schools serving student 11- to 14-years old. It was designed to assist schools in creating plans of action for the promotion of healthy teen relationships and the prevention and response to adolescent dating abuse. Available at <http://www.startstrongteens.org/resources> under the "Policy" hotlink.



- *Indiana’s Model Teen Dating Violence Education Materials and Response Policies for Schools Guidance Document.* The policy, beginning on page 25 of this document, was created for schools with grades 6 through 12. The model was created to “assist school personnel in the development of guidelines and policies which will be specific and appropriate for their school []; and will contribute to a safe environment where students will have the opportunity to benefit fully from the school’s programs, activities and instruction.” (Indiana Department of Education, 2011, 25). Available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/sservices/violence/> under the “Guidance Document” hotlink in the first paragraph of text.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2011-TA-AX-K114 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

