

# A Research-Based Question and Answer Resource on Intimate Partner and Teen Dating Violence for Youth-Supporting Professionals

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) and teen dating violence (TDV) are of growing concern to professionals who support young people who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work. IPV/TDV have been linked to negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes among young people who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems and/or homelessness, including a lower likelihood of frequent condom use, unplanned pregnancy, and engaging in sex under the influence of alcohol and drugs.<sup>1-3</sup>

This resource provides answers to common questions that youth-supporting professionals may have about IPV and TDV. Some of these questions may be of interest to all youth-supporting professionals, regardless of the young people with whom they work. Other questions may be of greater interest to youth-supporting professionals who work with young people who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work.

- What are IPV and TDV?
- What are the signs that a young person may be experiencing IPV/TDV?
- How can you start a conversation with a young person who may be experiencing IPV/TDV?
- What supports are available to young people experiencing IPV/TDV?
- What is the prevalence of IPV/TDV among young people involved with the child welfare and/or justice system, experiencing homelessness, and/or disconnected from work and school?
- What evidence-based programs are available to help young people involved with the child welfare and/or justice system, experiencing homelessness, and/or disconnected from work and school who are at risk for or experiencing IPV/TDV?

By providing research-based answers to these questions, this resource can help professionals appropriately respond to the needs of young people who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work who are experiencing or at risk for IPV/TDV.

*Activate: The Collective to Bring Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Research to Youth-Supporting Professionals aims to bridge the gap between research and practice in support of the Office of Population Affairs' mission to prevent teen pregnancy and promote adolescent health. Activate translates research into practice by creating research-based resources for use by professionals who support young people who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work (i.e., opportunity youth).*

## What Are Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Teen Dating Violence (TDV)?

[Intimate Partner Violence](#) (IPV) is any abuse between romantic partners who may or may not be living together.<sup>4</sup> [Teen dating violence](#) (TDV) is IPV that occurs within the context of a dating relationship in which the partners are under age 18.

[IPV](#) can take different forms, including:<sup>5,6</sup>

- **Physical violence:** Hurting or trying to hurt a partner using physical force. This includes hitting, shaking, kicking, pushing, biting, throwing objects, using a weapon, and strangulation.
- **Sexual violence:** Forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act or sexual touching when the partner does not or cannot consent; posting or sharing sexual pictures of a partner without their consent; or sexting someone without their consent.
- **Psychological aggression:** Using verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to mentally or emotionally harm or exert control over a partner.
- **Stalking:** Pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a current or former partner that causes fear or safety concerns.

## What are signs that a young person may be experiencing IPV/TDV?

Young people may be in unhealthy or abusive relationships if they:<sup>7</sup>

- Report that their partner is intensely jealous or possessive.
- Become depressed, moody, or argumentative.
- Frequently check in with their partner.
- Have unexplained bruises, scratches, or burns on their body.
- Report symptoms (e.g., sore throat, headaches, or dizziness) that could be caused by strangulation.<sup>8</sup>
- Defer to the partner's every wish.
- Often apologize for their partner's behavior.
- Experience a change in academic performance.
- Are isolated from friends and family.
- Get visibly upset after phone calls or dates with their dating partner.

In studies of young people currently or formerly in foster care, **16% to 62%** of young women and **20% to 31%** of young men report being a victim of IPV/TDV.



- Are afraid of making their partner angry.
- Describe being “punished” by their partner through silence, humiliation, or force.
- Lose interest in activities.

## How do you start a conversation with a young person who may be experiencing IPV/TDV?

These prompts are ways to start a conversation with a young person who may be experiencing IPV/TDV.<sup>9,10</sup>

1. Explain that a healthy relationship is one in which their partner cares about their happiness, understands that they have friends and a life outside of the relationship, does not pressure them to do anything, and values their privacy. Then express concern that they may not be in a healthy relationship.
2. Ask the young person if their partner ever...
  - a. Tries to stop them from seeing or talking to family or friends.
  - b. Calls them derogatory names, puts them down, or criticizes them.
  - c. Threatens or scares them.
  - d. Hits, slaps, pushes, or kicks them.
  - e. Pressures or forces them to do something sexual when they don't want to.
  - f. Humiliates them when they are alone or in front of others.
  - g. Controls where they go, what they wear, or what they do.
  - h. Gives them the silent treatment for not doing what they wanted.
3. Give the young person time and tools.
  - a. Encourage them to think about their relationship.
  - b. Assure them that you will be there for them if they want to talk.
  - c. Encourage them to talk with someone else if they are not comfortable talking with you.
  - d. Share resources that they might find helpful.

## What supports are available to young people experiencing IPV/TDV?

**If you believe a young person is experiencing IPV**, share the National Domestic Violence Hotline, a 24-hour confidential service for survivors, victims, and those affected by domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and relationship abuse.

- Phone number: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Text option (message and data rates may apply): Text “START” to 88788
- Live chat function: <https://www.thehotline.org/>

**If you believe a young person is experiencing TDV**, share the National Teen Dating Abuse helpline, a 24-hour helpline for teens (ages 13-18) experiencing dating abuse.

- Phone number: 866-331-9474
- Text option (message and data rates may apply): Text “LOVEIS” to 22522
- Live chat function: <https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

**If you believe a young person who identifies as Native American is experiencing TDV**, share the StrongHearts Native Helpline, a 24-hour culturally appropriate and confidential service that provides lifesaving tools and immediate support to Native Americans experiencing TDV.

- Phone number: 1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483)
- Text option (message and data rates may apply): 1-844-762-8483
- Live chat function: [www.strongheartshelpline.org](http://www.strongheartshelpline.org)

## How prevalent are IPV and TDV among young people involved with the child welfare and/or justice system, experiencing homelessness, and/or disconnected from work and school?

Research indicates that between 10% and 30% of young people in the general population experience IPV or TDV, with rates varying depending on gender identity and sexual orientation, with young people who identify as female, and young people who identify as lesbian, gay bisexual, or questioning reporting higher rates of IPV/TDV.<sup>9-11</sup> **Studies of IPV/TDV among young people involved with the child welfare and/or justice system, experiencing homelessness, and/or disconnected from work and school find similar rates**, although rates are often based on small, nonrepresentative samples.

**Studies of young people currently or formerly in foster care have found that 16% to 62% of young women and 20% to 31% of young men have been a victim of IPV/TDV.**<sup>2, 12-13</sup> One of these studies also found that 30% of females with a history of child welfare system involvement had experienced reproductive coercion (e.g., partners telling them not to use birth control, taking a condom off during sex, or forcing them to have sex without using a condom).<sup>12</sup>

**Sixteen percent of first-time, court-involved non-incarcerated females in a longitudinal study reported being the victims of physical dating violence**, and court-involved males were as likely as court-involved females to report being victimized.<sup>14, 15</sup>

**Between one-fifth and one-third of the young people seeking drop-in services in Los Angeles reported being a victim of IPV.**<sup>16, 17</sup> In one study, 25% of the females and 22% of the males reported being the victim of IPV during the past year.<sup>16</sup> In the other study, 31% of the young people who had been in a sexual relationship within the past year reported being a victim of IPV within the context of their most recent relationship.<sup>17</sup>

**The only published study of IPV/TDV among young people disconnected from work and school found that 14% of young Black females enrolled in an employment training program reported being the victim of TDV.**<sup>18</sup> Data from the National Survey of Family Growth indicate that 13% of females and 7% of males who were disconnected from school and work had ever been forced to have sex by a male dating partner.<sup>19</sup>

## What evidence-based programs are available to help young people at risk for or experiencing IPV or TDV?

Two evidence-based IPV/TDV prevention programs have been used with young people involved with the child welfare and/or justice system. We could not find documentation of these or similar programs being used with young people experiencing homelessness or disconnected from work and school in peer-reviewed or gray literature.

**Break the Cycle's Ending Violence** is a 3-day teen dating violence prevention curriculum designed for middle and high school students. Teens learn about preventing and safely ending abusive relationships; their legal rights and responsibilities; and building healthy relationships. Schools, community-based organizations, and juvenile detention facilities have used the curriculum.<sup>20</sup>  
[https://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/ending\\_violence.page](https://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/ending_violence.page)

**The Youth Relationships Project** is an 18-session teen dating violence prevention program for 14 to 16 year-olds with a history of child maltreatment. This program aims to increase awareness about the signs of an abusive relationship and teach youth how to develop healthy relationships with dating partners. Youth learn about abuse and power dynamics in relationships, develop skills to avoid abusive relationship and resolve conflicts in non-violent ways, and become familiar with community resources from which they can seek help if they experience dating violence.<sup>21, 22</sup>  
<https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/467>

Between **one-fifth** and **one-third** of the young people seeking drop-in services in Los Angeles reported being a victim of IPV.



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## Endnotes

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