

Responding to Teen Dating Violence for Educators

Educators are often in the position to first notice TDV. Teachers, staff and administrators may be one of the first to respond to a survivor, perpetrator, or friend of a survivor disclosing experiences of TDV. The first response a survivor receives can have a tremendous impact on his/her healing and recovery. Responding in a supportive and empowering way is critical.

Be Prepared!

Learn to recognize the psychological and physical warning signs associated with TDV. Stay informed of the school's policies and protocol on TDV.



General Guidelines

- Listen to what the student, family member, or friend is saying without interrupting.
- Do not talk to the victim and perpetrator together.
- Be aware of your body language and respect the student's right to privacy and personal space.
- Help the student become informed of available resources.
- Maintain confidentiality while following school protocol on reporting and making sure the student is aware of this.

"By addressing abusive behaviors when they happen, particularly in school, youth service providers can make an impact on every teen who believes that adults do not take the issue seriously. In doing this, providers can also communicate an important message to teens experiencing dating violence—that adults will believe and care for them if they seek help for an abusive relationship."¹

References

¹Gallopín & Leigh. (2009). Teen perceptions of dating violence, help-seeking, and the role of schools. *The Prevention Resesarcher*, 16(1), 17-20.; "Teen Dating Violence: Information for Teachers." (n.d.) <http://bit.ly/17tcqzB>; Teen Dating Violence Prevention." (n.d.) <http://bit.ly/1FHc7pb>; "A Guide to Addressing Dating Violence in Texas Schools." (2007). <http://bit.ly/1G3Cvlg>; McKenry & Price. (2005). *Families and change: Coping with stressful events and transitions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

If someone shares that s/he is experiencing TDV...

- Find out what they would like to do and support them regardless of their decision.
- Be culturally sensitive. For instance, certain cultural groups typically do not seek help and depend on family relationships to cope, which may cause reluctance in confiding. LGBTQ populations face unique obstacles due to discrimination.
- Be non-judgmental and let the individual know you take the issue seriously. Students are most likely to not report because of the fear that adults will make the situation worse, cast blame, or make them feel guilty.
- Let the individual know that abuse usually gets worse over time.
- Reassure the student that you will be there for him/her.
- Expect survivors to be confused about their feelings and what to do. Also, know that they may change their mind.
- Talk to the survivor in a place where s/he feels safe.
- Connect the student with resources that can help provide support and safety. It is important for the victim to consider safety needs and to work with someone trained in developing a safety plan. See njcbw.org for a domestic violence program available in your county.

If you suspect someone is a perpetrator...

- Although you may feel that you want to address the accused perpetrator, do not confront the individual. It may put the victim at increased risk.
- Based on your school's policies and protocols, decide how you should proceed with informing any other persons, especially if the survivor's safety may be in danger.

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