



Dear Educator,

Dating violence is a prevalent issue that affects the daily lives of teens. One in four adolescents report verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year. Among 11-14 year olds in relationships, 62 percent say they know friends who have been verbally abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend, according to a Liz Claiborne Foundation Study. According to a 2010 study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2,546,000 Florida women will experience rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime. These numbers and the potential lifelong impacts of such behaviors are startling. However, research from CDC also indicates that teen dating violence is preventable and educators are an important part of the solution.

This teen dating violence prevention curriculum is designed for educators to use with seventh through twelfth grade students in a classroom setting. It was developed in response to the 2010 passage of Florida Statutes 1006.148 and 1003.42, which mandate the following: each district school board adopt and implement a dating violence and abuse policy which must be integrated into each school district's discipline policies; each school district must provide training for teachers, faculty, staff and school administrators to implement the new dating violence and abuse policies; and a teen dating violence and abuse component must be added to the comprehensive health education curriculum for students in grades 7 through 12.

This curriculum addresses *all* of the core components that must be covered according to the statute. The legislative requirements addressed in this curriculum include: the definition of dating violence and abuse, warning signs of dating violence and abusive behavior, characteristics of healthy relationships, measures to prevent and stop dating violence and abuse and community resources available to victims of dating violence and abuse. In addition, each session addresses up to 13 Florida Department of Education comprehensive health education benchmarks.

Three curricula were developed based on three age groupings: seventh and eighth grades, ninth and tenth grades and eleventh and twelfth grades. All three curricula have eight, 45-minute sessions. However, the curricula may be used in a three, five or eight session format.

It is recommended that all eight sessions are used together, as the content and dosage are research-informed and adhere to best practices in violence prevention<sup>1</sup>. Sessions one through three in each curriculum will provide a basic level of compliance with legislative requirements for comprehensive health programming. Implementation of sessions one through five in each curriculum will provide youth an opportunity to further explore the components of healthy relationships. Completion of sessions one through eight in each curriculum will provide youth an opportunity to explore advanced concepts around dating violence and their role in preventing teen dating violence.

Prior to implementation, it is recommended that you read the Introduction to this curriculum in its entirety. In addition, facilitators are encouraged to participate in facilitator training. Your local certified domestic violence center may be available to offer onsite training for facilitators. Each center provides training and community education for youth and adults and, depending on staff availability, may be able to assist you in implementing this curriculum in your class. In some cases, centers can provide a speaker for your class about prevention. If you'd like more information about training on domestic and dating violence or technical assistance for facilitating this curriculum, please contact your local certified domestic violence center or email [preventviolence@fcadv.org](mailto:preventviolence@fcadv.org). Please visit <http://www.fcadv.org/centers/local-centers> to find a comprehensive list of Florida's domestic violence centers. If you are unable to coordinate with your local center, web-based training modules are accessible online at [www.fcadv.org](http://www.fcadv.org).

If you have additional questions about statewide prevention efforts, email the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) at [preventviolence@fcadv.org](mailto:preventviolence@fcadv.org).

Sincerely,  
FCADV Staff and Curriculum Development Workgroup Members

<sup>1</sup>Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. L., Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane, E., & Davino, K. (2003). "What works in prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs." *American Psychologist*, 58, 449-456.

## Acknowledgments

FCADV would like to thank the curriculum workgroup members for their time, energy, and dedication to this important resource for Florida's schools. Each of you played an important role in developing this curriculum and through your efforts, Florida's students will learn about preventing violence and promoting healthy relationships in order to save lives!

FCADV would also like to thank the Department of Education, including the Health Cadre and local school districts, for their feedback and support for piloting this curriculum. Finally, FCADV would like to give special thanks to the Virginia Domestic and Sexual Violence Action Alliance and the Virginia Teen Dating Violence Prevention Taskforce who generously shared "Building Healthy Relationships Across Virginia: A Facilitator's Guide for Teen Dating Violence Prevention." Several of the activities contained within FCADV's curriculum were modeled from this resource.

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## Introduction

### Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

The mission of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) is to create a violence free world by empowering women and children through the elimination of personal and institutional violence and oppression against all people. FCADV serves as the professional association for Florida's 42 [domestic violence centers](#). FCADV provides leadership, advocacy, education, training, technical assistance, public policy and development, and support to domestic violence center programs throughout the state.

Primary prevention of intimate partner violence is one of FCADV's priorities. Each of Florida's 42 certified domestic violence centers receives funding to implement primary prevention programming. Primary prevention is any action, strategy or policy that prevents intimate partner violence (IPV) from initially occurring. Primary prevention seeks to reduce the overall likelihood that anyone will become a victim or a perpetrator by creating conditions that make violence less likely to occur. Prevention of IPV focuses on preventing first-time perpetration and first-time victimization. This differs from intervention-based programming in that intervention is typically focused on promoting safety and preventing a re-occurrence of violence. To learn about the primary prevention activities taking place in your community, please visit <http://www.fcadv.org/centers/local-centers> to find a comprehensive list of Florida's domestic violence centers.

In light of this focus, FCADV has partnered with the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to develop a teen dating violence prevention curriculum that meets school requirements for comprehensive health education for seventh through twelfth grades while adhering to evidence-informed practices in prevention.

### Dating Violence Facts and Impact

A dating relationship is considered abusive when one partner establishes a pattern of trying to have power or control over the other partner. Abuse between intimate partners is prevalent regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Abusers may use different tactics to have power or control over their partner, including intimidation, threats, isolating them from friends or family, emotional/verbal abuse, cyber stalking, etc. All relationships are unique. Not all abusive relationships involve the same types of unhealthy behaviors, and the frequency and severity of the violence may also be different.

Dating violence is a serious problem in the United States. Often teen dating violence is unreported or underreported for a variety of factors, including a fear of telling friends and family. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 72 percent of 8th and 9th graders reportedly "date." One in four adolescents report verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year. About 10 percent of students nationwide report being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 12 months.

According to CDC, dating violence has significant negative effects on the mental and physical health of youth, as well as on their school performance. Dating violence can have a negative effect on health throughout life. Teens who are victims are more likely to be depressed and may engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using drugs and alcohol. They are more likely to have eating disorders, and some teens even think about or attempt suicide. Teens who experience dating violence in high school are at higher risk for victimization during college. Violence in an adolescent relationship sets the stage for problems in future relationships, including IPV and sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization throughout life. For more information please visit [www.fcadv.org](http://www.fcadv.org).

## **How to Use this Curriculum**

This curriculum addresses *all* of the curriculum components that must be covered as a part of students' comprehensive health education according Florida Statute 1003.42. The statutory requirements addressed in this curriculum include: the definition of dating violence and abuse, warning signs of dating violence and abusive behavior, characteristics of healthy relationships, measures to prevent and stop dating violence and abuse and community resources available to victims of dating violence and abuse. In addition, each session addresses up to 13 FDOE health education benchmarks.

Three curricula were developed based on three age groupings: seventh and eighth grades, ninth and tenth grades and eleventh and twelfth grades. All three curricula have eight 45-minute sessions. However, the curricula may be used in a three, five or eight session format.

It is recommended that all eight sessions are used together, as the content and dosage are research-informed and reflect best practices in violence prevention<sup>2</sup>. Sessions one through three in each curriculum will provide a basic level of compliance with legislative requirements for comprehensive health programming. Implementation of sessions one through five in each curriculum will provide students an opportunity to further explore the components of healthy relationships. Completion of sessions one through eight in each curriculum will provide students an opportunity to explore advanced concepts around dating violence and their role in preventing teen dating violence.

It is important to note that this curriculum was created to address fundamental concepts related to dating violence prevention with the understanding that the facilitator may not have an in-depth knowledge of IPV prevention. However, facilitators are encouraged to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of students. If activities or discussions are too advanced, you are invited to adapt the content as appropriate. Likewise, if you or your students are more advanced in your understanding of certain content areas, you are encouraged to make revisions to the curriculum to meet your needs. For additional curriculum resources, please contact FCADV's Prevention Program at [preventviolence@fcadv.org](mailto:preventviolence@fcadv.org).

## **Empowerment Theory: Promoting Prevention and Working with Survivors**

The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the 42 certified domestic violence centers in Florida adhere to empowerment-based advocacy. Likewise, this curriculum was developed within the framework of empowerment theory.

Empowerment is a process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that all individuals, regardless of their situation within the current social paradigm, can take action to make healthy choices and create positive change. The way we achieve this is by focusing on strengths and experiences as a source of power. Prevention programs work to empower youth by providing the tools, skills, and resources to engage in healthy, non-violent relationships *before* they ever engage in an unhealthy relationship. Prevention programming helps youth develop assertive communication strategies, challenge rigid gender stereotypes, critically view and examine oppressive messages conveyed through the media and recognize and prevent violence. By disseminating these skills and tools and empowering youth with knowledge to make informed choices in their relationships, we hope to support ending the preventing violence for this generation.

The language used throughout this curriculum also reflects empowerment theory. Non-violent language is used throughout the curriculum, and people impacted by violence are referred to as "survivors" rather than "victims." The term victim may be conveyed as disempowering and may evoke a negative stigma often associated with victim-blaming attitudes. The term survivor focuses on the strength of the individual and their ability to heal, grow and create change. However when working with someone who has experienced violence, it is important to ensure that your language reflects how the individual self-identifies.

<sup>2</sup> Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. L., Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane, E., & Davino, K. (2003). "What works in prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs." *American Psychologist*, 58, 449-456.

### **Before you Begin: Assessing School Readiness and Preparing Students for the Discussion**

It is important to note that this is a prevention-based curriculum that is not intended for use as an intervention tool. Therefore, it may be inappropriate to administer this curriculum if your school and/or community recently experienced a violent incident. It is recommended that prior to implementation, the facilitator explore with school administrators, guidance counselors and faculty whether the content is appropriate for the climate of your community and school. Administering this curriculum immediately following a violent incident may create unintended negative consequences for youth who are attempting to cope with what happened. If your community has recently experienced an act of violence, it is recommended that the facilitator work closely with school administration, guidance counselors and the local domestic violence center to determine whether it is appropriate to implement this curriculum or if alternative crisis intervention programming should be implemented instead of, or in conjunction with, prevention programming.

If you decide that your school is ready to utilize this curriculum, students should be prepared in advance for the content. Due to the prevalence of intimate partner violence and violence in general, it is possible that discussions about these issues may evoke emotional responses from some students. Students may have experienced violence themselves or may know peers, friends or family members who have been impacted by violence. Tell students in advance that you will discuss forms of violence and the impact of violence. Facilitators are encouraged to work closely with school guidance staff prior to implementation to make them aware of the curriculum and to ensure that guidance counselors are available as a resource should they be needed. It is suggested that if students are uncomfortable with the content of the curriculum at the onset, or if they become uncomfortable during the course of implementation, that they be allowed to excuse themselves from the class. Students who excuse themselves from participation or who disclose abuse in the course of curriculum implementation should be referred immediately to a school guidance counselor.

### **Training for Facilitators**

Facilitators are encouraged to participate in facilitator training. Your local certified domestic violence center may be available to offer onsite training for facilitators. Each center provides training and community education for youth and adults and, depending on staff availability, may be able to assist you in implementing this curriculum in your class. In some cases, centers can provide a speaker for your class about prevention. If you'd like more information about training on domestic and dating violence or technical assistance for facilitating this curriculum, please contact your local certified domestic violence center or email [preventviolence@fcadv.org](mailto:preventviolence@fcadv.org). Please visit <http://www.fcadv.org/centers/local-centers> to find a comprehensive list of Florida's domestic violence centers.

If you have additional questions about statewide prevention efforts, email the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) at [preventviolence@fcadv.org](mailto:preventviolence@fcadv.org).

### **Disclosures of Abuse**

Due to the nature of some topics in this curriculum, youth may choose to share information that teachers are required to report under Florida's mandatory child abuse reporting statute. Florida statute states that all mandated reporters are to submit a verbal or written report to the Florida Abuse Hotline if they became aware of abuse or neglect of a child or a vulnerable adult. Most organizations have a protocol or procedure for documentation of abuse reporting. It is recommended that you consult your organization's policies regarding internal reporting prior to implementing this curriculum. It may also be helpful to become aware of community resources related to domestic and dating violence as well as child abuse.

Sharing your organization's policy regarding reporting at the onset of the implementation may reduce the potential negative response from a student who discloses abuse if you are required to make a report. Below are additional recommendations regarding responding to a disclosure, although your organization's policies should be considered in conjunction with these recommendations.

If a student begins disclosing physical or sexual abuse, be mindful of your facial expressions and body language. Students may feel responsible for or embarrassed about the abuse and misinterpret your facial expressions or body language as confirmation that they are at fault or "did something wrong." You may offer support by leaning forward, maintaining eye contact, and being a good listener.

If the student discloses the abuse in a private setting, allow them to continue talking by validating their feelings without asking questions. Seek support from your school guidance department as appropriate. If a student begins disclosing in a group setting, find an appropriate place to stop the group, validate what the student is saying, express your concern, and ask them if you can continue discussing it after class. If you are able to, have a co-facilitator take over and ask the disclosing student to meet with you privately or connect them with the guidance department. If this is not possible, follow up with the student immediately after class ends. Use caution when going through this process and be mindful of your tone of voice. It is recommended to attempt to protect the student's privacy, but avoid attracting more attention to the individual's disclosure.

If a student discloses that they have been abusive toward someone else, apply the same general response guidelines. If a student begins disclosing in a group setting, find an appropriate place to stop the group, validate what the student is saying if appropriate and ask them if you can continue discussing it after class. If possible, have a co-facilitator take over and ask the disclosing student to meet with you privately or connect them with the guidance department. If this is not possible, follow up with the student immediately after class ends. It is recommended to attempt to protect the student's privacy, but avoid attracting more attention to the individual's disclosure.

Whether the student discloses abusive behavior in a group setting or an individual setting, use caution when attempting to hold them accountable for their behavior, and be mindful of your tone of voice. Consider the nature of the disclosure. If the incident involved physical or sexual violence, follow your organization's policy regarding reporting. If the incident did not involve physical or sexual violence, refrain from making judgment statements. Let the student know that we all make mistakes and that we must accept responsibility for our actions when we do. Explain that we may not be able to take back what happened, but we can make changes in our behavior moving forward. However, avoid labeling them as "abusive" or as an "abuser."

Survivors are often made to feel responsible for the abuse they experience and may develop tools for safety that their partner construes as abusive or unhealthy. Due to the complex nature of abusive relationships, a survivor of violence may question their own actions and behaviors. Labeling behavior in general is discouraged, as it may cause the person to become defensive, angry or to shut down. It is appropriate to consider the context of each situation before responding to ensure that you do not reinforce victim-blaming attitudes. Depending on the nature of the student's disclosure, it may be necessary to make an abuse report. Refer to your organization's policies regarding additional reporting requirements.

Follow up with any disclosure by connecting the student with the guidance department at your school and, if appropriate, the local domestic violence center. For additional information or training on how to support survivors or respond to self-disclosures of abusive behavior, please contact your local domestic violence center.

Florida Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE

### **Safety Planning with Students**

Safety planning with a student who has experienced abuse may help promote safety. Whenever possible, work in conjunction with your guidance department to refer students who need assistance with safety planning to the local domestic violence center or the 24-hour Florida Domestic Violence Hotline for assistance. You may locate the domestic violence center in your community by visiting [www.fcadv.org](http://www.fcadv.org), and you may reach the hotline by calling 1-800-500-1119.

However, if the student is unable or unwilling to immediately access an advocate to develop a safety plan, it may be helpful to review some safety planning basics with them until the student is able to make contact with an advocate. Loveisrespect.org, the national teen dating abuse helpline, offers a template at the following link for developing a safety plan <<http://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Teen-Safety-Plan.pdf>>. A copy of the safety planning template can be found in the resources section of this curriculum.