

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Implementation Guide for the
Florida Department of Education Teen Dating Violence or Abuse Model Policy

Effective school policies that address teen dating violence prevention, intervention, and response can help form the foundation for a school to promote a culture of healthy relationships, build community collaborations, create a safe environment for all students and staff, and empower students.

In 2010, Florida's Legislature passed, and Governor Crist signed into law, the creation of Section 1006.148, Florida Statutes, effective July 1, 2010, related to teen dating violence and abuse. This statute includes school board requirements for the development, adoption, and implementation of a policy to prevent teen dating violence and abuse, as well as requirements for providing training for teachers, staff, and school administrators to support implementation of the policy.

Below is a synopsis of the s. [1006.148, F.S.](#)¹.

S. 1006.148, F.S., Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Policy

- Requires each school to adopt and implement a dating violence and abuse policy.
- Requires the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to adopt a model policy by January 1, 2011, to assist district school boards in the development of their own policies.
- Mandates that the FDOE model policy must provide suggested language, which the school boards may choose to adopt.
- Requires district school boards to provide training to teachers, school administrators, and staff to implement these policies.
- Requires each district school board to adopt and implement a dating violence and abuse policy which is integrated into each school district's disciplinary policies.
- Requires each school district to adopt a policy that prohibits dating violence and abuse by any student on school grounds, during a school-sponsored activity, or during school-sponsored transportation, and to provide procedures for responding to incidents of dating violence or abuse, which includes accommodations for students experiencing dating violence or abuse.

Per s. 1006.148, F.S., the [Florida Department of Education](#) developed a [model policy](#) to be utilized by district school boards as a guide for meeting the required development, adoption, and implementation of district-level policies prohibiting teen dating violence and abuse². Although

¹ Florida Statute Section 1006.148:

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1006/Sections/1006.148.html

² Florida Department of Education: <http://www.fldoe.org>

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the model policy is designed as a comprehensive policy for districts to adopt, districts may choose to include various sections and omit others for the purpose of implementing a policy in a manner that is integrated with the district's current discipline policies and is not intended to supersede the authority of the school districts.

The information and recommendations provided in this model policy companion document can be used to assist school personnel in effectively fulfilling the requirements of s. 1006.148, F.S., and the recommendations of FDOE's model policy against teen dating violence. This guidance document also includes suggestions for utilization of community resources.

In addition to reviewing the model policy, the district should have a clear distribution plan for the policy that includes information on who will receive the policy and when (for example, giving a copy to all new staff and students and to everyone at each school once or twice a year). Information about how often and through what method the policy will be reviewed can also be beneficial.

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Victim's Rights

Model Policy Language:

Florida Department of Education Model Policy Against Teen Dating Violence or Abuse

Per Section 1006.148, Florida Statutes, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has developed the following model policy to be utilized by district school boards as a guide for the development, adoption, and implementation of district-level policies prohibiting teen dating violence and abuse. Although the model policy was intended to be a comprehensive policy for districts to use as a guide, districts may choose to include various sections and omit others for the purpose of implementing a policy in a manner that is integrated with the district's current discipline policies and is not intended to supersede the authority of the school districts. In addition to the development of district policies prohibiting teen dating violence and abuse, each district school board shall provide training for teachers, staff, and school administrators to implement this section.

Although not required as part of district policies, the Florida Department of Education recommends the district and schools within be observant of the following victims' rights to the extent allowed by federal and state law:

Victim's Rights:

- 1. **Right to be treated with respect and dignity.** This includes not being blamed by staff and/or students (referred to as victim blaming), and not spreading rumors or retaliating against the victim.*
- 2. **Right to be informed of his/her options with regard to notifying law enforcement authorities, and to be assisted in notifying such authorities.** To the extent state and federal law allow, victims must make a voluntary and informed decision to notify authorities.*
- 3. **Right to not have parents/guardians notified, if such notification would endanger the student(s).** In some cases, parental notification will endanger the student(s) and prevent the student(s) from obtaining important services. In these cases, guardians/parents should not be notified unless the victim voluntarily consents in writing.*
- 4. **Right to be free from pressure not to report crimes to civil or criminal authorities.** This includes the right to be free from pressure to report a crime as a lesser offense than the victim perceives, and the right to be free from any suggestion that a victim somehow contributed to his or her own victimization by contributory negligence, or by assuming the risk of being assaulted, or by otherwise sharing the responsibility for what is alleged to have occurred.*

5. Right to have any violence committed against him/her investigated by the proper civil and criminal authorities. This right is in addition to, and independent of, school disciplinary proceedings.

6. Right to full and prompt cooperation from school personnel in obtaining and securing evidence necessary for any potential criminal/civil proceedings. Failure to fully and promptly cooperate to the extent possible may be considered a form of retaliation against the victim.

7. Right to be informed of any disciplinary actions taken against the offender. Knowing about subsequent disciplinary actions, such as suspension or expulsion, helps victims with safety planning.

8. Right to attend classes and to work in an environment free from unwanted contact or proximity with alleged assailants insofar as the school is able to provide. To the extent possible, victims and alleged perpetrators should be separated on campus. This might involve changing class schedules or having the parties agree to stay a certain number of feet away from each other in a Stay-Away-Agreement³.

9. Right to be free from violence at school. All students have the right to an education in a safe school environment. The District will take affirmative steps to prevent and respond to dating violence or abuse that occurs both on and off campus.

10. Right to transfer from school. Victims of teen dating violence or abuse have a right to transfer to another school. A victim's decision to transfer to another school must be informed and voluntary. The offender will generally be required to transfer whenever there is a choice between transferring the victim or the offender.

11. Right to be free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. All students have the right to be free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment at school. Dating violence or abuse are forms of sexual harassment.

12. Right to referrals for services. Victims of teen dating violence or abuse have the right to have access to counseling, medical services, and victim support services both on and off-campus. The District shall refer the victim of teen dating violence or abuse to a community-based advocate. The District will maintain a list of domestic violence/dating violence/sexual assault agencies and services in the community and make this list available to victims. Participation in any referral program is voluntary for victims.

³ For one example of a Stay-Away-Agreement, see the Texas Model Teen Dating Violence Policy, pg 8, available at <http://tcfv.org/pdf/hb121/Model%20Teen%20Dating%20Violence%20Policy.pdf>

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13. Right to have a support person present. *All parties in a teen dating violence or abuse case have the right to have a support person present during all stages of the investigation. A support person includes domestic violence victim advocates, parents/guardians, or other advisors.*

Implementation Guidance:

By including the above recommended Victims' Rights in the Model Policy, the District seeks to ensure that the system affords victims of dating violence respectful responses. When a district must make decisions about responses to dating violence that are not outlined in the policy, these rights can be useful to keep in mind to ensure that fair, respectful treatment of victims is prioritized.

These rights help to center the needs of young people in a policy that impacts their lives and safety.

For more information on domestic violence advocacy services in your area, please visit the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) webpage at: <http://www.fcadv.org/centers>.

Section A

Model Policy Language

a. Statement prohibiting dating violence or abuse:

It is the policy of the _____ School District that all of its students have an educational setting that is safe, secure, and free from dating violence or abuse of any kind. The district will not tolerate any form of teen dating violence or abuse as defined in section “b” of this policy.

Consistent with the intent and requirements of Section 1006.148, Florida Statutes, the school district upholds that dating violence by any student is prohibited:

- a) On school property;*
- b) During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity; or*
- c) During school-sponsored transportation.*

Implementation Guidance:

Section 1006.148, F.S. requires school districts to adopt and implement a policy prohibiting dating violence and abuse by any student on school property, during a school-sponsored activity, or during school-sponsored transportation, and providing procedures for responding to such incidents of dating violence or abuse, including accommodations for students experiencing dating violence or abuse.

By providing a clear, direct statement prohibiting violence, the District sets clear guidelines for the expected behavior of all students and informs survivors that the school administration will believe and support them. This policy also lets all students, including perpetrators, know that their actions have consequences.

Section B

Model Policy Language

b. Definition of Dating violence or abuse:

Teen Dating Violence or Abuse

Teen dating violence is a pattern of emotional, verbal, sexual, or physical abuse used by one person in a current or past dating relationship to exert power and control over another when one or both of the partners is a teenager. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, stalking, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive partner uses this pattern of violent and coercive behavior to gain power and maintain control over the dating partner. This may also include abuse, harassment, and stalking via electronic devices such as cell phones and computers, and harassment through a third party, and may be physical, mental, or both.

Implementation Guidance:

The above definition includes several important elements.

- Includes the use of power and control: Power and control is one of the fundamental aspects of abusive relationships. Any definition should include this element.
- Makes clear that dating violence is something one partner does to another: Dating abuse is not mutual violence, though the victim may use physical force at some time in self-defense. Dating abuse is one partner exerting or attempting to exert power and control over the other.
- Includes examples: These examples demonstrate many tactics of abuse but are not the only tactics that may be used.

A school district may elect to include additional definitions in the official policy or may choose to ensure that all staff, especially those responsible for implementing the policy, are familiar with some of the following expanded definitions.

Additional definitions can be included at the discretion of the School District. The following definitions may be useful to add clarity to the model policy or for staff to understand some of the terms discussed by the policy.

- **Abuser:** A person who physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally hurts a dating partner. May also be referred to as the perpetrator.
- **Victim:** A person who is hurt physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally by a dating partner. May also be referred to as the survivor, especially by domestic violence advocates.
- **Bystander:** A person who is aware that someone is being abused in a dating relationship. The bystander may become aware of the abuse through the abuser's or target's actions or words or through second-hand information.

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- **Accommodation:** A change or modification to a student's school enrollment, participation, or environment that increases access to meaningful education or safety for a student who is experiencing dating violence or sexual violence.
- **Cultural Competence:** The attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable a school district or school employees to educate and respond effectively to students and parents from diverse cultures, groups, and communities.
- **Dating Partner:** Any person, regardless of sex 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.
- **Dating Violence:** The use of abusive behaviors by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control a current or former dating partner. Dating violence includes but is not limited to:
 - **Physical Abuse:** Any intentional unwanted contact with the victim's body by either the perpetrator or an object within the perpetrator's control, regardless of whether such contact causes pain or injuries to the victim.
 - **Emotional Abuse:** The intentional infliction of mental or emotional distress by threat, coercion, stalking, humiliation, or other unwanted verbal or nonverbal conduct.
 - **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual behavior or contact by the perpetrator that is unwanted by the victim and/or interferes with the victim's ability to consent to or control the circumstances of sexual behavior.
- **Parent:** Parent or guardian or other legal custodian of a student.
- **Perpetrator:** An individual who has committed or threatened any act of dating or sexual violence as defined in this policy. May also be referred to as the abuser.
- **Predominant Aggressor:** The person determined to be the most significant, rather than the first aggressor, taking into consideration the circumstances of both the immediate incident and the course of conduct by the partners during the entirety of the relationship.
- **Protection Order:** A civil or criminal court order issued in any jurisdiction for the protection of a victim of dating violence or sexual violence that restricts the conduct of an individual toward the victim.
- **Safety Plan:** An individualized set of actions, strategies, and resources that addresses a student's safety with regard to dating violence or sexual violence.
- **School Employee:** Any person who is employed by the School District and who works in a district school or in direct association with district schools (e.g. school bus drivers and crossing guards), regardless of position.
- **Sexual Violence:** Sexual assault, abuse, or stalking of an individual, whether the perpetrator is known to the victim or a stranger.

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- **Student:** Any individual who is or has been enrolled and is or has been in attendance, or is eligible to enroll, at any district school.⁴

⁴ These sample definitions were developed as part of Break the Cycle's School Policy Toolkit, Break the Cycle 2009.

Section C

Model Policy Language

c. A procedure for reporting an act of teen dating violence or abuse, including provisions that permit a person to anonymously report such an act.

At each middle and high school, the principal or the principal's designee is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. In addition to reporting the incident to the principal or designee, if a school employee has reason to suspect that an alleged violation of this policy might constitute a crime, the employee shall also immediately report the complaint to law enforcement. Any uncertainty regarding whether an alleged violation might constitute a crime must be resolved in favor of reporting the incident to law enforcement. All other members of the school community, including students, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy anonymously or in-person to the principal or principal's designee. In cases involving an alleged perpetrator who is of adult age and an alleged teen victim, certain suspicions of abuse must be reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline or local law enforcement pursuant to Section 39.201, Florida Statutes.

Implementation Guidance:

A principal may choose to have a designee who serves as a teen dating violence advocate and handles complaints. Providing this person, whether the principal or a designee, with additional training on the dynamics of dating violence and empowerment-based advocacy can be very beneficial to students. Local certified domestic violence centers may be able to provide this training or guidance.

The designee may want to discuss reporting to law enforcement or the Florida Abuse Hotline with the victim. Some victims will wish to be in the room when the phone call is made so that they can be fully aware of everything that is stated about them in the report. All staff should be familiar with the mandatory reporting procedures.

In addition to letting students know that they may report to any adult, ensuring that all staff and students know who the designee is can ensure that reports make their way to the appropriate person. Keep in mind that a student can report to any employee or auxiliary/ancillary employee (ex: school resource officer), and that adult can then bring the report to the designee. By having a large number of supportive adults able to take reports, the School District works to ensure that students will have the opportunity to disclose to someone with whom they feel comfortable.

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Model Policy Language:

The principal of each middle and high school in the district shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents/legal guardians, how a report of dating violence and abuse may be filed either in-person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon. The victim of teen dating violence or abuse, anyone who witnessed an act of dating violence or abuse, and anyone who has reasonable suspicion that an act of dating violence or abuse has taken place may file a report of dating violence or abuse. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of teen violence or abuse will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments. Appropriate remedial action will be pursued for persons found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another of an act of dating violence or abuse.

Implementation Guidance:

All school stakeholders should work together to ensure a respectful learning environment. Anyone may file a complaint regarding teen dating violence. While school staff may be required to report policy violations to the designated staff, parents, students, and visitors should also be encouraged to report observed or known violations.

In addition to the procedures outlined in the Model Policy, other suggestions include:

- Provide a broad spectrum of individuals to whom a student can report abuse instead of just to the principal, counselor, or one specific teacher. This will maximize the chance that students have the opportunity to disclose to someone with whom they feel safe.
- Consider the needs of the most marginalized students when developing policies about abuse to help ensure that the policies respond to the needs of all students. Policies that do not take into consideration cultural or identity specific issues may have unintended consequences for students who come forward. For example:
 - Schools may choose not to have a school resource officer present during initial conversations with students due to some students' negative experiences with law enforcement officers.
 - Schools may work with the student reporting abuse to determine what setting they are comfortable speaking in and who they want present in the room.
 - Schools may make accommodations for the physical and intellectual needs of students. This may include having options to have interviews conducted through written or verbal communication and may mean allowing additional time for students who need it during the interview process.
 - Schools may provide written materials—policies, accommodations requests, etc.—in the student's primary language and/or have an interpreter available for students who communicate using American Sign Language or another visual language.

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The reporting procedure should be prominently publicized to all students, staff, volunteers, and parents/legal guardians. By making the policy and procedures readily available, the school works to ensure more equitable access to reporting and support systems. This also contributes to the overall climate of the school by letting students and staff know that dating violence is not acceptable behavior.

Model Policy Language:

Any written or oral reporting of an act of dating violence or abuse shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s). Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Implementation Guidance:

It is important that students are informed of all of their reporting options so that they can make the choices best for their circumstances. By allowing for multiple methods of reporting by students, administrators make it easier for students to access the support systems offered by the school. Students may feel overwhelmed by in-person reporting or fear being found out by the abuser or other classmates, making anonymous reporting a safer option for them.

Collection boxes can be made for anonymous reports and placed throughout the school. Administrators may wish to make these boxes available in places where it will not be obvious that a student is using the box to file a complaint. Some districts have established text or call in lines for reporting as well.

Section D

Model Policy Language

d. A procedure for the prompt investigation and disciplinary action of a report of dating violence or abuse and the persons responsible for the investigation:

Implementation Guidance:

A school has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to take immediate action to address the consequences of the violence that occurred and prevent its recurrence to the extent possible. The Florida Department of Education Teen Dating Violence Model Policy outlines a sample [Procedure for Investigating](#) dating violence or abuse within middle and high schools in a school district. A Title IX Coordinator can also assist with investigating reports of abuse.

If school personnel have knowledge of, or reasonably should know about, possible violence or other behaviors connected with dating violence, they should take prompt action to investigate, make a report to local authorities, coordinate with local law enforcement, and take the appropriate steps to the extent possible within the school environment to ensure the safety and well-being of the complainant (victim) and the school community.

Once a complaint has been received, whether written or oral, the designee can create a written complaint. Complaints should set forth the specific acts, conditions, and circumstances alleged to have occurred that may constitute dating violence. When the investigation has been completed, the principal or designee should compile a full written report of the complaint and the results of the investigation, which should describe all of the actions taken by the school to resolve the complaint.

Model Policy Language:

At each middle and high school in the district, the Procedures for Investigating dating violence or abuse include the following: The principal or designee selects a designee(s), employed by the school, trained in investigative procedures to initiate the investigation. The designee(s) may not be a relative of the accused perpetrator or victim.

Implementation Guidance:

By having a designee with training, it is more likely that investigations will be conducted in a similar and timely manner. In the event that the designee is a relative of the accused perpetrator or victim, an alternative investigator should be found. The principal may wish to determine who this person or persons will be before the need arises. This will help to decrease conflicts of interest or accusations of biased investigations.

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Model Policy Language:

Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses are conducted privately, separately, and are confidential. Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses) will be interviewed separately and at no time will the alleged perpetrator and victim be interviewed together.

Implementation Guidance:

If questions arise about confidentiality and mandatory reporting, the District may consult an attorney to help clarify the policy and implementation of the policy. This document is not legal advice.

The District may wish to keep these written records in a secure location separate from the students' academic files so that a student's experience of abuse is not shared automatically with other academic records. Record keeping should follow other district standards and protocols while keeping victim safety and confidentiality in mind.

Tips for interviewing a victim:

- Choose appropriate staff: Staff should have training on domestic violence, dating violence, and the district policy.
- Provide support to the student victim: This may be through a victim advocate or counselor.
- Consider the dynamics of abuse: Abuse is a pattern of behaviors that may include actions that are not against the discipline policy but are harmful to the victim.
- Work to ensure the victim does not need to repeat their story unnecessarily.

Model Policy Language:

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of youth involved in a dating violence or abuse complaint may be notified of the complaint, except if such notification is not in the best interest or impairs the safety of the students involved.

Implementation Guidance:

The principal/designee may wish to meet with the student(s) involved before notifying parents to determine if the student's safety would be impaired by notification. A student may deem it unsafe to notify their parents if the parents would be unsupportive or treat them poorly after learning of the relationship, including blaming the victim for the abuse or punishing the student for being in a relationship or in a relationship with that specific person. The victim may also be concerned about the perpetrator finding out about the report through their parents or guardians.

Model Policy Language

The maximum of 10 school days after the complaint shall be the limit between the initial filing of incidents and completion of the investigative procedural steps. The highest level of confidentiality

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possible will be upheld regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of teen violence and/or abuse, and the investigative procedures that follow.

Implementation Guidance:

Having a time limit ensures that investigations will be conducted promptly, which is in the best interest of the student. It is important that the victim be informed about the investigation process and given a timeline so that they have as much information about what will happen as they would like.

Model Policy Language

School employees shall refrain from sharing confidential student information with other school employees, students, or community members, unless disclosure is required by law or is necessary to protect the student's safety. Any notification made must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Implementation Guidance:

This includes ensuring that written files are kept securely and confidentially. The alleged perpetrator should not have access to information about the victim.

FERPA does not require a school to disclose all of a student's personal information to the parent/guardian, just the school record. In cases when a disclosure to a student's parent or guardian would put the student's health or safety at risk, the school should restrict such disclosures to the extent possible by law. The school may wish to work both with the student and with the district's legal support to determine what is appropriate to share.

Model Policy Language

If it is determined that dating violence or abuse has occurred, the designee will make recommendations for disciplinary action to the Principal or Superintendent.

Implementation Guidance:

This may include input from the victim about what may impact their safety. The District, principal, or designee may wish to contact the local certified domestic violence center to determine if offender services for teenagers are available locally.

Model Policy Language

Immediate action will be taken to eliminate the behavior. Disciplinary action will be taken immediately, based on the circumstances of the behavior(s).

Implementation Guidance:

The designee should be trained in the dynamics of dating violence to ensure that the survivor of the violence or abuse is not blamed for the behavior and actions of the perpetrator. Disciplinary action should be taken only against the perpetrator.

While most schools and districts have a disciplinary policy in place, there are some differences between dating violence and other types of infractions that are important to consider.

- Abuse is often a pattern of behaviors and actions that together are attempts to gain power and control over another person. Any one action may not constitute a violation of the disciplinary process, so it is important for the designee and other staff to understand the pattern and context of the behavior.
- Disciplinary procedures should work to ensure the safety of the victim.
- Procedures should involve the victim in the process without forcing them to interact with the perpetrator.
- Age and developmentally appropriate interventions for students who have engaged in abusive or violent behavior are important to prevent future abusive behavior.

Model Policy Language

If a crime has been committed, the police will be immediately notified. If the alleged act in violation of this policy is also the subject of an investigation by law enforcement, the investigation by the school shall proceed in full cooperation, and without interference, with the criminal investigation.

Whenever possible, face-to-face contact between the victim and alleged perpetrator should be avoided. If changes need be made, attention should be given to the victim's preference. The burden for any bus, classroom, or other schedule changes should be on the alleged perpetrator, not the victim.

Implementation Guidance:

A person who has been a victim of dating violence or abuse may have experienced trauma. They may act in a variety of ways as a result of the impact of this trauma. This could include being very vigilant of their surroundings and anxious or it could mean seeming detached and numb. Some students will express their emotions visibly through crying or yelling; others may be very quiet. It is important for educators and staff to recognize and understand the wide range of responses a person might have to a traumatic experience so they can be supportive of the student without punishing or disbelieving them because of the way their feelings manifest.

Having a confidential space to meet with students that is not too isolated can help students feel more comfortable. Ideally, this space would be physically safe, and students would be able to choose where to sit and whether to close the door.

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Throughout the process, remind the victim of the school's confidentiality policy and mandatory reporting (if necessary). This will support the student in understanding how and if their information will be shared and give them more choice in what to disclose.

Support the victim to participate in the process and have as much control over it as is possible. This could include discussions of discipline, accommodations, and intervention. Because abuse is about power and control, it is important for people working with someone who has experienced abuse to not take more power over the student.

Staff - in particular the designee - should also learn more about the dynamics of dating violence and the impacts of trauma to better respond to the needs of students and help to ensure that students feel safe and supported.

Safety planning is another tool utilized to support student victims and promote their safety. It should be understood that the responsibility for the violence always belongs to the perpetrator, whose actions may not be predictable. Districts should encourage school personnel, when responding to a teen dating violence incident, to develop a safety plan, in collaboration with the victim, which may include the following elements:

- The schedule(s) of staff person(s) that have been identified as a support system for the victim
- Routes to and from school
- Routes to and from classes
- A discussion of potential school-related problems/areas of concern and strategies for increasing safety: after-school activities, class trips, dances, etc
- A plan of action for the victim to follow if they encounter the alleged perpetrator outside of school: in a public place, on public transportation, at the victim's home, at the home of a friend, etc
- A list of resources: shelters, hotlines, agencies, advocates, and other services
- Follow-up meeting dates to review the situation and to make any necessary adjustments.

Schools should inform the victim's parent/guardian that a safety plan has been developed as well as the details of the safety plan unless this action would endanger the victim.

The organization *Love Is Respect* provides a worksheet that can be filled out by the student alone or with the support and assistance of school staff. It is important that the victim be able to adapt this plan in a way that works for them: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Teen-Safety-Plan.pdf>.

Schools are encouraged to access resources in the community that are available for teaching and supporting positive student behaviors and responding to the needs of students who have been hurt by violence or abuse or who have begun to use hurtful behaviors toward others.

Section E

Model Policy Language

e. A procedure for providing restraining orders to school resource officers/deputies:

Should a student or their guardian inform the School or the District that an order of protection has been issued, the designee will contact the abuser and his/her parents to initiate a Stay-Away-Agreement, consistent with the terms of the order, with penalties for known violations of the agreement. The principal or district administrator will notify law enforcement immediately if they have a reasonable belief that a criminal or civil restraining order has been violated. Campus police and/or security officers will respond immediately to a report of a violation of a criminal or a civil restraining order.

The school-based alternative to a legal protective order is called a Stay-Away-Agreement. The Stay-Away-Agreement provides a list of conditions that must be followed by the alleged perpetrator while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities. It is designed to ensure the safety of the victim.

The District encourages schools to administer Stay-Away-Agreements in a conference with the alleged perpetrator and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s). If the parent/guardian is unavailable or unwilling to attend the conference, the school may note this on the agreement. A Stay-Away-Agreement may include the following elements:

- A description of the relationship between the victim and alleged perpetrator.*
- A description of the violent incident(s): what, when, where, witnesses.*
- A list of behaviors that the alleged perpetrator may not do (i.e. talking to the victim, sitting near the victim, sending notes to the victim, etc.).*
- Schedule changes for the alleged perpetrator (to separate the victim and alleged perpetrator), including classes, lunch period, arrival and dismissal times, locker location, and extracurricular activities.*
- Notes on other disciplinary actions taken.*
- Disciplinary consequences if the alleged perpetrator violates the Stay-Away Agreement.*
- Dates during which the Stay-Away-Agreement is valid.*
- Date when the Stay-Away-Agreement will be reviewed.*

Implementation Guidance:

The Florida Department of Education Teen Dating Violence model policy outlines [Providing Stay-Away Orders](#), which provide a list of conditions that must be followed by the alleged perpetrator while on school grounds, on school transportation, or at school-sponsored activities. Local certified domestic violence centers can provide more information regarding dating violence injunctions for protection (legal stay-away order issued by a civil court to protect one student from another).

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A School Resource Officer, who works with school administrators to enforce the school disciplinary policy and also serves as the liaison with the local law enforcement community, can assist victims in developing school safety plans and working with administrators to carry out civil injunctions for protection, if one is in place. More information on School Resource Officers' role in teen dating violence can be found on the FCADV website in the [Law Enforcement section of the site](#).

A school-based Stay Away Agreement may be a good fit for students who do not want to or cannot receive an injunction for protection from the court system. Once a stay away agreement is in place, School Resource Officers and other designees should help to ensure that the perpetrator is adhering to the agreement and take any violations seriously.

Section F

Model Policy Language

f. A procedure to provide instruction and reasonable accommodations to the victim:

Requests for accommodations may be made orally or in writing to any school employee and these requests should be taken to the principal or principal's designee. If the request is made orally, the principal or designee shall document the request in writing. The school shall provide a written decision to the student as soon as possible, but in all cases a decision must be made within five school days of the request. A denial to a request for accommodation must include the reason(s) for the denial. All requests for accommodations should be kept strictly confidential. At no time shall the school personnel notify the alleged perpetrator of the student's request for accommodation, nor shall the school require the student to pursue a complaint against the alleged perpetrator through the school grievance process or the criminal justice system.

Implementation Guidance:

Though there is a time limit for the school to respond to requests, there should not be a time limit upon requests. Students may need weeks or months to determine what accommodations would make them feel safer, or abuse and harassment may restart after having stopped for a period of time. Accommodation requests should be taken seriously even if well after the initial investigation.

Model Policy Language:

All accommodations under this policy are voluntary; the student may choose to decline or rescind any accommodations at any time by notifying the principal or designee. 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.

Accommodations for safety shall be made even if the alleged perpetrator is not a student at the school or if the abuse occurred outside of school grounds.

The School or the District will provide a victim of dating violence or abuse with the following, based on the circumstances:

- *Stay-Away-Agreement: an agreement with the offender to stay away from the victim while on school grounds, on school transportation, and during school sponsored programs and events.*
- *Reasonable accommodations, such as class schedule changes, change of locker assignment, private space for meeting with school guidance counselor or other appropriate school personnel. If needed, the school will assist the student in creating an alternative education plan for the student such as transferring to a different school or the ability to make up school work missed due to dating violence.*
- *Security protection, such as safe egress/regress from school and within the school.*
- *Timely and comprehensive investigation of dating violence and abuse complaints.*

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- *Referrals for outside support and/or counseling.*
- *Information and assistance in securing interventions to address the behavior of abusers (e.g., empathy training, anger management).*
- *Information and assistance in securing intervention which includes assistance and support provided to parents/guardians, if deemed necessary and appropriate.*
- *Other actions determined appropriate under the circumstances.*

School districts should consider adopting the following methods of intervention with the alleged perpetrator:

- *Allow the alleged perpetrator to respond in writing to the allegations.*
- *Identify and implement disciplinary and other actions and consequences that will be taken to prevent further incidents.*
- *Refer the alleged perpetrator and parent(s)/guardian(s) to help and support available at the school and within the community.*
- *Address the seriousness of retaliations against the victim for reporting the incident or cooperating with the investigation. Inform the alleged perpetrator that retaliation or threats of retaliation in any form designed to intimidate the victim of dating violence or abuse, those who are witnesses, or those who investigate an incident, shall not be tolerated. In most cases, retaliation or a threat of retaliation will result in the imposition of a short or long-term suspension.*
- *Provide for increased supervision of the alleged perpetrator.*
- *Document the meeting and action plans on a complaint form.*

Implementation Guidance:

The list of possible accommodations is non-exclusive, meaning that alternative accommodations may be provided based on the needs of the victim. Only school employees involved in the request or needed to carry out the request need to be notified in order to protect the confidentiality of the student.

The purpose of the policy is to not place additional burdens on the victim. This includes not requiring the victim to pursue a civil injunction for protection but providing the option for an in-school stay away order.

Contact the local certified domestic violence center for additional community resources.

Section G

Model Policy Language:

g. A procedure for providing instruction to students in comprehensive health education including a teen dating violence or abuse component: *Members of the instructional staff of the public schools, subject to the rules of the State Board of Education and the district school board, shall teach all comprehensive health components listed in Section 1003.42, Florida Statutes, including a health education curriculum for students in grades 7 through 12 in the area of dating violence or abuse. This instruction shall include teen dating violence or abuse component that includes, but is not limited to, the definition of dating violence or abuse, the warning signs of dating violence or abusive behavior, the characteristics of healthy relationships, measures to prevent and stop dating violence or abuse, and community resources available to victims of dating violence or abuse. The curriculum chosen must also have an emphasis on prevention based education.*

Implementation Guidance:

Educators may access sample curricula that meet the statutory requirements on the FCADV webpage at: <http://www.fcadv.org/educators>. FCADV provides resource curricula for different age groups, supplementary materials, and teacher training modules to support implementation of the curricula.

In addition to curriculum sessions, there are various ways to incorporate prevention education into the school day and after-school hours. Youth-driven activities and youth-generated content can be powerful influencers and have the added benefit of being culturally and developmentally relevant, attractive, and accessible to teens in a particular school or community. Examples include:

- Using existing educational curricula, pop culture, video, discussion guides, and other resources to start a dialogue and to teach important relationship skills, as well as proactive bystander skills, in the classroom.
- Utilizing after-school time, study halls, or lunch breaks to bring students together for youth leadership and peer educator trainings; these groups may be led by students, school employees, or community-based organizations.
- Providing the opportunity for youth to explore the impact of violence and abuse in their own lives and to create scripts, poems, songs, public service announcements, art, theater, film, and other media to express themselves and influence their peers.

Section H

Model Policy Language:

h. A procedure for providing training teachers, staff and school administrators in the area of proper identification, investigation, and intervention of dating violence or abuse incidents that fall within the jurisdiction of the school, and for providing information to students and parents/guardians regarding this policy: *The district ensures that schools sustain healthy, positive, and safe learning environments for all students. It is important to change the social climate of the school and the social norms with regards to dating violence or abuse. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment – teachers, administrators, counselors, school nurses other non-teaching staff (such as bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, school resource officers, and/or instructional aides).*

Teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and other employees shall be provided training in the areas of the proper identification, investigation, and intervention of dating violence or abuse incidents that fall within the jurisdiction of the school.

Students, parents/legal guardians, teachers, and school volunteers shall be provided information at a minimum on an annual basis on the district's Policy and Procedures against dating violence or abuse. The information shall include evidence-based methods of preventing dating violence or abuse, as well as how to effectively identify and respond to dating violence or abuse incidents within the scope of the school.

Schools and school districts should utilize existing resources, including but not limited to, student support services staff (e.g. school social workers, school counselors) to assist in providing teen dating violence or abuse intervention and prevention training. Certified domestic violence centers can provide critical resources in understanding the dynamics of dating violence, training school staff, and providing advocacy to survivors of dating violence.

Implementation Guidance:

All staff should understand that they have a responsibility to foster a supportive, safe, positive learning environment for all students and that this includes the responsibility to intervene when witnessing harmful behavior and to not replicate this behavior themselves. To ensure that staff understand this responsibility and are able to take meaningful action to promote a healthy environment, staff should receive annual training. Annual training ensures that all new staff receive the information and that returning staff receive reminders and updated information as new material or policies become available. This also means that staff will more likely remember the policies and how to implement them as needed.

Training for Employees

Schools should provide annual training on the school teen dating abuse policy and on the topic of teen dating abuse, sexual violence, and stalking to all administrators, teachers, health staff, school resource officers/deputies, and all newly hired staff, as appropriate. It is recommended that a school staff person and a representative from a community agency that serves victims of domestic and/or sexual violence, such as a victim advocate, co-facilitate these trainings.

A basic school employee training should include, but is not to be limited to, the following topics:

- Definitions, basic principles, and warning signs of dating violence
- The health and academic impacts
- Trauma, including neurobiological impacts on youth
- The District's dating abuse policy and procedures
- Obstacles to reporting abuse
- Appropriate school-based interventions for dating abuse
- Appropriate ways to respond to disclosures of dating abuse from students
- Federal and state confidentiality and reporting requirements
- Responsibilities of school personnel under the District's policy concerning witnessing, receiving a disclosure, or suspecting that a student has been exposed to violence or is mistreating others
- Online and print resources, including classroom curricula, video, discussion guides, websites, and other resources addressing dating violence
- School-based and community services

Educators who present information on teen dating violence in the classroom should receive training on methods of teaching the dynamics of power and control in dating relationships, as well as strategies for effectively teaching teen dating violence prevention curriculum, from agencies in their local community who serve victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Schools should be encouraged to reach out to their local domestic violence center for support in providing annual workshops for school administrators, teachers, health educators, school nurses, and other staff. These workshops may include opportunities for staff to address incidents they have heard about or dealt with directly and discuss how to prevent and respond to teen dating violence issues in an appropriate and consistent way.

Providing Information to Students

Students should be provided with the District's teen dating abuse policy in the student handbook. Additionally, students should also be educated on how to report incidences or suspected incidences of dating violence, as well as the possible accommodations for targeted students of teen dating violence. The District may wish to include a detailed and developmentally-appropriate explanation of the mandated reporting policy in the student handbook or other student-read material so that students are aware of what will happen if they disclose information that leads to a mandated report.

Providing Information to Parents/Guardians

Districts should encourage schools to work with local domestic violence centers to sponsor parent/guardian workshops to educate parents/guardians on the issues of teen dating violence and sexual violence. The workshops might cover topics such as how to recognize the warning signs of dating violence in teens, what parents/guardians can do to help their teens learn how to have a safe and healthy relationship, and what resources can help parents/guardians find support for their teen, if they are experiencing dating violence.

Districts should encourage schools to provide parents/guardians and the community at large with information on what the school's teen dating violence policy is, where they can go for help if their child is a victim, and what they can do to address the issues of teen dating violence. Strategies can include social media, dedicating a section of the school website to violence prevention, and anonymous reporting, and written materials that are sent home with students should be developed for reaching parents who do not regularly attend school events.

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Resources

The following resources provide valuable additional information about teen dating violence, developing and implementing school dating violence policies, and prevention of dating violence. These were all instrumental in the development of this guide.

Florida Department of Education

Model Policy:

<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/3/urlt/finalteendatingviolencemodelpolicy9910.pdf>

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Local Certified Domestic Violence Centers: <https://www.fcadv.org/centers>

Educators' Resources: <https://www.fcadv.org/educators>

Teens and Youth: <https://www.fcadv.org/projects-programs/teens-and-youth>

Break the Cycle

Framework for Developing a School Policy:

https://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20Guide%20FINAL%20_0.pdf

Sample Model Policy: <https://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/pdf/dc-model-school-policy.pdf>

Resources for Schools: <https://www.breakthecycle.org/working-schools>

Futures Without Violence

School and District Policies to Increase Safety:

http://startstrong.futureswithoutviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/FWV_StartStrongPolicies_R4.pdf

Department of Education

The Department of Education's guidance document, "Title IX Grievance Procedures: An Introductory Manual," <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED135296>

Love is Respect

Teen Safety Plan: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Teen-Safety-Plan.pdf>