Promoting Healthy Teen Relationships For Adolescents with Disabilities

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Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence
Center for Healthy Teen Relationships
Overview

• What we believe
• Prevalence of adolescents with physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities
• Relationship abuse and sexual assault
• Intersection of disability and relationship abuse and sexual assault
• Parents/Caregivers
• Comprehensive Prevention Strategies
Adolescents with Chronic Medical Conditions & Disabilities

- Number of youth has increased over the past four decades\(^1\)
  - Over 10 million children and 5 million young adults.
- Frequency of chronic medical conditions increases with age
  - 16% of youth 12-17 years old
  - 45% of adults 18-64 years old

Adolescents with Mental Disabilities

1 in every 4 to 5 youths meet criteria for a lifetime mental disorder that is associated with severe role impairment and/or distress.\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSM-IV Disorders</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Adolescents with Severe Impairment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood Disorders</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Disorders</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Disorders</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IDEA

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- 13.2% of students served in 2008-2009
- From 2003 – 2009
  - ↓ in overall percentage of students with disabilities being served in programs (13.7 to 13.2%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disability</th>
<th>Change in Percentage of Children Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>↑ from 1.0 to 1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Delays</td>
<td>↑ from 0.3 to 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>↓ from 5.8 to 5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Impairments</td>
<td>↑ from 1.0 to 1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schools & Adolescents with Disabilities

• What does school for adolescents with disabilities look like in your community?
• Impact of the segregating teens with disabilities into special education programs or specialized classes.
• Closed communities – Schools For Deaf Students
Adolescents with IEPs

- Individual Education Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools &amp; Students with Individual Education Plans¹</th>
<th>Percentage of secondary schools with at least 1 IEP</th>
<th>Percent of secondary Students with an IEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IEPS

- Written statement
- Measurable annual goals
- Transition services - living skills
- Functional skills of daily living
  - Healthy relationships?
What We Believe

- Promoting healthy adolescent relationships knowledge and skills is how we can reduce relationship abuse and sexual assault.
It’s Not Your Mother’s Version of Dating

• Early adolescence is a critical time when the promotion of healthy teen relationships must begin for all young people

• Relationship Spectrum
Scope of the Problem

- Adolescent girls are more likely than adult women to be victims of intimate partner violence and to suffer both minor and severe injuries as a result of that violence (Davis, 2008).

- Rates of physical, emotional or verbal abuse experienced by adolescent girls greatly exceed estimates of other youth exposure to violence. (Davis, 2008).
Scope of the Problem (2)

• 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 7 men who experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, first experienced some form of violence between 11 and 17 years of age” (CDC, 2011, p. 49).

• Almost half of all female victims who have been raped, experienced their first rape before age 18 (30% between 11 and 17) (CDC, 2011).
Scope of the Problem (3)

• One in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

• Nearly one in ten of high school students nationwide were hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend (CDC, 2011)
Impact of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

- Adolescent victims of physical dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors … engaging in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide (Futures Without Violence, 2009).
Impact of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault (2)

- Girls who reported dating violence were also more likely to report sad/hopeless feelings and consider suicide (Futures Without Violence, 2010).

- Victims of sexual assault are more likely to suffer from depressing, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, abuse alcohol, abuse drugs, and contemplate suicide (RAINN).
Intersection of Adolescents with Disabilities & Sexual Violence

• Sexual Violence
  – Cheng & Udry, 2002
    • Adolescents with disabilities higher risk
    • Females: with vs. without disability twice as likely
      – 12 vs. 6%
  – Alriksson-Schmidt et al., 2009
    • Females with physical disability at an increased risk
    • Females: with vs. without disability twice as likely
      – 19.6% vs. 9.4
Intersection of Adolescents with Disabilities & Relationship Abuse

- 60% of adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities who had been in romantic relationships reported interpersonal violence, with no gender differences noted (Ward et al. 2010).

- Adolescents with Intellectual disabilities reported more victimization (Weiss et al., 2011)
Parents/Caregivers
Parents/Caregivers (2)

– Concerned about
  • Sexual activity
  • Drug and alcohol abuse
  • Media and violence

– Not concerned about
  • Abusive relationships

  – Hart Research, Start Strong National Initiative
Parents’ View Abusive Relationships As Less of a Problem in Start Strong Communities and Nationwide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Start Strong Communities</th>
<th>Nationwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having sex too early</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence/sex in media</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal drug use/abuse</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online bullying, rumor spreading, sexting</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen pregnancy</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use/abuse</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to be in romantic relationship</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy/abusive romantic relationship</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale; Hart Research Associates 2009
Adolescents with Disabilities & Healthy Sexuality

• What does healthy sexuality look like for adolescents with disabilities?
• Parental concerns for regarding sexuality
What can you do?

• Build on your strengths to reduce adolescent dating abuse and sexual assault for adolescents with disabilities

• Develop and implement a comprehensive adolescent dating abuse and sexual assault prevention programming
What can you do? (2)

- Empower young people to be part of the solution and as influencers
- Move at the speed of young people
- Innovation
Be Part of the Solution

- Foster parent/teen attachment
- Invest in adult champions in and out of schools
- Engagement at each level of the socio-ecological model
Socio-Ecological Framework

- Education – State, District and local secondary school level - IEPS
- Disability Advocacy Groups
- Youth Organizations
- Parent Organization
- Social Service Agencies
- Health Care Systems
- Juvenile Court Systems
- Community mental health
- Risk Behavior Advocacy

Engaging Communities on Values and Norms Promoting Healthy Relationships
- Respect
- Equality
- Safety
- Honesty & Trust
- Individuality
- Support
- Acceptance
- Communication
- Caring
- Space

- Parent/Caregivers
- Older Teen Influencers
- Other Adult Influencers

Engaging youth
Overview of Core Strategies

- Engage and educate youth
- Supporting adolescents
- Engage and educate teen influencers – parents!
- Change policy and environmental factors
- Effective youth-driven communications and social marketing strategies
What can you do? (3)

• Engage and educate middle and high school students with disabilities in school and out of school
Healthy Relationship Curricula

Universal Curricula – Middle School
- Fourth R
- Safe Dates

Targeted Curricula – Adolescents with Disabilities
- No adaptations
Talk to Adolescents with Disabilities About Healthy Relationships!

- Talk to young people with disabilities about dating (and sex!)
- Don’t Restrict Your Dating Options
- Be Confident in Yourself
- Be Positive
What can you do? (4)

Support adolescents who are at increased risk for involvement in dating abuse and/or sexual assault.
What can you do? (5)

- Educate parents, caregivers, and adult influencers
What can parents/caregivers do?

• Support healthy dating & sexual development of youth with disabilities
• POWER Approach
  (National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth)
• Preparation, Open Attitudes, Where Are You?, Exposure, and Reality Check
What can you do? (6)

- Design and implement prevention policies and environmental factors to create social change
- Secondary school policies
- School, district & state levels
- Community – disability organizations, health, youth and social services - policies
Policy Works!

• Promote Effective Prevention & Response Policies
• Promote healthy relationship behaviors among all students.
• Create a safer more respectful learning environment (a positive school climate) and
• Highlight the importance and normality of healthy relationships.
Policy Works! (2)

- **Elements of Effective Policies**
- Definitions of key terms
- Positive expectations for adolescent relationships
  - what is expected of students
  - focus on positive behaviors
  - expectations for bystanders
  - clear guidance
Policy Works! (3)

- Elements of Effective Policies
- Primary prevention coordinator/point of contact
- Youth engagement.
- Parent/caregiver and community engagement
- Awareness and notice of policy
Policy Works! (4)

Elements of Effective Policies

• Training school personnel prevention education curricula
• Adult and peer reporting mechanism, documentation, and confidentiality
• Early intervention and treatment in addition to response
• Social norms change through communication strategies
• Monitoring
What can you do? (7)

Youth-led communication and marketing strategies
National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month

- **Love What’s Real** toolkit mailing to 400+ Idaho secondary schools

- **Love What’s Real Challenge** – high schools with 30 bonus points for activities done by high school students in middle schools

- **Love What’s Real Poetry Contest**

- **Power of Words**
Love What’s Real
Poetry Contest
Power of Words
Youth-led Communication Strategies

Youth-led Communication Strategies

FACE-TO-FACE In face-to-face contact you have the best possible reception. That doesn’t mean that talking about break-ups is going to be easy, but you both will have a better chance of understanding each other’s feelings and communicating your own. It’s important to use body language and tone of voice to help get your message across without miscommunication.

PHONE: phone calls are amazing tools that help us stay in touch with the people we care about. Unfortunately, they are not the best tool for ending relationships. They all have some controversy, where you can verbally communicate feelings and thoughts, and hear tone of voice, but the problem is that there can be miscommunication — slain hang-ups, zero body language information, a lack of privacy and lost reception.

TEXT: Sending a text in an effective way of communicating a message. However, it is not the best way to communicate during a break-up. It can be hard to tell if someone is lying, happy or angry from an email. The person you’re trying to communicate with may not read your message. The reception is dependent on what the other person thinks is meant by each word or phrase or idea. Also, once something is sent, it is very hard to take it back or explain away the miscommunication.

SOCIAL NETWORKS: You’re breaking up, and you want the whole wide world to know? Posting something hurtful on Facebook is the last thing you should do. Someone may feel good for a moment, but no one will really hear your message clearly, especially the person who made it understand. Even if you or did something hurtful to cause the break-up, posting hurtful messages tells others more about you and how you treat others.

UR BREAKING UP!? This way you communicate often determines how well your message is received. This is especially true when you are breaking-up. Use this tool to help you pick the best strategy for being heard. Like the reception bars on your phone, the more bars you have the stronger and cleaner your message will be.
Adolescents with Disabilities in Popular Culture Activity
Popular Culture Communication Strategies
Youth-led Communication Strategies (2)

Hunger Games –
March 23, 2012
Lessons Learned

- Everyone need to be part of the solution – especially youth with disabilities!
- Successful Prevention Requires a Multi-Faceted Approach
- Identifying and Utilizing Influencers is Key
  - Foster parent/teen attachment
  - Older teens
- Schools are Focal Points for Youth - Middle School Matters
Lessons Learned (2)

• Social Media and Mobile Technologies are Key Communications Tools
• Youth- Informed Programs are Crucial
• Popular Culture has teachable moments!
• Move at the speed of young people
• Be fearless
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