

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations

*for*

- Teens
- Parents
- School Personnel
- Mental Health Professionals and School Counselors
- Physicians and Health Care Professionals
- Judges and Court Personnel
- Victim Attorneys and Prosecutors
- Law Enforcement Officers
- Domestic Violence Organizations

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Teens

## VICTIMS, ABUSERS, SIBLINGS, FRIENDS AND BYSTANDERS

- Respect yourself and respect others. *Do it!*
- Don't be silent about teen dating violence.
- If you suspect someone is a victim, encourage them to find help.
  - *Support them to tell someone they trust.*
- If you suspect someone is an abuser tell them to tell someone they trust and get help!  
*Don't wait!*
- Without being judgmental, *listen*, so you can find out what the problem is.
  - *Don't cut them off.*
- Seek advice/training from an organization that addresses teen dating violence to learn how you can help a victim, ensure the victim's safety, and stay safe yourself!
- Help them realize there is a problem.
- Tell the victim they "deserve respect."
- Give the victim sincere compliments to help restore their self-confidence.
- Tell the victim, "It's not your fault."
- Tell the victim that there is never a reason to stay if they feel afraid, unhappy or abused.
- Encourage the victim to speak up and speak out for themselves.
- Make yourself available to the victim if they need you.
- Keep in contact with the person – it will let them know you're supporting them and that they're not alone.
- Be prepared to find appropriate help for the victim if you need to.
  - *Contact an adult whom you trust and you feel can help.*
- Help the victim make safety plans.
  - *Help them decide on a safe, public place to go.*
  - *Make sure they keep a trusted friend's phone number close by.*
  - *Help them create a password that, when used, is a signal that they need help.*

- Encourage the victim to keep a set of clothes at a friend's house.
- Always have a cell phone with you, in case they need you.
- If you're a victim, keep a cell phone handy in the event you need help.
- Raise awareness – Make it known that teen dating violence can happen to anyone, and that it can occur in different forms.
- Ask for or create school or community support groups with the guidance of an adult who is knowledgeable on the issue – leaders should be teens/students.  
The groups themes should be:
  - *Stay Strong!*
  - *Choose Respect!*
  - *Expect Respect!*
- Have support groups available so the abuser has someone to talk to as well.
  - *Guys to guys groups*
  - *Girls to girls groups*
- Tell friends and family about the warning signs.
- Support the “it takes a village” idea:
  - *Educate your community about the warning signs.*
  - *Involve your community in awareness and prevention.*
  - *‘Talk it up’ to everyone.*
  - *Don’t stop talking about it!*

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Parents

## DUAL PARENTS, SINGLE PARENTS, FOSTER PARENTS, LEGAL GUARDIANS

- Spend quality time with your teen – You’ll be amazed what you learn!
- Talk to your teens daily – ask about their day. *Listen, Listen, Listen!*
- Be willing to hear the good and bad about your teen.
- It’s okay if young people get mad when you ask questions – *Don’t stop asking!*
  - *But don’t badger your teen or their friends for information or answers – there’s a fine line!*
  - *And don’t press on an issue every day!*
- Give your child space to grow and discover who they are, but don’t close your eyes and ears completely.
- Give your teen positive feedback, make them feel good about themselves, and build up your teen’s confidence.
- Don’t pre-judge your teen’s friends.
  - *Be open-minded!*
- Be comfortable talking about ‘uncomfortable’ subjects. If you’re not, become comfortable by getting the necessary information and becoming educated.
  - *Find a way to bring up matters that your teen is hesitant to discuss.*
- Consider the idea that what you’re saying to your teen may not fit the current situation and/or the existing teen culture.
  - *Your perception of things may be wrong, so be willing to listen if your teen wants to tell you how things really are.*
- Start talking to your kids about healthy relationships when you first notice their interest in serious dating.
  - *Be aware of what’s going on, early on in your teen’s relationships.*
  - *Educate them about their rights and responsibilities as a teen who is beginning to date.*
- Communicate to your male and female children that both sexes are equal.
- Dads, don’t be “chauvinistic” – Show your sons how to treat women by how you treat your wife, your mother, your daughter, and other women.
  - *Treat your daughter in the same way you would like them to be treated by others.*

- Be a role model for your teen on issues such as sobriety, your personal relationship with your spouse or others.
  - *Show by example, even with the little things, such as saying “please” and “thank you.”*
- Tell your teen stories about your own life and your similar experiences.
- Talk with your kids about life’s possible negative experiences, and how to avoid them.
- Don’t use your poor relationship with your own parents as an excuse for being a bad parent to your child. *Get in there!*
- Establish a trusting relationship with your child. That way, if you ever need to talk about things like dating violence they will talk with you and trust you to do the right thing for them.
  - *Beware of the trust issue: Teens are afraid to talk to their parents about their relationships, especially if they’re abusive relationships.*
  - *If they show you they trust you with their secret by opening up to you, be careful how you react to and treat the information they’ve given you.*
  - *Don’t blow things out of proportion just because you don’t know about the issue.*
- Just because you know the other family, don’t assume everything is okay between your teen and their boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Don’t tell a teen “no,” or not to do something “just because,” with no explanation.
- Communicate with your teen about the possible connection between drinking, drug abuse and violent relationship behavior.
- Talk to your teen about the web sites they visit.
- Be a ‘detective’ without violating your kid’s privacy.
  - *Don’t just snoop: You should have ‘probable cause’ to penetrate their privacy.*
  - *Don’t jump to conclusions.*
- Be careful not to create a ‘friendship’ with your teen: Teens usually want (and need) you to be their parent – *not* their friend.
  - *If you are extremely close with your teen, know when to be a parent versus being your child’s friend.*
- If your teen seems angry or depressed, figure out why.
- Don’t be closed-minded about information you find because you don’t feel that it is directly related to your teen’s situation – you might miss something important or something that is related to their relationship that you aren’t aware of.

- Get educated on the extreme warning signs of teen dating violence (such as self-mutilation, thoughts of suicide, etc.)
  - *These are extreme situations and you should seek professional help immediately.*
- Try to work it out with your child first before asking someone else to help.
  - *Outside help may not work right away.*
- If you suspect your teen needs counseling, you may need to find a counselor outside of your area, because of your child's privacy/confidentiality concerns.
  - *Teens may be resistant to counseling so work with someone appropriate to locate a counselor your teen will work with.*
  - *If you decide counseling is needed, know that many teens prefer group counseling to individual counseling.*
  - *You may need to find counseling for a Native American teen off the reservation to relieve any pressure caused by the teen's confidentiality concerns, given the closed nature of the reservation community.*
    - *It might help to contact the Social Services Department of the closest Area Office of The Bureau of Indian Affairs or the closest Indian Health Service Hospital to seek assistance finding a counselor located off the reservation.*
    - *As a complement to professional assistance, you may want to consider traditional help within the tribe. For example, you may want to seek the assistance of a traditional healer.*
- Be aware of other possible resources.
  - *Relatives (especially grandparents) can be an effective resource, depending on your relationship with them, and their relationship with the teen.*
  - *Religious resources alone may or may not be effective when you need help. If you are pressured to keep quiet, insist on getting the appropriate help!*
- Talk to your kid's teachers because they may confide in a teacher they trust.
  - *Attend parent-teacher conferences and ask questions about any noticeable changes in your teen's behavior.*
- Talk to other parents in the community about what kids are doing; you may get information about your teen and/or their boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Help your community get the necessary resources to create Teen Centers, so kids have something constructive to do.
  - *Explore possible resources through the school system and the internet.*

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for School Personnel

**“SCHOOL PERSONNEL” INCLUDES:** All teachers, coaches, principals, administrators, secretaries, school nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, computer lab staff, teacher aides, teacher substitutes, paraprofessionals, media center staff, school resource officers, maintenance engineers, cafeteria workers, security personnel, parking lot attendants, probation officers, bus drivers, parent/guardian volunteers, and community resource personnel who come on campus.

- Work with your students to **clearly** define teen dating violence and then educate the student body about it.
  - *Educate your students as often as possible, but at least annually in an event that really draws attention to the issue. Please!*
- Schools should employ teachers whose actions show their *priority* is the kids – not just on paper, or during official meetings, but *all* the time!
- A ‘cool teacher’ will recognize when a student is acting out for attention, and then give them the appropriate attention they need. *Some kids need a little extra help and a self-esteem boost!*
- If you are interested in being the ‘cool teacher’ that students come to for help and advice concerning their relationships, you should have the following qualities and abilities:
  - *Passion about what you are doing;*
  - *Awareness and training concerning cultural differences, so you don’t wrongly interpret issues, or exacerbate or create unwarranted problems;*
  - *The desire to create ways that enable students to recognize their connections with **others**;*
  - *The ability to be a good listener (a ‘cool teacher’ won’t give the impression that they are too busy or not interested in the students);*
  - *The determination to find out what students need from their teachers and then show them you care about them by acting accordingly;*
  - *The ability to initiate a casual conversation with students, while showing that you are genuinely interested in them;*
  - *The willingness to invite student opinions and feedback and then respond to them;*
  - *The desire to encourage students to share their good and bad experiences;*
  - *A quality that enables you to show admiration for the ideas and activities your students are committed to;*
  - *The determination to give students individual and special attention;*
  - *Sensitivity to recognize when a student is upset and ask them what the problem is;*
  - *The ability to be respectful of students’ feelings (you don’t put down kids’ feelings by saying*

*things like, “You’re too young to really love someone.”);*

- *A flexible nature, but consistent about the school’s discipline policies;*
  - *The ability to enforce classroom policies that require students treat each other respectfully;*
  - *A non-judgmental character;*
  - *The ability to maintain your adult demeanor instead of becoming the students’ equal.*
- Make your classroom a comfortable place for your students to come and talk to you about sensitive issues like teen dating violence. (A desk full of papers doesn’t look like you have the time to talk.)
  - Create opportunities for students to speak out about things. If they have a serious problem, this may be the opportunity they seize to ask for help.
    - *Be sensitive about students who are reluctant about working with other students (you may want to investigate why they feel that way).*
    - *Find non-embarrassing ways to bring shy or reluctant students into the group. By doing that, you might be helping them to find a friend or solve a problem!*
    - *Provide a welcoming opportunity for kids to talk one-on-one with teachers. Be sure all the students know about it!*
    - *Create a teacher-planned period when teens can talk in confidence, in a relaxed place.*
    - *Explore ways to create confidential methods for students to get help, such as granting special passes so students can more easily have chats with teachers or participate in peer group discussions.*
  - Increase awareness of teen dating violence as a real problem that can occur anywhere and to any type of teen.
    - *Ensure awareness information addresses cultural differences and needs.*
  - Choose a creative theme to help teach about teen dating violence prevention at the school.
  - Be sensitive to other school personnel and aware that they too may need help/instruction/resources because they might have experienced dating violence in their own lives.
  - Ensure school personnel are educated and trained on the following issues:
    - *There are cultural differences in the appearance of teen dating violence, as well as different approaches to prevention. School personnel should be trained well concerning cultural issues so they can handle situations effectively for every teen in the school.*
    - *When dealing with teens, including Native American teens in rural areas, school personnel must also be aware and sensitive to cultural differences in terms of socio-economic conditions, which are often heightened in rural America and can play a significant role in a teen’s well-being on a multitude of levels – including issues associated with teen dating violence.*



- *When dealing with Native American teens, understand that differences revolve around tribalism. To ‘outsiders’ this can be problematic because you will often be dealing with a very closed community.*
  - *There are possible legal ramifications if a teen dating violence incident occurs on school grounds.*
  - *School personnel are mandated reporters in certain matters, so teachers must learn about their state laws and the issues involved if a student tells them personal information.*
    - *School personnel should consider the ability to change state laws to improve the situation for teens.*
    - *School personnel should find ways to honor their student’s trust in them.*
    - *School personnel should be encouraged to support meaningful changes so teens will be more likely to come to them for help (such as privacy issues).*
  - *High-quality, developmentally appropriate instructional materials (such as videos of people’s actual stories) to teach teens about teen dating violence and its dangers are effective teaching tools.*
  - *The indicators of teen dating violence—including both the obvious and less obvious signs of an abusive relationship.*
  - *Teen dating violence has a negative impact on a teen’s ability to learn.*
  - *Hostile environments discourage kids from seeking help and may even harm their ability to learn.*
  - *Sexual harassment demeans a person and is extremely disrespectful.*
  - *Students need to be taken seriously, supported, and helped when they need it.*
  - *Appropriately addressing students’ fear of losing friends if they come forward to report a victimization they suspect or know about.*
  - *The importance of encouraging classroom discussions on proper relationship behaviors.*
- Training materials need to be about real life-incidents, (not mock ‘imaginary’ trials or other portrayals by obvious actors, or actors who are obviously not teens).
  - School personnel must be educated to recognize their responsibility to youth so they take action when they see something, or when something is reported to them.
  - School officials must make and appropriately enforce specific school policy about what is NOT acceptable (e.g. pinching, patting and smacking butts or ‘kneeing’ guys in the groin).
  - Demand that students treat each other with respect at all times.
  - Prevent language in school that dehumanizes and sexually objectifies people.

- Address behaviors that desensitize kids and can set the stage for serious forms of abusive behaviors, such as sexual harassment.
- Talk to students about personal responsibility.
  - *Explain to your students that they may be sending mixed messages when the way they dress doesn't show they're choosing and expecting respect!*
- Have school dress codes and enforce them.
- Stress the responsibility of bystanders when a teen dating violence incident occurs.
- Help develop teen dating violence awareness activities within school adolescent health clubs and other teen-focused clubs and organizations.
- If appropriate for the school, consider using certain forms of surveillance. It may help a frightened student feel safe and secure.

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Mental Health Professionals and School Counselors

- Work to develop young people's trust.
  - *Listen, listen, listen, and always be there for us!*
  - *Don't deny or diminish our feelings.*
- When counseling, use the teen's first name.
- Talk with teens *about* their problems – don't talk *to* them.
- Clarify “confidentiality,” including the fact that the mental health professional may be required to report some things to the authorities, regardless of the teen's wishes.
  - *It's not OK to talk to others about specific issues that certain students have, unless the issues discussed are life-threatening, possibly harmful to others, or unless the teen has given you permission to do so.*
  - *“I told a counselor something and it got around the school because a counselor told a teacher.” If a teen says that, it's unacceptable! It destroys trust and is in conflict with the idea of ‘confidentiality.’*
- School counselors or another member of school personnel should be available and willing to listen to students.
  - *Be there for the teens at all times: Not just at your convenience;*
  - *Be non-judgmental;*
  - *Give good advice to the best of your knowledge and training;*
  - *If they need it, help the student to create a safety plan;*
  - *Make appropriate referrals to outside experts, when necessary.*
- Get into our business! Sometimes we're saying, “I don't have the willpower to tell anyone else, and that's why I'm coming to you for help.”
- Understand that some things *need* adult intervention, but also that adult intervention can be more harmful than helpful if it not fully informed.
  - *You should be trained concerning how to counsel teens from various cultural backgrounds. Or, know about the community resources available to teens from different cultures.*
  - *It would be helpful if counselors would have a list of other counselors in the area who are from different cultures so when a teen needs help, you can refer them to someone who is best suited to deal with their needs.*

- *If a Native American teen who lives on a reservation needs help, you may want to find counseling for them off the reservation to relieve any pressure caused by the teen's confidentiality concerns, given the closed nature of the reservation community. It might help to contact the Social Services Department of the closest Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the closest Indian Health Service Hospital to seek assistance.*
- Stay interested *and* involved in teens' lives. Keep up on what's going on!
  - *Establish appropriate relationships with ALL the students.*
  - *Continue to ask questions, and work to develop and maintain the students' trust.*
  - *Don't be surprised that teen dating violence happens in your community.*
    - *Someone who is involved and really cares won't say, "I had no idea teens deal with this."*
- Know what kids listen to, then listen to, know and understand the lyrics.
  - *Talk with teens about lyrics that demonstrate disrespectful, hurtful or illegal behavior.*
- Know the slang to understand what's going on so, if you need to, you can help.
- Be trained to recognize the warning signs.
- Understand the types of dating violence warning signs that many teen peers ignore. Overlooking the behaviors makes it difficult for teens to recognize or understand what is happening when a violent action actually *does* take place.
  - *Holding down, pushing, pulling, slapping, pulling hair, or controlling what the other person does or says are serious indicators of an abusive relationship.*
- Recognize the problem:
  - *This kind of abuse really happens... and it happens to all types of teens!*
  - *Girls and guys are being abused.*
  - *Teens hit other teens, and it's not right.*
  - *People who witness the violence don't stop it because they experience it too or they don't know how to help.*
- Don't be swayed when some students insist, "It doesn't happen in *our* school," or "It doesn't happen to anyone *I* know."
  - *Sometimes certain groups of students might think they're better than others and don't want to admit it can happen to them or someone they know...or admit that it actually **did** happen.*
- Educate students on warning signs and human dignity issues.
  - *Educate both guys and girls!*
  - *Help teens realize how serious teen dating violence is (Teens have died in violent relationships!), and how it's not right in so many ways.*

- Educate males and females about what ‘being a respectable male’ really means (or should mean), and that it does not include violence or control over others.
- Help teens set down rules for ‘good relationships.’
- Stress to all teens that it’s never OK to be hit.
- Help the teen understand the problem and possible solutions.
  - *Don’t tell teens what they feel or what they “have to do.”*
- Ask teens questions such as, “How long has this been going on?” and “Are you OK in your relationship?”
- Intervene appropriately if the student *feels* they are in danger, if you *sense* they are in danger...and especially if you *know* they are in danger.
  - *Your policy should be: If a student feels they are in danger, immediately help the student develop a safety plan.*
  - *Figure out the safest intervention methods and involve appropriate others to ensure intervention is safe and effective.*
- Work with teens to create prevention and intervention strategies.
  - *Most of the time teens go to their friends for help and advice, but stress to teens that their ability to help is less effective than the type of help an adult can provide.*
  - *Ensure the teens in your school receive appropriate and sound advice about how to help effectively, yet be safe themselves.*
- When counseling teens, don’t say: young men, young women, adolescent, teenager, youth, kids now days.
- When counseling teens, do say: teen, student, young people, young adults...and our first names.
- Tell us what our options are.
  - *What we can do to get out of it?*
  - *What should we say when we’re trying to end it?*
  - *What resources might we need?*
- Counselors should give the teen an information card with useful phone numbers, in case they need to call for help or want someone to talk too.
  - *It would help if there were more hotline numbers!*
  - *The information you give them should be culturally appropriate so it’s effective. This is especially helpful for students whose primary language isn’t English.*

- Teach teens to speak up!
  - *Encourage the experienced teens, who are comfortable talking about their situations, to go public with their stories about teen dating violence. Their stories can help other victims and abusers.*
  - *Encourage teens to talk to other teens when they see abuse taking place.*
  
- Get on the national agenda for a nationwide conference on high school reform, to address:
  - *Students' social/emotional health;*
  - *Appropriate and effective school discipline policies;*
  - *Quality school staff training that appropriately equips them to teach students about life skills and proper relationship building;*
  - *The creation of school systems that foster positive changes in teen culture.*
  
- Educate the community about teen dating violence, and how to be responsible to the needs of the kids – and to the schools' needs as well.
  - *Ensure your method of giving advice is culturally appropriate. For instance, on Indian reservations, the governing body of the Tribe (often called the Tribal Council) should be educated about teen dating violence and given prevention recommendations.*

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Physicians and Health Care Professionals

- Do what is appropriate to make your patient feel comfortable to talk with you.
  - *If the teen patient requests it, have their parent(s) leave the exam room.*
- Ask all your teen patients open-ended questions.
  - *“How’s school?”*
  - *“Are you dating (going out with) anyone?”*
- Don’t immediately ask pointed questions up front.
  - *E.g. “Did someone hurt you?”*
- Lead into the general issue of teen dating violence.
  - *Then give your teen patient helpful information, such as something explaining the warning signs.*
- Doctors should explain “confidentiality” up front to their teenage patients, including the fact that they may be required to report certain things to the authorities, regardless of the teen’s wishes.
- Doctors should understand that teens are concerned about confidentiality concerning sexual activity and substance abuse.
- Understand that teens are reluctant to tell a doctor about illegal behavior or any information that could get back to their parents/family. Some of the issues are:
  - *‘Dr. as a family friend’ is a problem that may keep teens from being honest with you.*
  - *Teens want their parents to think they’re OK so it’s very hard for a teen to tell their parents if they are in an abusive relationship*
  - *One suggested approach is: “What you’ve said makes me concerned. I want to get help for you, and to do that I think we need to talk to your parents and find treatment,” etc.*
- Some teens don’t care if the doctor talks to their parents as long as the teen doesn’t have to tell their parents about the problem – but you should know that before you discuss issues with parents.

- If needed, the doctor should refer the teen patient to a qualified counselor/therapist.
- The doctor's office should be a source of information for teens.
  - *The doctor should give the patient a list of teen-appropriate hotlines and support groups*
- It's embarrassing for teens if they have to pick up pamphlets with titles about certain teen issues, like "Teen Dating Violence," or "Herpes," etc. Instead, have information in your office for teens with a general title like "Today's Teen," with small sub-topics relating to teen dating violence and other important teen issues.
  - *Information should include topics concerning abstinence, STDs, substance abuse, and other issues teens deal with today.*
  - *The information in your office should include helpful phone numbers and other resources so teens can get help with relationship problems.*
    - *The information you provide should be helpful to all teens, so please make sure it's culturally appropriate for your area!*
- Doctors should be sure that appropriate medical information for teens is posted in medical building elevators, in the doctor's front office, on exam room walls, in hospitals, on bathroom doors in public restrooms, and in the school nurse's office.
- Develop a gender-neutral, very cool, media campaign targeting youth, concerning teen dating violence.
- Doctors should perform follow-up with child abuse victims, since many older victims of violence often suffered child abuse too.



# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Judges and Court Personnel

- All teen dating violence cases should be heard in an official juvenile or family court.
- In cases involving youth, the victim should be treated as *most important* – not as a silent participant, or observer in their own circumstances.
- Judges should not assume that only females are victims and only males are perpetrators.
- Judges should require the submission of accurate and thorough reports by everyone involved in a teen dating violence case.
  - *Insist the reports include language about the abusive act and other important things, like body language.*
  - *During sentencing, judges should make sure they have all information involved in each case.*
- Judges should be aware of cultural differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create additional legal problems.
- Judges should require the police officer involved in the case to appear in court as a witness.
- Judges should speak in terms that teens can understand!
  - *Some teens better understand their own language, and some only speak their native language, for instance Native teens in Alaska. So, it's important for judges and others in the court system to be able to communicate when it appears the teen is having difficulty understanding what you are saying.*
- Judges should offer youth the opportunity to speak, and listen to what they have to say.
- Judges should consider a victim's request to be present during the entire court proceedings.
- Judges should consider the victim's request to testify by closed circuit television.
- Judges should consider the victim's request to decide if and when the victim's parents are present in the courtroom.
- Judges should require the perpetrator's parents or legal guardian to be present during all courtroom proceedings.
- Judges should allow a victim's request to have pertinent, personal information discussed in a closed courtroom.

- Judges should give victims the opportunity to testify on the trustworthiness of the witnesses for the other side.
- Judges shouldn't disregard body language when they're hearing a case.
- Judges should be trained on the reality and seriousness of psychological abuse when they consider protective order cases.
- All protective orders should appropriately address "no contact" or "restricted contact," for the safety of the victim.
  - *Judges should explain the "no contact" language in the protective order to everyone involved.*
- Judges should explain the protective order to the perpetrator and make sure they understand it, and then follow it.
  - *Judges should clearly explain the consequences if they don't follow it.*
- Court systems should establish "zero tolerance" for violations of the protective order.
  - *Punishment should be mandatory!*
  - *Judges should lock up the perpetrator if they don't abide by the protective order.*
- Appropriate court personnel should hear and know the whole story concerning teen dating violence.
- Courts should recognize that "teen dating violence" means all situations when at least one of the people involved is a teenager, no matter the age of the other person.
- Court personnel should keep an open mind about the victim's and perpetrator's sexuality and gender identification.
  - *Recognize that dating violence occurs in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.*
- All court personnel should regard the victim as an 'abused person.'
  - *These cases shouldn't be easily disregarded as 'teens squabbling,' or a 'lover's spat.'*
- Court personnel should interview the perpetrator and the victim separately – not in the same room.
- Victims should be able to talk with the probation officer, so they understand *all* the information involved in the case, as well as understand the victim's fears.
  - *Courts should support and work to form specialized 'youth courts.'*
- Judges should work with legislators to pass legislation creating 'youth juries' that would assist the court in making final sentencing decisions.

- There should be quality counseling for both the victim and perpetrator, offered through the court system.
  - *Using the available court resources appropriately, require quality counseling for the perpetrator... Come on, give them the opportunity to get it right! With the proper help, they might be OK in the future!*
  - *Quality counseling of their choice should be ensured for the victim.*
  
- Probation officers should have smaller caseloads and be required to do their jobs well and thoroughly.
  - *Probation officers should be trained on important issues, including cultural differences.*
  - *They should be required to monitor their cases closely: Keep up with the kid and what's happening in their life.*
  - *Find the kids who don't report in, and investigate their activities.*
  
- Probation officers should closely monitor activities like: 3-way calling, instant messaging (IM), text messaging, email involving friends, letters, etc., from the perpetrator to the victim.
  
- Judges should support in-school and after-school community programs that keep youth busy.
  - *There should be after school programs that keep teenagers busy in healthy social ways... ways that encourage healthy relationships!*
  
- Judges should encourage age-appropriate youth education through 'peer groups,' to teach other youth about relationship violence and proper relationship behavior.
  - *This type of education should start early – about age 10, when kids are first starting to think about 'relationships.'*
  
- Judges should help educate children in an age appropriate way so they understand the court process.
  - *So they won't be so fearful of the legal process or hesitant to seek legal help if they do end up needing it as a teenager.*
  - *Use videos, coloring books and something fun to teach younger children about the legal process and court procedure, so they will consider it 'helpful' instead of 'scary' as they grow older.*
  
- Judges should support appropriate, quality training of social workers for kids who may need specific help (e.g. victims and perpetrators).
  - *As a prevention measure, not just when they're so bad off that they're already in the legal system.*
  
- Courts should distribute literature on the warning signs of teen dating violence.
  
- Include the topic of "bullying" in judicial and service-provider training.

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Victim Attorneys and Prosecutors

- If a teen comes to you for help, give them *immediate* personal attention – with good eye contact.
  - *Slow down and be patient so they'll open up to you!*
- Make sure your teen client knows the court system is accessible to them – even though they are minors.
- Make sure you are accessible to your teenage client.
- Explain legal procedures in simple language.
  - *Don't speak 'legalese' to teenagers!*
  - *Some teens better understand their own language, and some **only speak** their native language (for instance, Native teens who live in Alaska). So, it's important for everyone in the court system to be able to communicate when it appears the teen is having difficulty understanding what is being said.*
- Attorneys should ensure their client's privacy to the maximum extent allowed by the law.
- Prosecutors should clearly explain their role in teen dating violence cases.
  - *Explain that prosecutors represent the State, and are not the teen's attorney.*
- All the attorneys should make sure they have *all* information involved in the case.
  - *Victim attorneys and prosecutors need to look at all the records and reports to be fully educated.*
  - *Make sure you are aware of cultural issues that might impact the circumstances and the outcome.*
    - *Attorneys should be aware of cultural differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create additional legal problems.*
- Include the perpetrator's former probation department reports in the case materials.
- Ask questions about the victim's and perpetrator's friends, in order to better understand what happened and why. (Teenage culture is different from the adult social environment. If you don't understand it, you won't be effective!)
  - *Look at their entire social environment – Get the big picture!*
- Take the victim's experience seriously.
  - *Attorneys and prosecutors need to treat victims with respect and make them feel validated.*

- Protect teen victims in court.
  - *Help them avoid interactions with the perpetrator.*
- Support your teen client's choice to have a parent present during proceedings, or not.
- Support a victim's right to have personal information discussed in closed court.
- Attorneys should support their teen client's preference if the teen wants to talk in the judge's chambers so they can speak more openly, without feeling fear.
  - *Don't make them tell their story in front of everyone unless they want to.*
- Raise concerns to the court in order to change the perpetrator's situation, so the victim is safe and isn't punished.
  - *The victim shouldn't (wrongfully) have to be the one to change classes or schools!*
  - *Victims shouldn't be afraid to attend their classes or be in the hallways and cafeterias, or in transit between school and home, or during after-school activities.*
- When you seek protective orders, ask the judge to include protections that will ensure your client will not be retaliated against by the perpetrator, the perpetrator's friends, or others.
- Encourage the victim to have no contact with the perpetrator (and vice versa if you're representing the accused) during the investigation and court procedures, including no instant messaging, no cell phone contact, no email, no text messaging, etc.
  - *Victim attorneys and prosecutors should do everything they can, to ensure the victim is protected in a restraining order.*
- If appropriate, refer your teenage client to a qualified 'victim's counselor.'
- Attorneys should be aware of the victim's and perpetrator's needs.
  - *Both victim attorneys and prosecutors should know about resources and support services for teens' needs – whether they are victims or perpetrators.*
  - *Make referrals to other organizations or professionals for appropriate and effective assistance.*
  - *Cultural differences and needs should be addressed too!*
- Find appropriate ways to get to know teens and understand the teenage environment.
  - *It will make you a better representative of your teenage client's interests.*
  - *If you're a prosecutor, you should make the effort to fully understand teenagers so your work will be appropriate and effective.*
- Raise awareness of protective order issues and laws among prosecutors and attorneys through required Continuing Legal Education (CLE) classes.
  - *Contact state and local bar associations' publications representatives about featuring informative articles on teen dating violence and protective order issues.*

- Attorneys should support appropriate, quality training of social workers for kids who may need specific help (e.g. victims and perpetrators).
  - *As a prevention measure, not just when they're so bad off that they're already in the legal system.*
- Include the topic of “bullying” in attorney training.

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Law Enforcement Officers

- Create a teen dating violence unit within the police department, with officers who are interested in working with the community's teens and are trained in teen dating violence matters.
- Police should focus on **prevention** rather than punishment.
- Law enforcement should develop and actively participate in school-based activities and programs that educate younger kids on the law and the possible consequences for breaking the law, *before* they get involved in a cycle of abusive behaviors.
- Police and School Resource Officers (SRO) should conduct more dating violence presentations in high schools and make quality, teen-appropriate information available to students from *all* races and cultures.
- If you work with teens and might be called to a teen dating violence-related scene, you should make sure you've been trained on cultural issues and differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create unwarranted problems.
  - *Some teens better understand, or only speak their native language, so it's important to have the ability to verbally communicate if the teen is having difficulty understanding you.*
- Police officers should make sure their police reports fully describe the abusive act and are thorough.
- Police officers should be encouraged to file charges in teen dating violence cases, based on probable cause.
- Law enforcement officers should encourage parents to file protective orders for their child if they suspect someone is abusing them.
- Law enforcement organizations should support victimized teens' ability to file their own petitions to seek protective orders.
- Police officers and domestic violence organizations need to work together to educate people who work with teens, concerning the types of adult violence that might get a start in violent teen relationships.
- Police should work more closely with domestic violence shelters to address safety needs specific to teen dating violence cases.

- There should be an SRO, or a special liaison that the students are comfortable with, in *all* schools.
  - *School Resource Officers should be aware of cultural issues and differences!*
- School Resource Officers need to integrate within the schools and student populations, and interact with the students more often so they are able to recognize when something occurs that is out of character. *Get in there!*
- When fights (verbal and physical) and other abusive types of behavior occur within schools, School Resource Officers should intervene and, if appropriate, take the perpetrator and victim to the school counselors to talk about the problematic relationship and help develop a permanent and safe solution.
  - *To guarantee safety, separate the teens and ensure they meet **separately** with the counselor.*
  - *If necessary, an SRO should call the local police.*



# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations for Domestic Violence Organizations

- Please don't call teen dating violence "domestic violence" and don't treat it the same or many teens won't take your advice. Our relationships are different than adult relationships, and we view things differently than adults!
- If you haven't been educated or trained on teen dating violence issues and how they're different from adult issues, seek training and get educated. Know the realities and differences. **Get in there!**
  - *Be aware of cultural differences and needs too!*
- Domestic violence organizations should educate and train their entire staff on what can be done to help **teen** victims of dating violence.
- Domestic violence organizations and police officers need to work together to educate other people who work with teens, concerning the characteristics of adult domestic violence that may get a start in violent teen relationships.
- Paying special attention to cultural differences and needs, domestic violence organizations specializing in services to teens should:
  - *Help create teen support groups in the high schools.*
  - *Develop internet-based tools: instant messaging, counseling, and appropriate referral information – all dealing with teen dating violence issues.*
  - *Use live dramatic presentations (e.g. "The Yellow Dress") and real testimonials to teach teens about the reality and seriousness of teen dating violence.*
  - *Develop effective teen-influenced slogans and warning signs to put on posters, bumper stickers, pencils, and t-shirts, etc. and get teens to help you distribute them in all high school in your area.*
- Learn about the signs a teen might give off that will tell you they are or may be abusive.
  - *Though they have a reputation for being aggressive or violent, they're act very nice with a person they are pursuing.*
  - *They act very respectful of you and other adults, but you've heard stories that they're abrasive and rude, or have a reputation for being a bully.*
  - *They treat their parents badly.*
  - *He is very disrespectful of his mother.*
  - *They seem sullen, angry, and don't have many friends.*

- Domestic violence organizations should place teen dating violence warning signs and prevention information in places like high school restrooms and locker rooms.
  - *The information should be culturally diverse and include advice for both victims **and** perpetrators, and for males **and** females.*
  
- Develop a general awareness education program for school personnel, educating them on teen dating violence.
  - *The program should be proportionate to the size and character of the school.*
  - *Help school administrators create school policies that don't interfere with the victim coming forward, rather encourages them to do so.*
  - *Give culturally sensitive presentations that also utilize legal terminology in a clear and simple manner that can be easily understood.*
  - *Don't use 'legalese!'*
  
- Don't insist on running the 'awareness show' alone! Instead, ask us teenagers what we've experienced, what we think, and what our suggestions are...and ask us to help spread the knowledge!
  
- As the adult, don't tell teens how they feel or what they did wrong; don't tell them what to do or how to do it. Instead, use qualified teens to help you do that so the teen audiences will listen and take the advice.
  
- Encourage the creation of teen-led organizations to address teen dating violence – because teens are *really* effective working with other teens!
  
- Domestic violence organizations should train 'student leaders' about teen dating violence and how they can help their peers, while at the same time being careful not to leave anyone out – including the LGBT students.
  - *'Student leaders' should be a diverse and respected group of students that represents every group and 'clique' in the school.*
  
- Use qualified teens for outreach efforts in middle and high schools.
  - *Target 5th and 6th graders, when they are first entering into relationships, and teach them what a healthy relationship is.*
  - *Don't attempt to talk to students about teen dating violence issues without a qualified teen there to make the presentation with you; let the teen tell teen stories and give advice to the audience...with your gentle participation and guidance!*
  
- Be aware that some teens will try hard to demonstrate no signs of abuse when they are being victimized (e.g. a 'perfect student;' someone who goes about their daily responsibilities like a robot; someone who constantly dresses in clothing that covers them up; or someone who talks about their relationship as if it's unusually 'perfect.').

- Domestic violence organizations should also be supportive of a teen perpetrator's need for help and effective services.
  - *Don't ignore their need for effective services! Help teen perpetrators get the quality and effective services they need so they don't grow into abusive adults.*
  - *Don't talk badly about them to the victim, or simply suggest they be 'put away.' Remember, the victim probably had feelings for them and still may care about them.*
  - *Teens don't want other teens to just be locked up and lose their chance to have a good life!*
  
- Domestic violence organizations should create special shelters and community organizations to deal specifically with teen dating violence.