

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

FOR TEEN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Break the Cycle

PRODUCED BY: BREAK THE CYCLE &
THE LOVE IS ADVOCACY YOUTH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM
WITH SUPPORT FROM





So you want to change your community?

Standing up and taking action for something you believe in isn't always the easiest thing to do. Starting any new initiative may seem scary, overwhelming, frustrating, and confusing. However, developing a plan and taking the initial steps to make a difference in your community is absolutely doable, and can be fairly easy with the right support and resources. Dating abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault can affect all kinds of relationships: friendships, families, and romantic partnerships. Prevention is all about trying to stop violence before it even begins.

As young people, there are many times when we feel like our voice goes unheard and that we cannot make an impact due to our age. However, never assume that you can't be a change maker. Your voice has power! Especially when you connect and work with other advocates and organizations who share similar beliefs and ideas. You have an opportunity to find your people, to work together, and shape the future!

Take the assessment below to learn about your community's prevention activities and policies. Once you finish the quiz, take a look at the many different examples of actions you can carry out as a young person to prevent teen dating violence and sexual assault in your community. There are plenty of opportunities for you to help improve your community's prevention efforts and make the possibility of healthy relationships for all young people a reality.



HOW ACTIVE IS YOUR SCHOOL IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION?

Take a moment to reflect on your community's prevention efforts by completing the following quiz. After you finish, please use the answer key to get ideas on how to use your voice to bring these strategies to your community.

1. Does your school have a Teen Dating Violence policy?

Yes No

If you checked yes, is it enforced and do your peers know about it?

Yes No

2. Are there staff or faculty members to talk to about receiving accommodations if someone is a survivor of sexual assault or dating violence?

Yes No

3. Do students have access to a counselor for emotional support?

Yes No

4. Is there a place in your school where all students can easily see what the Title IX protections are?

Yes No

5. Does your school offer healthy relationships, dating violence, and sexual assault education?

Yes No

6. Could staff or faculty members tell you who your Title IX coordinator is?

Yes No

7. Are there any clubs or programs at your school that focus on youth empowerment, leadership, and/or activism?

Yes No

If yes, do they address violence prevention?

Yes No

8. Is there an easy way for you to file a grievance (a complaint) if your school isn't doing any of the things listed above?

Yes No



SO HOW DID YOUR COMMUNITY DO?

If you checked “no” for any of the highlighted questions above, that means your school is not doing something that it is legally required to do by federal law. If you checked “no” on any of the un-highlighted questions that means your school is not following some of the best practices recommended for violence prevention. See the explanations below.

BEST PRACTICE VS. LEGALLY OBLIGATED

Title XI Information (Legally Obligated):

Title IX is a federal law that protects students from all forms of discrimination based on sex including: gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity at an educational program that receives federal funding.

Title IX explicitly prohibits these types of sex-based harassment:

1. **Sexual Harassment:** unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, such as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature
2. **Sexual Violence:** physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent (due to age, use of drugs/alcohol, or because an intellectual or other disability prevents the capacity to give consent)
 - a. **Includes:** rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual abuse, and sexual coercion
3. **Gender-based Harassment:** unwelcome conduct based on an individual’s actual or perceived sex, including harassment based on gender identity or nonconformity with sex stereotypes, and not necessarily involving conduct of a sexual nature

Harassment can include: verbal acts, name-calling, as well as non-verbal behaviors, such as graphic and written statements or conduct that is physically threatening harmful, or humiliating.

4. **Title IX Information Needs to be Accessible:** Schools are required to notify all students and faculty/staff/employees about the contact information of their Title IX coordinator and their nondiscrimination policy. This information should be posted in easy to find places like student services areas, the school website, and throughout buildings.
 - a. If this information is not accessible or difficult to find, advocate for the school to include the Title IX coordinator information in places students are already accessing like bulletin boards in classrooms, on social media, and in syllabi for classes.
5. **Title IX Coordinator:** Schools must designate a Title IX coordinator who is responsible for implementing procedures to resolve Title IX complaints, educating the school community about how to file a Title IX complaint, working to resolve sex discrimination complaints promptly and appropriately, and coordinating the institution/school’s response to sex discrimination. The Title IX coordinator is the contact person if you would like to make a report about sexual assault, and they are required to be available to meet with the students, faculty, and other school community members such as parents/guardians.



BEST PRACTICE VS. LEGALLY OBLIGATED CONT.

a. If your school does not have a Title IX coordinator, you can contact the school administration and/or the school board/board of trustees to explain that they are required to have a Title IX coordinator and publicize their contact information.

i. If your district/institution does not have any information, contact the Department of Education in your state.

b. If your school does have a Title IX coordinator. Ask for a meeting and gather information like:

i. Who trains the Title IX coordinator?

ii. Who conducts a Title IX investigation? How are they trained?

6. **Accommodations:** Title IX requires schools to provide an environment for students and staff that is free from sex discrimination including any harassment, retaliation from peers and staff, and a discrimination-free learning environment. If a sexual assault or dating violence affects the student survivors' access to a safe learning environment, regardless of the location of the assault, the school is required to take action to protect that student. Schools still have to protect the school environment even if the violence occurs off-campus. This means that schools are required to offer accommodations to create equitable learning opportunities for students. Possible accommodations may include:

a. Academic accommodations - if discrimination or violence is affecting a person's ability to focus or work on assignments, the student, social service staff, and teachers should work to create modifications to workload/assignments.

b. Schedule changes- perpetrator(s) and/or harasser(s) are moved so their presence in the survivor's classes does not interfere with their ability to learn. Forcing the student survivor to move classes is a Title IX violation.

c. Safety Planning- Student services staff should work to create a safety plan and necessary staff person should be notified of how to keep that student safe. Check out <http://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/> for more information.

7. **File A Grievance:** If you have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, or dating violence you have options to access resources and report your experience to a trusted adult at school. Administration is required to investigate your case, and provide you with accommodations to access your education in an environment free of sex discrimination. Be aware, if you are under the age of 18, your state might have mandated reporting laws that require school staff to tell Child Protective Services or law enforcement.

a. If you feel your school/institution mishandled the investigation of your case, did not provide you fair accommodations, or did not take adequate steps to prevent sex discrimination from happening in the school environment, you can file a Title IX complaint to the Office for Civil Rights against your school/institution.



BEST PRACTICES

Currently, these policies, protections, and strategies are not required under federal law. However, they are considered best practices, with many examples from all across the country for other communities to follow. Research has consistently shown the most effective way to prevent teen dating violence, domestic violence and sexual assault is through a comprehensive, varied approach - promoting education, awareness and support in all kinds of different ways. Not only do you have the power to try and bring some of these things to your community yourself, but you could begin advocating for the need to address these things within your community to those in positions of power (such as legislators or school board members):

8. **Healthy Relationship Education in Schools:** Although not required under federal law, many states have begun to mandate healthy relationship education in schools, such as California, Hawaii and West Virginia. Currently, only 8 states require healthy relationship education in schools.
9. **Teen Dating Violence (TDV) Policy:** Having a TDV policy at your school is the only way to guarantee a clear, community-specific response to all the different types of teen dating violence that can be found in teen relationships, such as cyber harassment, which is not addressed in Title IX protections. Although still uncommon, TDV policies are certainly not rare for school districts, and there are many models, including on breakthecycle.org, that exist and can be adapted by your school board.
10. **Counselors:** Most schools have access to academic counseling, but not enough provide students with guaranteed access to emotional support counseling. Many school districts have thought outside-the-box to provide this service to their students when under limited resources. For example, the district could partner with another community serving organization (such as the local DV/SA agency) to provide counseling certain days of the week.
11. **Youth Leadership Programming:** None of the innovative solutions listed above will be able to move forward without involvement of those it affects- which is YOU, the students! There are many programs all over the country that help develop youth leadership skills, including working on your presentation skills, education skills, and understanding school policy and legislative advocacy. Not only can you work on trying to bring a national program to your community (such as Sources of Strength, or Teen Council through Planned Parenthood), but you can connect with leaders in your school and community about trying to create your own! Think of who is already doing this work that you could partner with - School Government? Your local DV/SA Organization?

REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Shifting culture and changing societal norms isn't something we can do on our own. It is important to understand that creating a world that is free of violence takes time, and requires intentional efforts from a multitude of people. The purpose of this resource is to acknowledge the key preventative strategies in your community, and to recognize additional policies or programming that your community can still implement. Now that you've had an opportunity to assess your community's current efforts, develop a plan and identify specific actions you can take as a young person! This is your opportunity to bolster the prevention efforts of your community by connecting with your community members. One of the greatest protective factors from violence is connection, so no matter what you choose to do, it is always important to remember that there are many people who can support you and offer valuable ideas and insight in your effort to make a difference.

Resource Citation:

- U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Title IX Resource Guide (Apr. 2015).
- <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-title-ix-coordinators-guide-201504.pdf>

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

FOR TEEN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Break the Cycle

PRODUCED BY: BREAK THE CYCLE &
THE LOVE IS ADVOCACY YOUTH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM
WITH SUPPORT FROM

