

IMPLEMENTING A TARGETED TEEN DATING ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM

NCHDV 2015

Presenter: Barbara Ball, SafePlace

Co-authors: Kristin Holland, Khiya Marshall, Caroline Lippy and Ruth Westby, CDC; Sumati Jain and Kathleen Souders, SafePlace



CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES EXPERIENCED BY EXPECT RESPECT PROGRAM FACILITATORS

Expect Respect

- Targeted dating abuse prevention
- School-based delivery model
- 24-week, curriculum-based support group program

Program Evaluation

- Controlled outcome evaluation
- Fidelity and implementation research
- Explore unique opportunities and challenges of working in the school system
- Develop a better understanding of factors that enhance or challenge program implementation and outcomes





EXPECT RESPECT PROGRAM

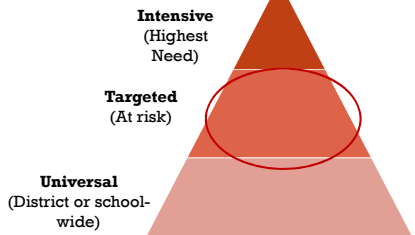
Overview

PROMOTING SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH

- Support Groups
- Youth Leadership
- Training and Collaboration



ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL



AT-RISK YOUTH

- Are in unhealthy peer or dating relationships
- Worry about making their partner angry or jealous
- Are involved in bullying
- Have difficulty managing anger
- Are socially isolated
- Use alcohol or drugs
- Are pregnant or parenting
- Have experienced any form of violence or abuse



National Survey on Children's Exposure to Violence

(Finkelhor et al., 2013)

In the past year,

- 41% of children were physically assaulted
- 22% witnessed family and community violence
- 13% of children report being physically bullied, 30% reported being emotionally bullied
- 13% of children were harmed by a parent or caregiver
- 10% of girls ages 14-17 experienced sexual assault or abuse

- 15% had been exposed to violence six or more times
- 5 % had been exposed to 10 or more violent acts



POLY-VICTIMIZATION AND TRAUMA

Children exposed to one form of violence are at far greater risk to experience another form of violence

(Finkelhor et al., 2009)

Current trauma symptoms are more tied to variety and number of exposures than to specific victimization types

(Hamby, 2011)



EXPECT RESPECT SUPPORT GROUP CURRICULUM

- 24 sessions (85 minutes)
- Developing group skills
- Choosing equality and respect
- Recognizing and healing from abusive relationships
- Learning skills for healthy relationships
- Promoting nonviolent relationships in the community



TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

- Safety
 - Social/emotional support
 - Belonging
 - Empowerment
-
- Multiple channels of communication and expression (movement, role play, art, music, language)
-
- Skill-building and social competence



PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

- Middle and high school students
- Boys' and girls' groups facilitated by same-sex facilitator
- Agreement with the school district and the campus principals
 - Groups are provided during the school day
 - Referrals are coordinated by a school contact person (school counselor or social worker)
 - School provides logistical support
- Expect Respect facilitator offers faculty training and program orientation (referral criteria)
- Expect Respect facilitators conduct individual intake session and weekly 55-minute support groups





METHODS

Qualitative study based on a grounded theory approach

PARTICIPANTS

- Seven Expect Respect Support Group (ERSG) facilitators (3 males, 4 females)
- ERSG facilitators employed by SafePlace, the program developer
 - Licensed social workers or professional counselors and
 - Paraprofessionals with extensive experience in working with youth
 - Training on teen dating and sexual violence
 - 2 – 7 years of experience facilitating ERSG
- ERSG facilitators provided 40 groups for 306 students at 24 middle and high schools
- Interviewed at mid- and endpoint of the school year/ program.



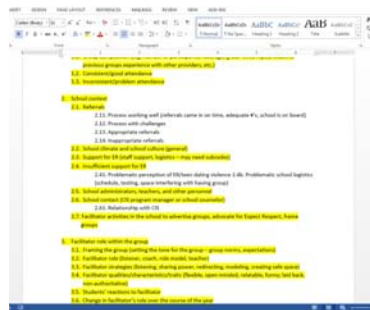
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL


- Phone interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes
- Conducted by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Semi-structured format with open-ended questions
 - General information about groups
 - School context and referral process
 - Facilitation strategies
 - Perceptions of individual- and group-level changes or lack of change
 - Factors that contributed to implementation challenges and successes (at end point)
 - Think about one student/ one group that functioned well and one student/ one group that presented challenges
- Transcribed interviews and de-identified transcripts; pseudonyms assigned



DATA ANALYSIS

- Combination of grounded theory techniques, including open and axial coding
- Research team including 3 CDC staff and 3 SafePlace staff
- Developed coding system (topic codes) by independently coding one transcript and convening to discuss discrepancies
- Primary and secondary coders were assigned to each transcript to ensure inter-coder agreement







RESULTS

What factors contribute to a successful support group? What are the challenges?

WORKING WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM



- School support is necessary to **"build the foundation"** of a successful program
 - "What makes groups really successful is that piece of support from the school because if we don't have that, it's really tough to even form a foundation for a good group."
- The **school's culture** can impact identification and referral of at-risk students
 - "There is just a general feeling of respect in the school. They don't tolerate any low-grade violence and they are very aware of what is going on the students' lives."
 - "The whole culture of the school is about denying that there are any problems. They didn't want to name it."
 - "The school is not doing well academically and there is a lot of pressure on teachers."
- Challenges in the **referral process** impede program commencement, consistent attendance and formation of a cohesive group
 - "They made a ton of referrals but most of the students rarely come to school or have academic problems to the point where they won't be allowed to come to group."



ESTABLISHING A SUPPORTIVE GROUP PROCESS



- Students taking ownership of the group is a characteristic of a productive group.
 - "I like to sit in a circle and tell them, 'We are sitting in a circle because **everybody's equal here**. We're all sharing, we're all trying to grow from this experience.'"
- Bonding and sharing in group are essential for change to occur.
 - "There was change to the point of them really being able to **open up** and talk about their own personal experiences of domestic violence and being able to use those experiences to develop empathy and change those attitudes [dominance over women, misogyny] and the way they spoke about women."
- Inconsistent attendance, high levels of conflict or disrespect in group thwart this process.



INTRODUCING THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE



- Given the abusive environment students grow up in, facilitators view themselves as "planting seeds" for healthy relationships.
 - "Instead of just thinking that's normal or not even really questioning it [the violence and abuse], or not talking about 'cause they are embarrassed or ashamed of what is happening, they would be able to come and talk openly and get support and be open to feedback and then the possibility of change, that they deserve something different."
- For some students it takes a long time to question the culture of violence surrounding them.
 - "They are so used to being treated wrong that they don't even know what it's like. So when I bring up healthy relationships or being assertive, they're looking at me like, 'Miss, what world are you living in?' Cause that's not our reality."¹⁹
- Pressing needs and threats to students' safety include ongoing violence in the home, substance use, unwanted pregnancy and abusive partners.



OBSERVING BEHAVIOR CHANGE

- "It is worth trying"
 - "I think the whole group started understanding the need to be able to communicate effectively with the people around you. And that even though it is difficult to be assertive, it's really worth trying."
- "Breaking up is hard"
 - "I would have wanted her to say that she was no longer in that relationship, but I don't think that she was ready for that yet."
 - "She realizes that the person she was dating was not good for her. It took the whole year for her to break up with him. And we all supported her."
- "Less aggressive and controlling"
 - "I had a couple of girls who were actually the perpetrators in the relationship. I think I've seen the most improvement with them."



DISCUSSION

What are considerations for implementing targeted dating abuse prevention programs within the school setting?

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- School staff's awareness of the impact of violence and abuse on students' lives is critical.
 - Increase identification of "at risk" students in earlier grades and before they fall behind academically, start dropping out of school, or develop a history of disciplinary referrals.
 - Support efforts to develop trauma-informed schools

- Nationwide 71% of school counselors report that they have not received formal training on teen dating abuse, 80% report they have no protocols for responding to incidents. (Khubchandani et al., 2012)
 - Increase training on teen dating abuse
 - Bring school policies to life
 - Build support for the implementation of dating violence prevention programs in schools



SUPPORTIVE GROUP PROCESS

- In contrast to curriculum-based classroom intervention support groups are based on members opening up, sharing and reflecting on their experiences and taking ownership of the process.
 - Cohesive and trusting group in which members are open to questioning the normalcy of abuse in their lives is essential for planting the seeds for change.

- Challenges
 - Lack of group cohesion due to inconsistent attendance, high levels of conflict, disrespect and trauma
 - Low levels of school support (referrals, logistic support)
 - Increase appropriate referrals



PROGRAM OUTCOMES IN TARGETED PREVENTION PROGRAMS

- Expected program outcomes must be considered within the context of the students' "lived reality" and environment
 - Protective factors in the students' lives
 - Poly-victimization and ongoing threats to safety and wellbeing
 - Involvement in multiple risk behaviors

- "Planting the seeds" for change
- Behavioral changes
- Need for ongoing support for the highest risk youth



CONCLUSIONS



THANK YOU!

Barbara Ball, PhD
Expect Respect Program Evaluation Specialist
bball@SafePlace.org

www.SafePlace.org
www.expectrespectaustin.org