

Teen Relationships

Safe and Healthy Dating for Youth

The teenage years are a critical point for social development, especially when teens begin romantic relationships. As children enter adolescence, they develop the cognitive ability to explore their identities and societal roles.¹

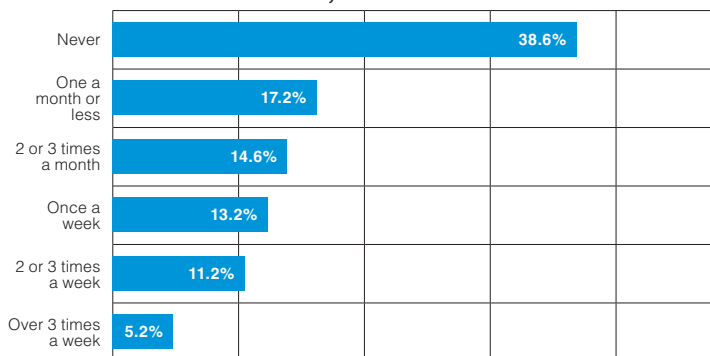
In adolescence, children's center of social interaction changes from the family to their peers,² and as teens gain independence from their parents, they begin exploring types of relationships other than platonic friendships.³ One common type of teen relationship is dating, where adolescents spend time with a romantic partner.⁴ Dating often starts between the ages of 14 and 16 years, lasting usually a few months and taking place in group social contexts.⁵ Later teenage relationships tend to become longer as pairs form from the group and begin to spend time away from the group.⁶ In these relationships, the couple develops a sense of shared identity while providing mutual support for one another.⁷

Dating and teenage romantic relationships have been found to be associated with both positive and negative social, emotional and academic outcomes, depending on the health, timing and duration of the relationship.^{8,9} Teens in healthy relationships report higher levels of emotional well-being and are more likely to perceive themselves as popular with peers.¹⁰ Evidence also suggests these relationships are associated with positive academic outcomes and less antisocial behavior.¹¹ However, unhealthy relationships are associated with lower academic achievement and motivation, poorer mental health, and more frequent drug and alcohol use.^{12,13} Breakups for teenagers can be stressful and are a leading factor contributing to suicide attempts for individuals who have a history of difficulty or loss.¹⁴



Relationships in the teenage years help adolescents develop skills, such as communication and respect, which are foundational for developing committed relationships as adults.

How Often Grade 12 Students Go Out with a Date, United States: 2013



Source: Monitoring the Future Survey, 2013

Healthy Teen Relationships

While there is no standard definition of a healthy relationship, there are characteristics that have been found to be associated with healthy and unhealthy relationships. To develop a healthy relationship, partners must communicate effectively and set healthy boundaries while displaying a willingness to compromise and to respect each other's privacy.¹⁵ Relationships in the teenage years help adolescents develop skills, such as communication and respect, which are foundational for developing committed relationships as adults. Failure to develop healthy dating and relationship habits may negatively affect intimate relationships in the future.¹⁶

Research has identified six protective factors that reduce the risk of teens engaging in unhealthy relationships. Teens are at less risk for unhealthy relationships if they have high empathy, higher grade-point-averages, higher verbal IQs, attachment to their schools, positive maternal relationships and an understanding that committing dating violence is wrong.¹⁷ Beyond these protective factors, youth workers can promote healthy teen dating behavior through implementing programs that build conflict resolution skills, foster intimacy, teach prosocial behaviors, teach self-control, and build confidence and empathy.¹⁸

Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Teen Relationships ^{19,20}	
Healthy Relationships	Unhealthy Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual respect • Trust • Honesty • Compromise • Individuality • Good communication • Anger control • Fighting fair • Problem solving • Understanding • Self-confidence • Being a role model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control • Hostility • Dishonesty • Disrespect • Dependence • Intimidation • Possessiveness • Verbal abuse • Extreme jealousy or insecurity • Physical violence • Sexual violence

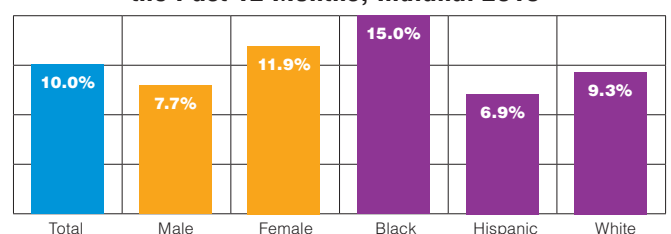
Unhealthy Teen Relationships

Teenagers who exhibit unhealthy relationship behaviors are often reflecting what they see at home and within their families.²¹ Unhealthy dating behaviors range on a continuum of severity, from dishonesty and disrespect to intimate partner violence (IPV). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, IPV includes "physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner (i.e., spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, dating partner, or ongoing sexual partner)."²²

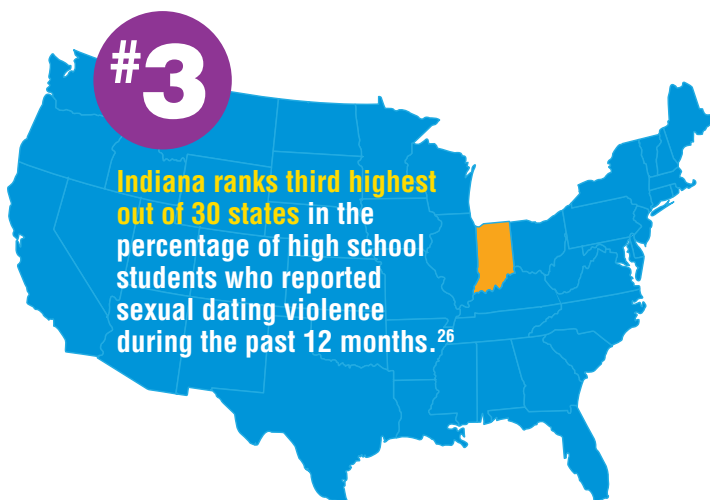
Intimate partner violence can have a significant negative impact on victims' physical, reproductive and mental health, and academic achievement, as well as their ability to have healthy relationships outside of their abusive intimate relationships. Teen dating violence is associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety, suicidal ideation, engagement in delinquency and antisocial behavior, and abusing alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.²³

According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the overall percentage of Indiana high school students who experienced physical dating violence in the past 12 months in 2015 was 10.0 percent, which is higher than the nation at 9.8 percent.²⁴ Indiana ranks 12th highest in this survey of 37 states.²⁵ Females (11.9%) had a higher rate of experiencing physical dating violence than males (7.7%). Black high school students (15.0%) had a higher prevalence of physical dating violence than white students (9.3%) and Hispanic students (6.9%).

Percentage of High School Students Who Experienced Physical Dating Violence During the Past 12 Months, Indiana: 2015

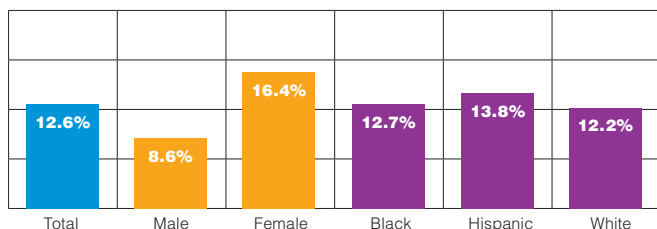


Source: Indiana State Department of Health



Intimate partner violence is not limited to physical dating violence—it also includes sexual dating violence. Indiana ranks third highest out of 30 states in the percentage of high school students who reported sexual dating violence during the past 12 months.²⁶ The survey defines sexual dating violence as an individual who was “forced to do sexual things (counting being kissed, touched, or physically forced to have sexual intercourse) they did not want to do by someone they were dating or going out with one or more times during the 12 months before the survey.”²⁷ The median national percentage was 10.6 and Indiana’s percentage was 12.6. Across the surveyed states, the percentage ranged between 7.5 and 14.7. The percentage of females (16.4%) who experienced sexual dating violence was almost double the percentage of males (8.6%). The rate of sexual violence does not vary considerably among race and ethnic groups.

Percentage of High School Students Who Experienced Sexual Dating Violence During the Past 12 Months, Indiana: 2015



Source: Indiana State Department of Health

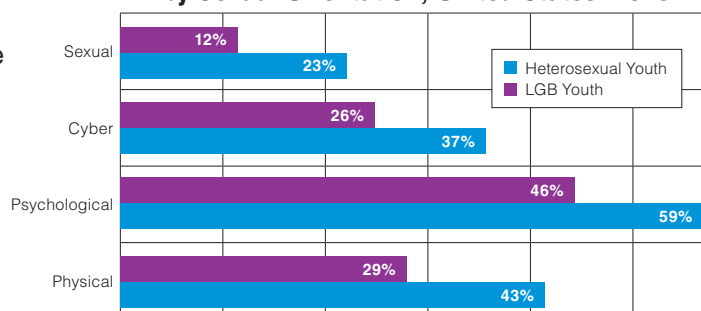
Dating Violence in LGBTQ Relationships

Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB)¹ youth are more likely than heterosexual youth to be victims of dating violence. LGB youth were more likely to report being victimized by physical, psychological, cyber and sexual dating violence than heterosexual youth.²⁸

LGBTQ+ youth face unique tactics of power and control from their abusers, and they have unique reasons for not reporting abuse. These may include:

- “Outing” a partner’s sexual orientation or gender identity to family, friends or members of their communities, or fear that seeking help will force the youth to out themselves.
- Being told no one will help the victim because they are LGBTQ+, or that they are being abused because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.²⁹
- Worrying that disclosing the abuse would reflect poorly on the LGBTQ+ community; the abuser might use this pressure to discourage the victim from seeking help.³⁰
- Monopolizing of support resources, through which the abuser might generate sympathy from support resources, such as mutual friends and family members, cutting the victim off from the community.
- Existing resources may be fewer for LGBTQ+ youth and they might not have the same legal protections as their heterosexual peers.³¹

Types of Dating Violence Victimization by Sexual Orientation, United States: 2013



Source: Urban Institute, 2013

Call 1-866-331-9474, text LOVEIS to 22522, or log on to www.loveisrespect.org to talk, text or chat to trained peer advocates who offer education, support and advocacy to teens and young adults, as well as concerned friends and family members, who have questions or concerns about their dating relationships.

¹ Sample size of study only permitted results for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. There was not enough data to include transgender or other LGBTQ+ youth

IPV Prevention in Indiana

State law requires the Indiana Department of Education to develop “model dating violence educational materials” and “a model for dating violence response policies and reporting,” from which schools can implement if they choose.³²

However, state law does not require schools to provide IPV prevention instruction to students. According to prevention research and the Indiana Department of Education guidelines for schools, effective programs:^{33, 34}

- Support protective factors
- Are comprehensive
- Provide a sufficient amount of education over time
- Use varied teaching methods
- Are based on logical, purposeful rationale
- Are developmentally appropriate
- Account for diversity of cultural beliefs, practices, and norms
- Measure effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement
- Have relevant curriculum and sufficient support for instructors

Evidence-Based IPV Prevention Program: Safe Dates

Safe Dates is the sole teen dating violence prevention program that meets the National Institute of Justice’s highest evidence-based practice ranking.³⁵ The program is for middle school and high school students, and is designed to stop or prevent the initiation of dating perpetration and victimization. One study found program participants reported less psychological and sexual abuse perpetration during four follow-up periods, relative to youths who did not participate in the program. The study also found a moderate reduction in physical violence victimization for the participants.

The program aims at changing adolescent views on dating violence and gender roles, improve conflict resolution skills for adolescents in dating relationships, promote help-seeking for victims and perpetrators, and develop help-giving skills. Students learn from a curriculum of nine 50-minute lessons, one 45-minute play performed by students, and a poster contest. The program also involves parents, who receive educational materials and are encouraged to talk with their children about IPV.

Warning Signs of IPV Victimization and Steps Adults Can Take To Help Victims ³⁶	
What adults should watch for:	What adults can do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detachment, shame, and guilt• Sudden changes in relationships• Desire and plan to take revenge• Significant changes in in self-identity and attitude• Premature entrance into adulthood• Hesitancy to leave home• Distress about their trauma• Avoiding reminders of trauma• Coping behaviors such as substance abuse and/or self-harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a safe environment in which teens can express their concerns• Offer options for future action• Support parents in keeping a close relationship to their teen• Support teens in anticipating what will happen next• Respond honestly to questions• Help teens find ways to express their feelings through journaling, writing stories or poems, and art• Anticipate having to provide long-term support



Resources

Choose Respect Community Action Kit; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Topics in this resource include: creating healthy relationships; dating abuse; parental involvement; school involvement; preteen and teen involvement; and community involvement. http://www.shelterincalpena.org/choose_respect_action_kit.pdf

CrimeSolutions.gov

This database provides overviews of seven evidence-based teen dating violence education programs. To access the articles, type "teen dating violence" into the search box. <http://www.crimesolutions.gov>

Dating Matters; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dating Matters is a free, online course for youth workers to learn about what teen dating is and how to prevent it through videos, interactive exercises, and information gathered from experts. <http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/datingmatters/>

Identifying Teen Dating Violence; Indiana Department of Education

This resource provides an overview of state law and Department policies regarding teen dating violence, as well as educational resources and programs that have been found to be effective. <http://www.doe.in.gov/safety/identifying-teen-dating-violence>

loveisrespect.org

This resource provides information on healthy and unhealthy dating behaviors and helps identify whether a relationship is abusive. It also provides 50 downloadable resources for youth workers and parents. Individuals experiencing IPV and concerned adults can contact trained volunteers for advice. <http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV)

ICADV is a statewide organization that brings together domestic violence programs, agencies, and concerned individuals. The organization provides technical assistance, resources, information, and training to individuals and organizations that work with victims of domestic violence. <http://www.icadvinc.org/about-us/>

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

NCADV is a national organization that provides resources for individuals experiencing IPV and concerned adults. It also brings together organizations and individuals to advocate for policies and projects that help IPV victims. <http://www.ncadv.org/about-us/mission>

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To see past issues, go to: www.iyi.org/issuebriefs



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IYI Resources

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Get the most comprehensive overview of children's well-being in Indiana. **Download the Kids Count in Indiana Data Book** at www.iyi.org/databook.

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