



POLICY Rx: Implement Effective Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Response Policies

2019

The Issue

[Teen dating violence](#) is a form of intimate partner violence that can include physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence within a dating relationship where at least one of the partners is a teen. Such abuse can also include stalking behavior and can occur in person or electronically.

Teen dating violence is a prevalent problem both nationally and in Wisconsin. According to the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2017](#) survey, millions of teens are affected in the United States every year. This study found that by the age of 18, 23% of women and 14% of men had experienced some sort of intimate partner violence. Wisconsin's rates of physical teen violence victimization were 10.3% for females and 6.7% for males, respectively.

The CDC survey also measured the amount of sexual dating violence experienced by teens. Nationally, 14.4% of female students had been kissed, touched, or forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to by someone they were dating or going out with one or more times during the 12 months before the survey. This compares to a rate of 6.4% of male students. Wisconsin's sexual teen dating violence rates were 15.7% for females and 4% for males, respectively.

Teen dating violence is associated with many serious [short- and long-term health risks](#). Victims of teen dating violence have a [higher risk](#) of substance abuse, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, depression, and future victimization.

Despite the prevalence and associated risks of teen dating violence, Wisconsin has not passed legislation to specifically address teen dating violence prevention.

Why is Addressing Teen Dating Violence Important to Women and Girls?

- Wisconsin girls are [disproportionately](#) victimized by teen dating violence. Wisconsin high school girls experience physical teen dating violence at a 54% higher rate than high school boys. Wisconsin high school girls experience sexual teen dating violence at almost four times the rate as did high school boys.
- [Nationally](#), females are twice as likely as males to be victimized by teen cyber dating abuse.
- Victims of teen dating violence have a [higher risk](#) of substance abuse, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, depression, and future victimization. Implementing effective teen dating violence prevention and response policies will help reduce the incidence of these serious health risks.

What Wisconsin Can Do

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), at least 22 states have laws that urge or require school boards to develop curriculum about teen dating violence. These laws vary widely in what, if any, educational content is mandated to be included in any such curriculum. Several other states suggest or mandate that schools implement specific policies and responses to reports of teen dating violence.

There are many [evidence-based policies](#) that states can implement in order to help prevent and effectively respond to incidents of teen dating violence. According to [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin](#), "school-based violence prevention programs are most effective when they combine education to students with policies that create a supportive environment for victims to report abuse and seek help."

As noted above, Wisconsin does not currently have any laws that specifically address teen dating violence. However, bipartisan, [comprehensive teen dating violence prevention](#)



Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health

[legislation](#) was introduced during the 2017-2018 legislative session. If passed, the bill would do the following:

- Direct schools to integrate age appropriate [teen dating violence prevention education](#) into classroom instruction for middle-school and high-school students.
 - The bill would require the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to create a model curriculum and response policy, both of which individual school districts could choose to adopt. If a school district chose not to adopt the model DPI policies and curriculum, then the school district would have to develop its own policy and curriculum to adopt.
- Set guidelines for schools' response to teen dating violence to create an atmosphere in which victims can get help and abuse is not tolerated.
- Provide training for teachers and administrators to identify, prevent, and respond to teen dating violence

Unfortunately, this legislation failed to pass into law before the end of the legislative session.

How Can I Help Ensure Wisconsin Addresses Teen Dating Violence?

There are lots of ways you can help address teen dating violence in Wisconsin.

- Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support evidence-based teen dating violence prevention legislation
- Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working to address teen dating violence:
 - [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin](#)
 - [Domestic Abuse Intervention Services](#)
 - [Dare 2 Know](#)

Resources:

- [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin Teen Dating Violence Resource Page](#)
- [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Dating Abuse and Teen Violence Fact Sheet](#)
- [Center for Disease Control: Understanding Teen Dating Violence](#)