

Relationships Education and Adolescent Health

Ardawatia A., Walcher C., Guillot-Wright S., Torres, E., Temple, J.R.

Summary

School-based programs that promote healthy relationships can effectively prevent interpersonal violence.

What the Evidence Says about Relationships Education and Adolescent Health

- A rigorous study of 24 Texas middle school students found that those who received the *Fourth R* relationship education program (1,237 participants) were less likely to perpetrate dating violence than students who received the standard health curriculum (1531 participants).ⁱ
- A 2019 meta-analysis of 10 rigorous studies found that evidence-based programs effectively reduced adolescent emotional and sexual dating violence.ⁱⁱ
- 233 majority-low-income participants who received a brief relationship education program had improved conflict resolution skills, were less accepting of dating violence, and were less likely to engage in conflict.ⁱⁱⁱ
- A study of over 3000 US middle school students in high-risk urban areas found an 11% decrease in bullying perpetration and an 11% decrease in physical violence perpetration following participation in the *Dating Matters* teen dating violence curriculum.^{iv}

WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT *FOURTH R*:

"I'm actually learning a lot of things that I kind of actually want to know."

"[I'm learning] better ways to approach situations with friends or family."

"Resilience and stuff like that, how to carry yourself. Being assertive, ways to handle situations."

Important to Consider

- Perpetrators of interpersonal violence are more likely to have been exposed to violence earlier in life and lack conflict resolutions skills.^v
- Healthy relationships education should consider larger structural and social factors that influence relationships such as trauma, racism, and discrimination.^{vi}

Policy Implications

- Making healthy relationships and dating violence prevention education a required part of Texas middle- and high-school curricula will reduce interpersonal violence among adolescents and has the potential to prevent subsequent domestic violence in adults.
- Embedding structural/societal factors into healthy relationships curricula will require support on behalf of school districts and other public leaders for teacher training and educational development.

Correspondence

Jeff Temple, PhD, Vice Dean of Research, School of Nursing; Director, Center for Violence Prevention, jetemple@utmb.edu

References

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