



Supporting Teens in Teen Dating Violence Situations



Whether a student is experiencing harm or causing it, educators are in a powerful position to reduce risk and strengthen protective factors. Your role is not to investigate or confirm the behavior but to speak up, share concerns, and connect students to the right people and resources.

An Educator's Role

Share observations with the school administration, the threat assessment team, the school resource officer (SRO), the Title IX coordinator, or mental health professionals.



Even if you're unsure what to do, connect with these professionals as they are trained to assess the situation and take next steps; you are not expected to have all the answers.

Respect boundaries and maintain a calm and steady presence.

Do **not** investigate or try to confirm the behavior.

Supporting Victims

Communicating With Victims

Choose a private, safe setting when opening a conversation.

Ask gentle, open-ended questions, and let the student know that you care about their safety.

Listen without judgment, avoid blame, and use language that gives agency.

- ➔ Try: "That sounds really hard. I'm glad you told me."
- ➔ Avoid: "Why didn't you tell someone sooner?"



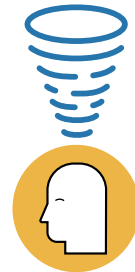
Use language that centers their voice, affirms their choices, and validates their experience.

- ➔ Try: “I believe you,” “You did the right thing by talking to someone,” or “This was not your fault.”

Respect boundaries and remain a calm, steady presence.

Understand survival responses such as fight, flight, freeze, and fawn.

- ➔ Fight: Fighting back to regain control
- ➔ Flight: Fleeing the situation
- ➔ Freeze: Shutting down or becoming silent
- ➔ Fawn: Complying to avoid escalation



These are common trauma reactions and may look like shutting down, avoiding action, or complying with a partner’s demands to feel safe.

Conversely, survival responses could also look like acting out with extreme verbal or physical responses in order to regain control.

Providing a Safe Space

Address harmful peer behaviors (e.g., glaring, mocking, exclusion, and posturing) firmly but calmly.

Avoid escalation; model respectful communication.

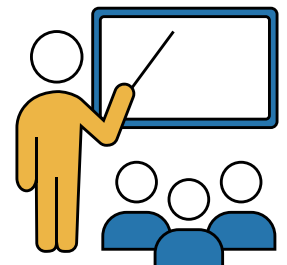
Set clear, respectful boundaries for behavior without threats or dismissiveness.

Reinforce positive behavior and encourage inclusion.

Avoid using threats or dismissive language.

Let students know that they can come to you privately if they feel unsafe.

Recognize that students using violent behaviors may also have experienced trauma.



Supporting Victims

Encourage victims to reconnect with safe friendships, mentors, and extracurricular activities.

Promote peer allyship through inclusive group activities.

Help students identify their safe adults (teachers, coaches, counselors, and family members).

Refer to school-based or community services that provide culturally relevant, identity-affirming care.

Reassure victims that support is available even if they do not disclose everything.



Resources and Interventions

Resources for Both Victims and Those Causing Harm

Resource	Description	Contact and Website
Violence Free Colorado	A list of local domestic violence and sexual assault organizations. Most counties have domestic violence shelters or youth-trained advocacy centers.	Website: https://violencefreecolorado.org/find-help/survivor-resources/
One Love Foundation	A resource providing education on healthy versus unhealthy relationships, as well as tool kits, safety planning resources, and training.	Website: https://www.joinonelove.org/
The Trevor Project	A nonprofit organization offering 24-7 support for LGBTQ+ youth via phone, text, and chat.	Call: 1-866-488-7386 Text: START to 678678 Live chat: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/

Resource	Description	Contact and Website
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	A 24-7 nationwide support, providing free and confidential emotional support to those in suicidal crisis or emotional distress via phone, text, and chat.	Call or text: 988 Chat: https://988lifeline.org/

Resources for Victims

Resource	Description	Contact and Website
Victim advocates, support groups, or school-based mental health professionals	Connect victims to professionals trained in teen dating violence and domestic violence.	Website: https://violencefreecolorado.org/find-help/survivor-resources/
Love Is Respect	A 24-7, confidential help and safety planning chat specializing in teen dating violence.	Call: 1-866-331-9474 Text: LOVEIS to 22522 Live chat: https://www.loveisrespect.org/supporting-others-dating-abuse/# Website: https://www.loveisrespect.org/
The Hotline	A 24-7 national domestic hotline offering confidential support plus local referrals via phone, text, and chat.	Call: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) Text: START to 88788 Live chat: https://www.thehotline.org/
Crisis Text Line	A global mental health organization dedicated to offering 24-7 confidential text support for any crisis.	Text: HOME or HOLA to 741741 Live chat: https://www.crisistextline.org/

Resource	Description	Contact and Website
I Matter	Youth therapy offering up to six free therapy sessions for Colorado youth.	Website: https://www.imattercolorado.org/

Resources for Students Who May Be Causing Harm

Resource	Description	Contact and Website
School mental health or special education teams	Professionals who can evaluate whether extra academic or behavioral support is needed through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan.	Via school personnel
Colorado Domestic Violence Offender Management Board (DVOMB)	Search for a list of state-approved adolescent-focused domestic violence treatment providers.	Website: https://dcj.colorado.gov/dcj-offices/odvsom/dvom-board
What's OK Helpline	Confidential support for youth (ages 14–21) with sexual behavior or safety concerns.	Call: 844-WHATSOK (844-942-8765) Text: WHATSOK to 888-532-0550 Website: https://www.whatsok.org/
A Call for Change Helpline	A free, anonymous, and confidential intimate partner violence prevention service.	Call: 977-898-3411 Email: help@ACallForChangeHelpline.org Website: https://acallforchangehelpline.org/

Resource	Description	Contact and Website
Coaching Boys into Men	An informed coach-led program to prevent abuse or harassment among athletes.	Website: https://coachescorner.org/

What Can Educators Do?

There is no single right response in every situation, but ignoring signs of teen dating violence can lead to serious consequences.

You should do the following:

Make a mandatory report within 24 hours to CO4Kids at 844-CO-4-KIDS or to local law enforcement if you suspect physical or sexual violence, as required by law.

Document observations, whether they are about a victim or a student who may be causing harm.

Consult with the school administration, the threat assessment team, mental health professionals, the SRO, or other staff who are trained to guide next steps.

Make a referral to the Title IX coordinator and share their contact information with the student victim.

Be aware that if a student discloses an intent to harm themselves or others to a school mental health professional, that mental health professional should consider their ethical duties to protect the student and elevate the issue to others.

Follow your school's safety protocols.



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