

turning knowledge into practice

Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships

Outcome Evaluation Baseline Data

EMBARGOED

Until March 29, 2012

RTI International (RTI), Research Triangle Park, NC



Overview

- Introduction
- Design
- Key findings from baseline data
- Limitations
- Acknowledgements

Introduction

- *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships (Start Strong)* is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in collaboration with the Blue Shield of California Foundation and Futures Without Violence (formerly the Family Violence Prevention Fund). *Start Strong* targets 11-to 14-year-olds and is operating in 11 communities to promote healthy relationships as the way to prevent teen dating violence.
- The *Start Strong* model utilizes innovative program components to:
 - Educate and engage youth in schools and out of school settings
 - Educate and engage teen influencers such as parents/caregivers, teachers and other mentors
 - Change policy and environmental factors
 - Implement effective communications/social marketing strategies
- On behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the California Blue Shield Foundation, RTI is conducting an independent evaluation of *Start Strong*.
- **This report covers the first wave of data collection for the outcome evaluation.**

Teen Dating Violence (TDV)

- Teen dating violence (TDV) is defined as physical, sexual or emotional violence within a dating relationship.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 10% of high school students nationwide reported being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 12 months.
- There is limited information about teen dating relationships and primary prevention programs targeting middle school students.
- **The *Start Strong* evaluation is one of the few studies looking in-depth at dating violence behaviors and risk factors among 7th-grade students.**

Research Design

- Longitudinal quasi-experimental research design following the same students over time
- 4 waves of data collection overall
 - Wave 1—Fall 2010
 - Wave 2—Spring 2011
 - Wave 3 – Fall 2011
 - Wave 4 – Spring 2012

Sampling Frame

- Sampling frame
 - ◆ All 7th-grade students (except for those in self-contained classrooms) in 8 middle schools
 - 4 *Start Strong* schools
 - » Los Angeles, CA; Bridgeport, CT; Indianapolis, IN (2 schools)
 - 4 comparison schools— Efforts made to identify comparable schools based on race/ethnicity, gender and % free/reduced lunch
 - » San Diego, CA; Saginaw, MI; Indianapolis, IN (2 schools)

Sampling Design

- Sampling Design
 - ◆ Study recruitment of 7th-grade students at each participating school
 - ◆ Parental consent and student assent obtained
 - 57% student participation rate (range from 44%-71%)

Sample

- Sample
 - ◆ Not a nationally representative sample
 - ◆ 1,430 7th-grade students
 - Mean age = 12 years
 - 50% female
 - 30% African American, 24% White, 34% Hispanic, 12% other

Methods

- Methods
 - ◆ Data Collection
 - Paper-and-pencil questionnaires
 - Data collected in one class period in fall 2010

Measures

- Student reported on:
 - Risk and protective factors known to be linked to teen dating violence
 - Teen dating violence behaviors
 - ◆ Victimization
 - ◆ Perpetration

Risk and Protective Factors for TDV

- Harmful gender stereotypes
- Perceived negative consequences of TDV
- Acceptance of TDV
- Sexual harassment
- Peer victimization or perpetration of TDV
- Witnessing relationship violence
- Parent-child communication about TDV

Measures for TDV Behaviors

- Perpetration and victimization within past 6 months
- *Physical Dating Violence* – 5 items (e.g. - pushed, grabbed, shoved or kicked)
- *Psychological Dating Violence*– 5 items (e.g. - would not let them do things with other people)
- *Electronic Dating Violence*– 8 items (e.g. - boyfriend or girlfriend using a cell phone, e-mail, IM, text messaging, Web chat, a blog, or a networking site like MySpace or Facebook to call them names, put them down, or say really mean things to them)
- Analysis compared students who reported any behaviors to those that reported no behaviors in each category

Key Findings

BASELINE DATA

TDV is a problem among 7th-graders

- Dating is common among the 7th-graders in our sample
 - ◆ 75% of students report ever having a boyfriend or girlfriend
- More than 1 in 3 (37%) students surveyed report being a victim of *psychological dating violence* in the last 6 months
- Nearly 1 in 6 (15%) students surveyed report being a victim of *physical dating violence* in the last 6 months
- Nearly 1 in 3 (31%) students surveyed report being a victim of *electronic dating aggression* in the last 6 months

TDV is not happening behind closed doors

- 7th-graders in our sample report the following experiences in the past 6 months:
 - ◆ More than 1 in 3 (37%) report witnessing boys or girls being physically violent to persons they were dating
 - ◆ Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) report having a male or female friend who was physically violent to their partner
 - ◆ More than 1 in 5 (21%) report having a male or female friend whose partner was physically violent to him or her

Risk Factors for TDV

- Harmful gender stereotypes among 7th-graders in our sample are pervasive
 - ◆ Nearly 2 out of 3 students in our sample (63%) strongly agree with at least one harmful gender stereotype, such as “girls are always trying to get boys to do what they want them to do,” or “with boyfriends and girlfriends, the boy should be smarter than the girl.”
- Nearly half (49%) report being a victim of sexual harassment in the past six months, such as being “touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way” or that someone “made sexual jokes about you.”
- Too many students still believe TDV would not have negative consequences in their relationship
 - ◆ 1 in 4 students (26%) strongly disagree with statements about perceived negative consequences of teen dating violence and abuse, such as, “if I hit a boyfriend/girlfriend, he/she would break up with me.”

Risk and Protective Factors for TDV

- Students are more accepting of TDV perpetration by a girl than by a boy
 - ◆ Half of students strongly agreed that it was okay for a girl to hit her boyfriend under certain circumstances, such as “a boy who makes his girlfriend jealous on purpose.”
 - ◆ 7% of students strongly agreed that it was okay for a boy to hit his girlfriend under certain circumstances, such as “a girl who makes her boyfriend jealous on purpose.”
- Students are talking to their parents about dating and TDV
 - ◆ Nearly three-quarters of students report that, in the past 6 months, they “sometimes or often” talk with their parents about dating topics, such as, “how to tell if someone might like you as a boyfriend or girlfriend.”

Limitations

- Data from these schools do not reflect 7th-graders in general; this is not a nationally representative sample
- Self-reported data may be biased if students report what they perceive as the desired response

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