



Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund

Stop Abuse for Every (SAFE) Teen Act (S. 1447/H.R. 2689)

Teen Dating Violence is an Education Issue

Teen dating violence is pervasive and results in poor physical and mental health, lower academic achievement, truancy and school drop-out. An effective prevention program will decrease these poor academic factors and increase student health, safety and academic achievement by meeting youth where they are – in schools. A few facts:

Dating Violence is the Rule – Not the Exception

- About 72% of 8th and 9th graders report “dating”
- 1 in 4 adolescents reports emotional, physical, or sexual violence each year
- 1 in 10 adolescents reports being a victim of *physical* dating violence
- 1 in 4 teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cell phones and texting
- A substantial number of teen dating violence incidents occur in school buildings and on school grounds

Students Can't Learn if They Don't Feel Safe

- The pervasiveness of abusive behaviors occurring on school campuses affects the overall school climate and distracts students from their focus on learning
- Students who experienced physical and/or sexual violence had lower grades; approximately 20% of these students had mostly D's/F's and only 5-6% had mostly A's
- Witnessing violence has been associated with decreased school attendance and academic performance

Dating Violence Results in Long-term Negative

Health Consequences

- Teen victims of physical dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors (taking diet pills or laxatives and vomiting to lose weight), engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide
- Girls are up to 3 times more likely to become pregnant and more than 2 times as likely to report a sexually transmitted disease
- Physically abused teens are 3 times more likely than non-abused peers to experience violence during college
- Abusive behaviors learned in adolescence can escalate into adulthood

For over 15 years, domestic violence and sexual assault agencies have provided a range of teen dating violence prevention education programs in schools using federal and state domestic violence and sexual assault funds and private grants. Programs have been delivered during a range of classes, after-school programs, athletic and other extra-curricular activities and through school climate improvement activities. However, we are learning that teen dating violence and bullying, and other problem behaviors including substance abuse and weapon carrying, are occurring together in teens. As a result, we need to enable schools to use federal school violence prevention funding to deliver teen dating violence prevention education programs as part of a comprehensive approach to school safety.

More and more states have passed or are considering teen dating violence bills. To date, 21 states have laws addressing teen dating violence abuse in the schools (Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington) and many more, such as California, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina are considering legislation. Most of the state bills are an unfunded requirement on schools to teach about teen dating violence, train school personnel, and to incorporate response mechanisms into their school policies.

What the SAFE Teen Act Would Do

As Congress considers reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, advocates and concerned parents are proposing a marker bill entitled “Stop Abuse for Every Teen Act” or the “SAFE Teen Act.”

Introduced by **Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID)**, **Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)**, **Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI)** and **Congressman Dave Reichert (R-WA)**, this bill would:

- Expressly authorize schools to use existing grant funding for teen dating violence prevention
- Highlight teen dating violence prevention as part of the comprehensive, community prevention program, *Safe Schools, Healthy Students*, that already funds prevention activities
- Support better teen dating violence data to understand the scope of the problem as well as having a means of measuring the impact of prevention programs and policies
- Support promising practices to further replicate, refine and test prevention models
- This is not a mandated program and the cost is included in existing grant streams

For questions, please contact Sally Schaeffer with Futures Without Violence, formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund, at 202-595-7384 or sschaeffer@futureswithoutviolence.org.

Endorsing Organizations American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Foundation, Love is Not Abuse Coalition, Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund), Jewish Women International, Girl Scouts of the USA, YWCA, RAINN, GLSEN, American Counseling Association, American School Counselor Association, American Association of University Women (AAUW), National Association of School Nurses, National Women's Law Center, National Partnership for Women and Families, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Victim Rights Law Center, School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), Security On Campus, Inc., GroundSpark/The Respect for All Project, Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, Joyful Heart Foundation, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, SafePlace, TX, Sojourner House, RI, Family Violence Law Center, CA, and Peace Over Violence, CA.