

# Adolescent Relationship Abuse: Prevention Takes a Village



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**Children's Mercy**



- Because relationship abuse is so common, assume there are survivors here today.
- Be aware of your reactions and take care of yourself first.

# What is Adolescent Relationship Abuse?



- A pattern of repeated acts in which a person physically, sexually or emotionally abuses another person of the same or opposite sex in the context of a dating or similarly defined relationship, in which one or both partners is a minor.

# What is dating?



- Hanging out
- Hooking up
- Seeing each other
- Just talking
- Group outings vs. single-couple outings

# Epidemiology



- 1 in 5 U.S. teen girls and 1 in 10 U.S. teen males report having experienced physical and/or sexual abuse in a dating relationship
- Impacts teens of all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic status
- Often reciprocal in teen relationships
  - Girls injured more severely, more frequent victims of sexual abuse

# What's happening in Kansas City?



- Interim data from Children's Mercy ED study
  - Males and females, age 14-19 years
- 1 in 5 – physical abuse
- 1 in 10 – sexual abuse
- 1 in 5 – psychological abuse
- 6 in 10 – cyber abuse
- 1 in 10 – reproductive coercion

# Cyber ARA



- Use of technology to exert power & control
  - Mobile apps
  - Social networks
  - Texts
  - Other digital communication
- 83% of cyber abuse occurs outside of school

# Cyber ARA



- 26-40% of teens experienced cyber abuse in past 3-12 months
- 31% females, 21% males - partner repeatedly contacted about whereabouts, who they were with
- 33% females, 18% males - pressured to send/post sexually explicit photos of themselves
- 15% - mean/hurtful comments
- 9% - partner tamper with their social media account
- 7-8% - partner pressure them via text/e-mail to do unwanted sexual acts



# Cyber ARA



- Cyber abuse is a red flag for other forms of abuse
  - Rarely occurs in isolation
- Teens experiencing sexual cyber ARA more likely to experience sexual ARA
- Teens experiencing nonsexual cyber ARA more likely to experience physical and sexual ARA
- Females experiencing cyber ARA more likely to not use contraception and experience reproductive coercion

# Reproductive Coercion



- Interference with, control over a partner's contraceptive methods and/or pregnancy
- Preventing health clinic visits
- Coerced sexual activity
- Hiding/withholding contraception
- Poking holes in condoms
- Refusing to wear condoms
- Not allowing an abortion

# Reproductive Coercion



- 5-19% of 16-29-year-olds attending family planning clinics experience reproductive coercion in past year
- Associated with unintended pregnancy
  - 21% if reproductive coercion vs. 12% in total population

# Who is at risk?



- Teens with previous exposure to abuse (child maltreatment, witness to intimate partner violence)
- Being young – ages 16-24 years
- Substance use
- Bullying at younger age

# ARA and Mental health



- Young women who have experienced ARA have higher rates of:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Eating disorders
  - Suicidality
  - Substance abuse

# ARA and Health Risk Behaviors



- Youth experiencing sexual ARA are more likely to:
  - Initiate sex before age 15 years
  - Have 4 or more sexual partners
  - Use alcohol or drugs before sex
  - Have a past or current sexually transmitted infection
  - Report inconsistent use or nonuse of condoms
  - Have a partner with known HIV risk factors
  - Use alcohol, marijuana, cocaine

# ARA and Teen Pregnancy



- Teen girls in physically abusive relationships are **3.5 times more likely** to become pregnant
- Pregnant teens are **2-3 times more likely** to experience partner violence than older pregnant women.
- Teen mothers experiencing physical abuse within 3 months of delivery are **nearly twice as likely** to have a repeat pregnancy within 24 months.

# ARA and School



- Victims and perpetrators more likely to:
  - Carry weapons
  - Engage in physical fighting
  
- Teens experiencing physical and sexual abuse are more likely to:
  - Drop out of school
  - Have lower grades
  - Feel less connected to school



# ARA and Homicide



- One third (32%) of female homicides among ages 11-18 years are committed by an intimate partner.

# What do we know?



- ARA is common.
- ARA is associated with multiple risk behaviors.
- ARA has multiple, significant, lifelong consequences for teens.

*So, what do we do?*

# ARA Prevention



- Teens need to hear about healthy relationships from key adults in their lives and in multiple settings.
- Partnership and collaboration are important.
  - ARA cannot be addressed by a single institution or sector of the community.

# Coaching Boys into Men



- Coaches leadership program
- Partners with coaches to equip teen male athletes to practice respect and healthy relationships
- Created by Futures Without Violence, in partnership with the National High School Athletic Coaches Foundation



# Coaching Boys into Men



- 12 10-15 minute sessions
- Takes advantage of teachable moments
- Goals for athletes are to:
  - Treat women with honor and respect
  - Understand that violence never equals strength
  - Use their knowledge to become role models

# Coaching Boys into Men



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8N5emwY-wE>

# Coaching Boys into Men



- 3-year evaluation of over 2,000 athletes in 16 schools:
- Coaches
  - Increased confidence intervening when abusive behavior witnessed among athletes
  - Greater bystander intervention
  - Greater frequency of violence-related discussions with athletes, other coaches
  - Felt CBIM easy to implement and valuable for athletes

# Coaching Boys into Men



- **Participants:**
  - 3-month follow-up – More likely to report intentions to intervene when ARA seen and actually more likely to intervene
  - One-year follow-up – More likely to report less abuse perpetration and less negative bystander behavior when witnessing abusive or disrespectful behavior among peers



# Hanging Out or Hooking Up Safety Cards



- Business-card sized pamphlet
- Gender neutral
- Inclusive of diverse sexual orientations
- Brief intervention can be easily incorporated into any type of healthcare visit



# Hanging Out or Hooking Up Safety Cards



- **Goals**
  - Discuss healthy relationships
  - Identify signs of an unhealthy relationship
  - Educate teens about how to help others
  - Plant seeds for victims
  - Help victims learn harm reduction strategies and support services
- **Use recommended**
  - Annually and with each new partner
  - During any health appointment
  - With teen by themselves
  - Every teen

# Hanging Out or Hooking Up Safety Cards



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VknwdXy66fY>

# Hanging Out or Hooking Up Safety Cards



- 11 school health centers, 939 14-19-year-olds
- Intervention participants
  - Improved recognition of sexual coercion
  - Increased knowledge of ARA resources
  - Increased self-efficacy to use harm-reduction behaviors
  - Less likely to report ARA at 3-month follow-up (for those reporting ARA at baseline)
  - More likely to disclose ARA during the health center visit

# Safe Dates



- 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades
- 10-session curriculum
  - Wrap-around materials include a play, a poster contest, parent materials, evaluation questionnaire
- Goals
  - Raise awareness of what constitutes healthy and abusive dating relationships
  - Raise awareness of dating abuse
  - Equip students with skills and resources to help themselves and friends
  - Equip students with healthy relationship skills

# Safe Dates



- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Model Program
- Included in National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

# Safe Dates



- 14 schools, 1700 8<sup>th</sup> graders
- Intervention participants
  - Initial follow-up
    - ✦ Less initiation of psychological ARA (if no ARA at baseline)
    - ✦ Less psychological and sexual ARA perpetration (if reporting ARA perpetration at baseline)
  - 4-year follow-up
    - ✦ Less physical, serious physical and sexual ARA perpetration and victimization

# Safe Dates



- Program effects mediated through
  - Changes in dating violence norms
  - Changes in gender-role norms
  - Awareness of community services
- Preliminary research suggests program may also impact other forms of youth violence
  - 31% less weapon carrying
  - 12% less other victimization
  - 23% less violence perpetration (among minority teens)



# SafERteens



- ED-based brief intervention
- Computer-based +/- therapist component
- 397 14-18-year-olds in an urban ED, with past-year history of ARA
- Decreased ARA victimizations up to 6 months after intervention
  - Computer-based intervention alone was effective
- For those with more severe ARA, computer + therapist reduced victimization seen at 12 months after intervention

# Key Components of Interventions



- Not just a one-time occurrence (exception – ED-based intervention)
- Focus on healthy relationship behaviors, not just abusive behaviors
- Address bystander behavior
- Meet the teens where they are - school, sports, healthcare settings

# Some Local Efforts



- **Rose Brooks – Project SAFE**
  - Counseling at school for children exposed to violence
  - Violence prevention curriculum (includes ARA) in Jackson County schools
  - Prevention training for educators
  
- **Hope House**
  - Speakers' Bureau can provide ARA education for teens, community organizations, churches, schools

# Some Local Efforts



- **SAFEHOME**
  - Healthy Relationships curriculum – middle and high schools in Johnson County
  - “The Outrage” – educational theater presented by high school students
  - A.S.A.P. (Advocates for Sexual Assault Prevention)
- **Synergy Services**
  - Safe Dates - school-based program, 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades

# Some Local Efforts



- **Coaching Boys into Men**
  - St. Thomas Aquinas
  - KS – Hays, Winfield and Ransom
  
- **Children's Mercy**
  - Educate trainees and staff about ARA
  - Social Work provides ARA-specific resources as needed
  - Exploring primary prevention possibilities
    - ✦ Universal education via Hanging Out or Hooking Up card
    - ✦ Coaching Boys into Men
  - Research

# What can you do?



- Talk about healthy relationships with your own children
- Advocate and/or provide education for teens you interact with
- Advocate for school-based programs that address ARA
- Advocate for legislation and policy that support teens experiencing ARA and promotes universal ARA education