



PREVENTION UPDATE

Intimate Partner Violence

Overview

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as violence between two people in a close relationship, including current and former spouses and dating partners. IPV occurs on a continuum from a single episode to ongoing battering and can include physical violence, sexual violence, threats, emotional abuse, stalking, and controlling reproductive health.

IPV is a significant issue for college campuses. According to the [2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#), most male and female victims of IPV “experienced some form of IPV for the first time before age 25.” A [review](#) of college-specific studies yielded estimates of IPV among college students ranging from 13 to 74 percent, although the most consistent findings range from 20 to 33 percent. A [2011 review](#) summarized the literature about specific types of IPV, estimating that approximately 20–30 percent of college students have experienced physical violence, 70–90 percent have experienced psychological violence, and 3–20 percent have experienced sexual violence in a dating relationship.

What the Evidence Tells Us

Successfully addressing the complex issue of IPV requires multiple prevention efforts that target [specific risk and protective factors](#) across individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and societal levels. The World Health Organization (WHO) report [Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women: Taking Action and Generating Evidence](#) summarizes the literature on effective intervention strategies for IPV, including promoting gender equality, building communication and relationship skills, and changing social and cultural gender norms that contribute to IPV. The report also discusses reducing access to and harmful use of alcohol as one part of an overall approach.

Few campus-based IPV prevention efforts have been evaluated; however, successful K–12 efforts, such as [Shifting Boundaries](#) and [the Safe Dates Project](#), suggest that more effective programs use a multilevel approach that combines individual-level skill-building with environmental changes, such as clarifying policies, enforcing laws, and monitoring high-risk areas where IPV can occur. Similarly, the CDC’s [Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancements and Leadership Through Alliances \(DELTA\) Program](#) funds community-based IPV prevention efforts to plan and implement multilevel change strategies that target the unique needs and culture of each of the funded communities.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that effectively addressing IPV on campus will require a combination of efforts to prevent violence before it starts, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. The Higher Education Center’s framework, [Preventing Violence and Promoting Safety in Higher Education Settings: Overview of a Comprehensive Approach](#), suggests using this type of comprehensive, coordinated set of programs, policies, and services that are research-based and adapted to local circumstances.

Lessons Learned From Colleges and Universities

California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), a [CDC DELTA](#) community, created “[Beat the Punch](#),” a multi-strategy campaign to prevent IPV on campus. “Beat the Punch” has three key components: (1) bystander intervention training for students, leaders of student organizations, resident advisers, and housing personnel; (2) a social media campaign that reminds students how to take action against IPV; and (3) involvement in the Cal Poly Women’s Safety Committee that advocates for improving related



campus policies and practices. Preliminary assessment indicates positive initial outcomes, for example, trainees indicated they were better informed about what bystander intervention entails as a result of their participation.

Other campuses also use bystander intervention to address IPV. For example, two State University of New York (SUNY) campuses, [SUNY Oneonta](#) and [Binghamton University](#), address IPV as well as other forms of violence during their in-person [Green Dot](#) training. To reinforce the knowledge and skills taught in the training, SUNY Oneonta's Prevention, Awareness, and Intervention for Relationship Violence and Sexual Assault (PAIRS) committee developed "[Julie's Story](#)," a 12-week poster campaign in the form of a comic book with a new installment each week. The posters use Julie's interactions with her boyfriend and friends to tell the story of an unhealthy relationship, review the warning signs of an unhealthy relationship, and model various helping behaviors.

The University of Michigan's [Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center](#) uses a series of coordinated IPV prevention efforts to target first-year students. The program starts with an interactive theater program during summer orientation that models bystander intervention behaviors and identifies men's roles in addressing IPV as well as sexual violence. Before moving onto campus, students are required to complete an online prevention education course that includes content about IPV as well as other health-related topics. Later in the fall semester, students must attend a workshop where they learn healthy relationship skills, including communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

To engage male student leaders as role models and peer educators in IPV prevention efforts, the University of South Florida's [Center for Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention](#) developed the Relationship Equality and Anti-violence League (REAL) program. REAL Men provide classroom instruction and workshops tailored for male student groups, including fraternities, athletes, and first-year male students. The curriculum counters the social norms that contribute to IPV, such as machismo and male privilege, and trains students to intervene in familiar scenarios, such as stopping a friend from using technology to facilitate stalking or unwanted sexting after a breakup, or rethinking the organization of a party where alcohol is mixed with male dominance and the objectification of women. Participants can stay connected on the [REAL Facebook page](#), where REAL volunteers post related news articles and videos and highlight outreach events throughout the year.

Higher Education Center Resources

- [Preventing Violence and Promoting Safety in Higher Education Settings: Overview of a Comprehensive Approach](#)
- [Interpersonal Violence and Alcohol and Other Drug Use](#)
- "[Bystander Intervention Training Institute](#)": Agenda and Meeting Materials

Other Federal Resources

- [Vice President Biden's "1 is 2 Many" Campaign](#)
- [U.S. Department of Justice Dating Violence Web Page](#)
- [CDC's Intimate Partner Violence Web Page](#)
- [National Center for Victims of Crime Campus Dating Violence Fact Sheet](#)

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