

Love is Not Abuse: A Teen Dating Violence Prevention Curriculum

Reviewers Comments

Reviewer 1 Comments:

Strengths: The program has the flexibility to be implemented in more than one subject. I believe that flexibility could be a benefit to schools with tighter schedules. The program encourages partnership with community domestic violence providers. The program provides a range of teaching strategies to successfully connect with a range of learning styles. I liked the bystander responsibility and practice session.

Limitations: With curriculum compromised of only 3 sessions, the scope of the program is limited in many areas (though a short, flexible program may be a benefit for some schools). The program is primarily framed around recognizing and responding to the signs of teen dating abuse rather than emphasizing healthy, respectful relationship skills. Program information is mainly directed at the individual and relationship levels; school level follow-up is encouraged, but no guidelines or materials are provided to support those efforts.

Reviewer 2 Comments:

In terms of providing pedagogical tools for teachers, this is a high-quality curriculum. The set of “ground rules” presented in the first teaching tips section helps teachers to establish boundaries within the classroom setting and facilitate safe and effective discussion. The curriculum also contains background materials for teachers, which supplement the lesson plans with additional strategies and facts. Writing assignments promote introspective understanding and allow kids space to work out their own thoughts. Several interactive sessions should have supplemented the writing activities, as role-playing and group discussion allow kids to practice skills, particularly in the area of bystander prevention.

The story about an abusive boyfriend’s abusive father is effective in helping students understand the role of the family environment. Exploring other levels of the social ecology (community, institution, society) in a similar manner would likely augment comprehension of the concept that risk factors for and protective factors against dating violence develop across multiple settings. For example, a documentary-style video format could be very effective in exploring themes of the influence of institutional and organizational culture on interpersonal relationships; the follow-up activity could be student involvement in initiatives to strengthen school policy against bullying, dating, and sexual violence.

Love is Not Abuse: A Teen Dating Violence Prevention Curriculum

Reviewers Comments

Among the four videos shown at the beginning of the curriculum, there should be one featuring a male victim and a female perpetrator. It's important to demonstrate that relationship abuse can happen this way, too. The curriculum touches briefly on resisting ethnic stereotypes, but these points should be further elucidated.

Love Is Not Abuse offers high-caliber resources and support for the work teachers do, and if supplemented with themes and actions in other interventions (such as Green Dot and In Touch with Teens), theoretically could be a significantly stronger curriculum.

Reviewer 3 Comments:

The Love is not Abuse curriculum is a well thought-out awareness raising curriculum, but it falls short for primary prevention purposes. The content spends much time and attention on risk reduction and awareness raising, offering warning signs, the cycle of violence, and safety planning information. It spends little, if any, time on the development of healthy sexuality and healthy relationship skills. I could not detect any intention to foster socially just communities and institutions.

The program worked at two levels of the social ecology and hinted at expanding to a third level, but did not specifically cover that level. It is mainly a classroom based curriculum, with few or no activities taking place outside of this setting. However, the risk and protective factors were consistent across the prevention activities, and later activities could be traced back to previous lessons.

The curriculum is set up to be completed in three classroom lessons. While no specific follow-up activities were mentioned with the curriculum, there were suggestions for how to incorporate the curriculum into a broader school-wide violence prevention program, including revising policies on dating abuse and creating a peer education group.

The curriculum allows for active participation among audience members, though most of the activities focus on partner/group work followed by class discussion. There are homework assignments, also, which allow participants to practice their skills and expand their learning.

Love is Not Abuse: A Teen Dating Violence Prevention Curriculum

Reviewers Comments

While it is unclear what causal foundation the curriculum is based on, it is evident that the curriculum has been developed using community-based participatory research. The findings have created changes incorporated into later versions of the curriculum.

This curriculum is intended for high school students, which seems a little late developmentally to be discussing this topic at this level. Unfortunately, the curriculum focuses on behaviors that may already be present in the age group it is targeting; however, I would not use this specific curriculum without revisions with a younger audience. I cannot see a way for the curriculum to be tailored to any other age group as presented.

The curriculum was piloted at a range of high schools across the country, including rural, suburban, and urban. Based on the pilot, the curriculum was changed to include student input, including, I would assume, cultural beliefs, practices, and community norms. The activities seem to present stories from several populations which indicates at least inclusion of diversity.

No systematic method of determining effectiveness and quality improvement was evident. Based on the introduction, there must have been some form of evaluation or assessment in order to pilot and create later, updated version, however the curriculum does not specifically mention any evaluation measures.

The strongest part of the curriculum, in my opinion, was the detail and support it provided to teachers and instructors of the curriculum. The program progressed sequentially and allows for teachers to build upon earlier lessons. The materials offer further reading and support for instructors that could help enhance the presentation of the curriculum.

Overall, I would suggest this curriculum for schools looking for a secondary/risk reduction/awareness raising curriculum, but not for those seeking primary a prevention program.