



The Vision of ERA is to contribute to stopping violence in relationships through province-wide provision of effective, accessible, ethical services for individuals who have used abuse in relationships. Although we wish to respond to all abuse in intimate relationships, our primary focus is on men's abuse against women given that official statistics indicate that 85% of reported incidents are of men using violence against their female partners.

Youth Dating Violence

Adapted from: Healthy Relationships for Youth: A Youth Dating Violence Intervention by Kerry Chutter (2008)

The teen years are a time of exploration when young people are testing the limits of acceptable behaviour. During this time many teens could end up in a relationship where one person is abusive towards the other. The pattern of assault by a boyfriend or girlfriend, which occurs during the dating phase, may be carried over into later relationships unless there is a therapeutic intervention. The alarming course of repeating and escalating violence that begins in adolescence when dating patterns are being formed illustrates that early prevention and intervention is crucial.

Prevalence

- 20% to 46% of youth have been abused by a relationship partner
- the 16 to 24 year-old age group has the highest rate of victimization within dating relationships
- it is within dating relationships where more than half of the sexual assaults against teenage girls happens

Sequela of Victimization

- physical harm to youth
- symptoms of post traumatic stress
- poor self esteem and self worth
- symptoms of depression
- learning difficulties
- psychosomatic effects (e.g. chronic pain)
- eating disorders
- risky sexual behaviour
- suicidal ideation

Risk Factors for Using Violence

- past involvement in an abusive relationship
- early onset drug use (in particular high marijuana use and drinking alcohol)
- poor parental monitoring
- poor parental support
- stress
- the inability to emotionally self regulate
- symptoms of depression
- gender attitudes and beliefs that condone violence

Co-occurring behaviours

- school failure
- aggression towards the same sex
- risky sexual behaviours

Youth Dating Violence- What Can Be Done?

Gender Differences Indicate Separate Treatment Groups needed with Emphasis on Male Offenders

Dating violence statistics are disproportionately high for males who use violence in relationships. Males report not only significantly higher amounts of violence towards dating partners but higher co-occurring substance abuse than females. Males and females also show differences in their psychological adjustment. Males tend to externalize showing "hostility, delinquency, aggression, and hyperactivity" while females tend to internalize often presenting symptoms through "withdrawal, somatic complaint, anxiety, depression, obsession, and compulsion". It is important to note that the literature points out that the majority of female offenders are most often reacting in self defense. Another consideration for separate intervention groups for males and females are gender role stereotypes. Gender role stereotypes are particularly influential for men and customary male role attitudes are synonymous with coercive sexual conduct and adversarial sexual relationships.

Knowledge of Violence

Youth must learn to identify behaviour that is violent, controlling, and abusive as, well as what constitutes a healthy relationship. It is important for youth to recognize psychological aggression as well as the range of physical aggression and to have conversations about the characteristics, consequences, and escalation of violence involved in abusive dating relationships.