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Title: Preventing Dating Violence among At-Risk Adolescents: Preliminary Outcomes of Expect Respect Support Groups

Text: Dating violence has substantial and long-lasting negative effects for victims and perpetrators (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002; Jewkes, Sen, Garcia-Moreno, 2002). Much work suggests dating violence is initiated during adolescence (Krahe, 1998; Poitras, & Lavoie, 1995), thus increasing the need for prevention programs during the middle and high school years (Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, & Haworth, 2002). To decrease the incidence and prevalence of dating violence perpetration and victimization among adolescents, Expect Respect (ER, Ball, Rosenbluth, Randolph, & Aoki, 2008) was developed as a comprehensive prevention program for dating violence. ER employs support groups, youth leadership, and school-wide prevention strategies. ER support groups meet weekly for 24 sessions during school to provide accessible services for youth who are at increased risk for dating violence due to experiences of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Youth who are already engaged in abusive peer and dating relationships are included as well. In an initial, uncontrolled evaluation of 25 ER support groups, one hundred forty four students (67

female, 77 male) completed the program in the 2007-2008 school year. When we examined students' reports of physical and sexual violence perpetration and victimization in the three months prior to group participation, 90 (62.5%) reported no physical or sexual perpetration or victimization, 9 (6.3%) reported physical or sexual perpetration only, 20 (13.9%) reported physical or sexual victimization only, and 24 (16.7%) reported physical or sexual perpetration and victimization. We then collapsed across support groups and examined students' changes in dating behaviors between the initiation and completion of the group. At completion of the groups an overall significant increase was found in students' reports of their use ( $t(142) = -3.65, p = .007$ ) and their partners' use ( $t(141) = -2.74, p = .001$ ) of positive conflict resolution strategies. When we examined how outcomes differed based on reports of perpetration/victimization at baseline, we found that among the students who reported physical or sexual perpetration and victimization at baseline ( $n = 24$ ), a significant decrease was found in emotional victimization ( $t(23) = 2.38, p = .03$ ), emotional perpetration ( $t(23) = 2.06, p = .05$ ), physical victimization ( $t(23) = 2.10, p = .05$ ) and physical perpetration ( $t(23) = 2.06, p = .05$ ). These preliminary results, if replicated in well-controlled, rigorous evaluations, would suggest that the ER support groups show promise in decreasing negative dating behaviors and increasing positive dating behaviors. Implications and future directions ER groups will be discussed.

Theme Groups: 2 Relationships relevant to...

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