



Meeting Summary

## **ILLINOIS FAMILY VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCILS**

**Semi-Annual State Council Meeting  
July 16, 2002  
Northfield Inn  
Springfield, Illinois**

There were approximately 200 people in attendance from local and state committees and councils.

### **Welcome**

The day began with a welcoming address by Judge Thomas G. Russell and Janice DiGirolamo, Co-chairs of the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils. Judge Russell thanked everyone for coming to share their knowledge and to learn more about how to assist teens. He also thanked the teen panel for agreeing to come and provide fresh insights to enable us to better the role we play in helping teens. Janice thanked everyone for being present, doing the work that they do and noted how fortunate we are to do work that is meaningful and makes such a significant difference in lives.

Janice introduced Amy Lehrner, Program & Policy Specialist, Bureau of Domestic Violence Prevention & Intervention, Illinois Department of Human Services to talk about the prevalence of teen dating violence

### **Teen Dating Violence**

Ms. Lehrner provided an overview on teen dating violence that included prevalence, dynamics, risk factors, warning signs, effects and systems challenges to working with teens in dating violence relationships.

**Prevalence** - Teen dating violence (TDV) is the ongoing pattern of behavior in which one young person is using power and control over another person that he/she is dating. TDV is not a problem that is exclusive to any particular group. It is found across the board in rural, urban and suburban communities, crossing all racial and religious lines. Research has increased in the last 15 years however, the availability of data and research is still limited. Prevalence and rate of reporting varies depending on how TDV is defined. The reporting rate is higher when the definition includes behavior such as hitting, kicking, punching and slapping and threatening one's partner. One study revealed that 59% of teens reported experiencing at least one incident in the last year. A JAMA

study found that 1 out of 5 teens reported experiencing physical and sexual abuse in a dating relationship which indicated a severe social and public health problem. And researchers estimate that 1/3 of teens experience dating violence.

***Dynamics and additional issues for teens*** - The dynamics of teen dating violence are similar to adult intimate partner violence in that they mirror the perpetrator's use of power and control over the victim, utilizing abusive tactics which include shame, blame, isolation, threats, physical abuse and minimization of abuse.

Some additional issues for teens include:

- Lack of experience. For some it may be their first experience dating
- The developmental stage of adolescence - asserting independence, developing identity and gender roles and questioning self value and worth may cause a teen to feel prohibited from reaching out or asking for help.
- Peer pressure to be in a relationship
- Confusing and/or combining jealousy and possessiveness as proof or a confirmation of love

***Risk Factors*** - Dating violence and sexual assault can happen to anyone. Some factors that might put a teen at risk to be a victim are:

- ▶ Exposure to community and school violence
- ▶ Acceptance of dating violence
- ▶ Teen parents
- ▶ Previous sexual assault victimization

Some factors that might put a teen at risk to be a perpetrator are:

- Beliefs and attitudes about the acceptance of violence (highly consistent with the use of physical abuse for males)
- A history of dating violence and prior verbal abuse
- Family history of observing or experiencing abuse
- Other risk behaviors including: substance abuse; aggression, truancy, delinquency or criminal-related problems

***Warning Signs*** - Some warning signs often observed of victims of teen dating violence can include: withdrawing from peers and family members, tardiness and inconsistent school attendance, marks or bruises, crying for no apparent reason and depression.

Some warning signs often observed of perpetrators of teen dating violence can include: extreme jealousy and possessiveness, monitoring partner closely, withdrawal and isolation and overreacting to minor incidents.

***Effects*** - The effects of teen dating violence are numerous. It can impact the victim's school environment and academic performance, cause social isolation and a diminished sense of self worth and potential.

A study by the Journal of the American Medical Association found that teen girls in violent dating relationships were at an increased risk for: substance and drug abuse; pregnancy; sexual health risk behavior and sexually transmitted diseases; unhealthy weight control; depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, considering or attempting suicide; physical injury and homicide.

**Systems Challenges** - Teens usually do not seek help from adults. In one study of teens who were in violent dating relationships, 6 % told a family member, 30% told no one and 61% told a friend. While awareness and education on this issue is important, it is of particular importance that teens are educated on the issue. Being that teens most often report to their peers, it is important that their peers have a good understanding of the issue, of who can help and what resources are available.

Prevention and intervention efforts are ongoing and continue to be crucial. Some systems' issues for teen dating violence are: Orders of Protection, law enforcement response and adequate shelter services. Building multi-disciplinary community response systems is critical. We need to design and deliver services and programs that are youth appropriate. More advocacy is needed with the courts, law enforcement and schools as well as the building of alliances with youth, youth advocates, domestic violence and sexual assault providers, schools, the legal system and parents.

**Joyce Sousa, Director of Cognition Works, Inc.**

***A Year In The Schools - What did We Learn?***

We realized that in order to effect a change with the students, we would need to begin with the staff and thus, worked almost exclusively with staff. Schools that showed the greatest progress had strong leadership, and were the quickest to work on staff resistance and facilitate change.

It was a surprise when we discovered how difficult it is for personnel to change. Change is stressful. Learning and doing something different can cause a great deal of personal discomfort. We found that it was very much the "canary in the mine" scenario. It was viewed as the student being a barometer, in distress. This view/interpretation informed how staff acted and responded. The tendency was to focus on the canary by providing canary rescue, looking at food supply, inoculation, etc. All actions resulting in canary survival which are good but don't look at adults resistance to change. We learned the importance of working on the environment and ourselves as adults and that in that lies the greatest opportunity for change.

**Barbara Shaw, Director of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA)**

***Illinois' "Safe To Learn" Program***

Ms. Shaw provided a brief status of the Safe To Learn Program. The program was cut due to state budgetary shortfalls. Safe To Learn is a grant program administered by IVPA that funds school districts across Illinois to implement school violence prevention programs with school personnel, students, parents and community members. Programs include addressing safety and violence reduction through a myriad of school projects and education and community awareness. This past year the Safe To Learn Program also funded teen dating violence grants in 20 schools. Grantees completed the planning stage of their programs which included training teachers and staff and purchasing resources. The Safe To Learn cut occurred before the implementation stage of the teen dating violence grants. Ms. Shaw thanked everyone who advocated for the restoration of the program and assured them that those efforts are continuing. The goal is to restore the program at the next legislative session.

## **Youth Violence Prevention**

Presenters shared successes and learnings from implementing youth violence prevention work in schools through R.E.A.C.H., the Breakable Vow and Schools Respond to Family Violence projects.

### **Mariame Kaba and Carolyn Chernoff, Friends of Battered Women and Their Children *Relationship Education: A Choice For Hope (R.E.A.C.H.)***

Ms. Kaba and Ms. Chernoff spoke about their program Relationship Education: A Choice For Hope (R.E.A.C.H.). The REACH program is conducted in schools with high school students. Our program builds upon the knowledge kids have. One method we use is to take them through a decision making exercise called *Stay or Go*.

Utilizing audience volunteers, Ms. Kaba and Ms. Chernoff took the audience through the “Stay or Go” exercise. Approximately 15 volunteers lined up, one behind the other. A hypothetical dating relationship scenario was read to the volunteers. A series of behaviors and events were introduced during the reading (e.g. you have been dating for a while and your partner expressed that he doesn’t want you hanging out with certain friends any longer). And at the end of each introduction the participants were asked, “do you stay in the relationship or go?” At that point they would choose to remain in the *stay* line or move over to the *go* line. Many expressed that listening to the scenario it was difficult to make choices about staying or going, because some of the events and behavior were subtle although with reflection were recognizable as use of power and control.

“We use this exercise to show how patterns are formed. We want students to be able to identify what an abusive relationship is and to know that it is not always receiving a punch, a slap or a black eye, but that the abuse can also be subtle.”

### **Cathy Filippi, Richton Park Police Department and Kara Bickhem, Rich East High School *The Breakable Vow***

Cathy Filippi, a Domestic Violence Officer with the Richton Park Police Department Kara Bickhem a teacher at Rich East High School spoke about the Breakable Vow Program. Officer Filippi, who helped initiate the Program said that in 2000 her Department begin to notice that statistics in the domestic violence unit revealed a prominent involvement of juveniles in domestic violence incidents. A decision was made to address this issue through a youth education program within the schools utilizing the book, “The Breakable Vow” and the accompanying curriculum. The book is a fictional story that chronicles the abuse handed out by a teen-aged boy against a teen-aged girl through high school and, after they married, continuing on into their adult lives.

The Breakable Vow Domestic Violence Prevention Education Program is designed to assist young people in choosing non-violent partners and recognizing and developing healthy relationships. The program was piloted in high schools in Richton Park and Park Forest, Illinois. The program was implemented utilizing a multi-disciplinary team consisting of teachers, assistant state’s attorneys and police officers. It was introduced through a variety of classes using the bibliotherapy technique (assigned reading & classroom discussion). Topics included: cycle of violence; types of abuse; profile of an abusive partner; victim blaming; healthy and unhealthy relationships; risk assessment; safety and break-up plans; helping friends; date rape and date rape drugs; and society’s acceptance of dating violence. We found that students were “hungry” for this knowledge, had many questions

and appreciated the opportunity to address those questions to the appropriate parties (e.g. legal questions to law enforcement officers, assistant state's attorney's, etc.).

**Paula Campbell, The Prairie Center Against Sexual Assault**

Paula Campbell, Prevention and Education Specialist for the Prairie Center Against Sexual Assault spoke about the programs and services offered by the Center. Our program provides education in the schools for pre-K and junior high school students. Pre-K children are taught about “good and bad touch” and taught that if someone is hurting them or doing something to them that makes them feel sad or uncomfortable, it is okay to talk to someone they trust about it. We seek to empower junior high school students by teaching them skills which include assertiveness, decision making, and developing positive relationships. Our program discusses date rape and sexual assault and defines what “consent” means. We have found that many of our youth are unclear on what consent is and how it is given. Often they can not identify when they have or a friend has been a victim of sexual assault; and date rape is minimized, especially if the victim had prior intimacy with the perpetrator.

We must empower students and friends to take a stand against violence. We need comprehensive programming. There are many great programs already established. It is important to find them and collaborate with them. To find the sexual assault agency that serves your area, you can go to the website for the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) and conduct a search by entering your zip code. Their website address is [www.ICASA.org](http://www.ICASA.org).

**Teresa Adair and Pat Olson-McGee, Union Community School  
*Schools Respond to Family Violence***

Teresa Adair, School Psychologist, and Pat Olson-McGee, a teacher with Union Community School District #115 in Biggsville, Illinois, spoke about the Schools Respond to Family Violence Project.

The Schools Respond to Family Violence Project is a 18 month project sponsored by the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils in partnership with the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority. The Project is funded by the Safe To Learn Project, and Union Community Unit School District #115 is one of three pilot sites. Each site has developed a local multi-disciplinary project team which includes district superintendents, principals, school counselors, school liaisons, Coordinators of local Family Violence Coordinating Councils, and representatives from sexual assault and domestic violence agencies, a DCFS representative and a parent representative, a youth representative and a teacher.

We felt that through this project we could make a difference with students and the staff. We wanted to involve teachers and students. The first thing we did was survey our staff to gauge their level of knowledge and determine specific topics related to family violence that they were interested in learning more about. We brought in speakers who spoke to students and school personnel on a variety of family violence issues, including, child abuse, child witnessing of domestic violence, bullying and dating violence. One exceptionally powerful speaker well received by both students and teachers was Vicki Crompton-Tetter's whose 15 year old daughter Jennifer was killed by her abusive boyfriend. Ms. Crompton-Tetter came and shared her story. Other speakers included a survivor and a perpetrator of dating violence who shared their experiences, discussing the cycle of

violence and of children witnessing violence in the home. Neighboring high schools were invited to view the play, “The Yellow Dress”- a one woman performance designed to educate youth about dating violence.

What we learned:

Our students expressed that they enjoyed and learned a lot from the project. Many of our boys did share that they sometimes felt victimized by some of the discussions and found some topics to be upsetting.

With the increase in knowledge staff and students felt empowered, free and safe to speak about the issue. Students and school personnel communicated better with one another.

### **Esther Franco-Payne, Circuit Court of Cook County Family Violence Coordinating Councils Self Reflection**

Esther Franco-Payne, Cook County Council Coordinator of the Circuit Court of Cook County Family Violence Coordinating Councils, led adult participants through a self reflection group exercise. Adult participants were asked to think back and recall what it was like being 15 years old. They chose a partner in the audience and were given approximately 15 questions to discuss which related to their experience as a teen.

Some responses to the exercise were:

- It was difficult to remember, open up and share those feelings.
- I remembered that adolescence is a very emotional time that I struggled through.
- One of the issues teens are dealing with today now have a name and a face: teen dating violence.
- How do we get young people to disclose and talk about it remembering how difficult it to talk about it?
- I can't imagine dealing then with the normality of pressure there is now to have sex.
- There are an enormous number of issues teens are dealing with in conjunction to dating violence. Vulnerability is a huge issue.
- We must help teens garner a support system to let them know that they are not alone, and that they are not the only one.
- We need to educate teens on how to develop healthy relationship.
- Gender appropriate education is needed. In some cases we need to create an environment for dialogue among males and females to discuss their own issues.
- When teens talk to us and disclose abuse, they need to feel safe and that the perpetrator will be held accountable for his abusive behavior. Review and keep abreast of laws and policies changes.

### **Esther Franco-Payne, Circuit Court of Cook County Family Violence Coordinating Councils Addressing Teen Dating Violence Through Youth Leadership**

Esther Franco-Payne led the group's dialogue with teens on dating violence. A youth panel, comprised of teens from Brownstown, Loogootee, Richton Park and Vandalia, Illinois reacted to the following teen dating violence scenario:

“What would you do?”

“Alicia a 16 year old Latina has been secretly dating Tue an 18 year old Asian American for close to one year. Both Alicia and Tue realize that their upbringing does not allow for them to date. The prom is approaching and it’s bringing up some sensitive issues for Alicia and Tue. Tue is willing to talk with his parents asking for permission to take Alicia to the prom, however Alicia is afraid of how her Dad will react, he gets angry easily. At their second attempt in discussing this, Tue is losing it, he tells Alicia, “if you care about our relationship and love me, you will do this for me.” Tue is angry with Alicia for not going along with what he wishes. Alicia feels helpless and anxious at the same time. Alicia bows her head. Tue sees this as a sign of disrespect and starts yelling and shaking Alicia. Alicia is able to break free and runs out of the room crying. Later that day, Tue finds Alicia with a group of girls in the park. Tue asks Alicia if he could talk with her for a moment. Alicia reluctantly walks slowly towards Tue. Tue apologies profoundly and asks for forgiveness. Alicia accepts his apology, however she still is not looking at him. Alicia’s friends notice something different about this interaction and come over by her. At this point, Shereda reminds Alicia that they will be late for a meeting so they need to get going. Alicia turns to Tue and tells him she will talk with him later. When she met him later he pushed her against the wall causing her to hit her head. Tue told her that she had disrespected him and that he was not going to stand for this.”

Reactant panel comments:

How would you address this situation in your school or community?

- ▶ Talk to Tue and recommend that he speak to the school counselor.
- ▶ Talk to Alicia. Listen to her and encourage her to tell her parents.
- ▶ Talk to Alicia and encourage her to get an Order of Protection.
- ▶ Talk to Tue’s parents about his behavior.
- ▶ Talk to Alicia’s friend Shereda to get a better understanding of the relationship and advice on how I can help.
- ▶ Ask Alicia how important can her and Tues’s relationship be if it must be kept secret.
- ▶ Encourage Alicia to not attend the prom with Tue.
- ▶ There could be a big difference due to culture. I would tell her to let the relationship fizzle out.
- ▶ Explain to Alicia that she and Tue’s relationship is not a healthy one and that she has options.

Do you think that Alicia would seek an Order of Protection?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ If Tue’s behavior is ongoing she should.

Are there any adults that you would choose to help handle this situation?

- ▶ My parents
- ▶ The school counselor
- ▶ Alicia’s parents should be involved. If her parents do not know about the abuse, it could go on and on.

How would you educate your community about teen dating violence?

- ▶ Bring experienced speakers to talk in schools, share information on resources and let students know that they are not alone and there is someone they can talk to.
- ▶ Use creative and fun things that people can relate to but explain that this is a very serious issue.

Audience comments:

What are some of your thoughts about what you observed or heard?

- Teens focused a lot on communication
- Knowing the importance of peer relationships at this age, it is important to educate teens on this issue.
- I was worried about Alicia's fear over her father's response to her involvement with Tue. She might need to be careful in how she tells her parents. If she has witnessed violence in the home she may not feel comfortable telling her mother.
- I thought of gay, bisexual, lesbian, transsexual and questioning teens. They have the highest rate of suicide and often fall through the cracks due to a particular type of isolation.
- In my experience as a parent I have found that kids are starving to have someone listen to them. They are confused about many issues and want someone who will talk to them openly and honestly.

### **Ryan Tyler**

#### **Singing Out Against Domestic Violence**

Ryan Tyler is a 15 year old musician, singer and songwriter. His song titled *Day One* was the first place winner of the student songwriting contest sponsored by the Domestic Violence Unit of the Richton Park Police Department. The CD of his song was featured. The audience listened to his lyrics that expressed feelings of fear, frustration and isolation from the point of view of a victim of domestic violence asking the question: *how can she feel safe?*

### **Cathy Filippi, Richton Park Police Department**

#### **You Belong To Me**

Participants viewed a video presentation of the play *You Belong To Me!* The play consists of an all teen cast from the Rich Township High School Dating Violence Prevention Education Drama Group and has been performed in many local high schools. It is a short, fact based, fictional character drama depicting the dynamics and impact of teen dating violence. The drama also touches upon generational violence as learned behavior, teens turning to one another for help and the importance of educating our youth on dating violence.

The following are some Websites that were referred to as a resource for obtaining more information on issues discussed during the meeting:

Illinois Center for Violence Prevention	<a href="http://www.Violence-Prevention.com">www.Violence-Prevention.com</a>
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence	<a href="http://www.ILCADV.org">www.ILCADV.org</a>
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault	<a href="http://www.ICASA.org">www.ICASA.org</a>
Illinois Violence Prevention Authority	<a href="http://www.IVPA.org">www.IVPA.org</a>