

# BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



## Preventing teen dating violence through skills-based education

### What is the primary project goal?

To design, implement, and evaluate a series of classroom-based workshops that reduce the incidence of teen dating violence among youth of all genders in grades 8 and 9 through skills-based education on healthy relationships. Our project brings together the trauma-informed gender violence expertise of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) and the evidence-based sexual health education expertise of Planned Parenthood Ottawa (PPO).

### WHO?



Youth (Grades 8 and 9) in communities at highest risk to experiencing gender-based violence

- a. Youth of all genders, including young women, young men and other marginalized genders
- b. Indigenous youth, newcomer youth, and queer and trans youth

Teachers and school staff will receive the curriculum delivered through workshops and support materials

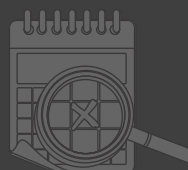
Parents will be advised about the workshops and workshop contents

### WHERE?

Classroom-based delivery in schools in or near Ottawa, Ontario



### WHEN?



Program delivery spread across 5 weeks, 1 workshop per week

Overall project: 2018-2023

### WHAT?



- 1 Extensive youth engagement in the development of the intervention and in the research and evaluation of the intervention.
- 2 Consultation and program piloting with a broad range of communities to ensure cultural safety.
- 3 A health equity approach to specifically address the needs of populations that are at higher risk of teen dating violence.

Program led by:

Planned  
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In collaboration with:



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## 1 SKILLS-BASED EDUCATION

- A)** Our project will present deliver a series of 5 classroom-based and skill-focused workshops to youth in grades 8 and 9. Existing workshops by PPO and OCTEVAW on healthy relationships, consent, sexual decision-making and bystander intervention serve as the foundation for this series.
- B)** The series will also provide opportunities for students to learn and practice six skills including nonviolent conflict resolution, effective communication, ability to negotiate and adjust to stress, belief in partner's right to autonomy, shared decision-making, and trust.

### WHY?

- 1** *Successful prevention programs utilize varied teaching methods that provide opportunities for participatory learning and skill development (Nation et al., 2003).*
- 2** *Contemporary research demonstrates that participatory and skills-based learning is an essential component of effective sexual violence prevention (DeGue et al. 2014; De La Rue et al 2017).*
- 3** *Teens must be provided with the opportunity to learn and practice health-enhancing behaviours in order for them to successfully perform these behaviours in dating and other sexual relationships (Public Health Agency of Canada)*
- 4** *Centres for Disease Control (2008) has identified the above six skills as foundational to healthy, respectful, and non-violent relationships.*

## 2 CONSECUTIVE WORKSHOP DELIVERY

- A)** As much as possible, the workshops series will be delivered to participants at a rate of one workshop a week for 5 consecutive weeks. This will allow participants to learn and apply foundational concepts such shared decision-making both inside and beyond the classroom before they are asked to practice more difficult healthy relationships behaviours such as non-violence conflict resolution.

### WHY?

- 1** *Five workshops over five weeks will help the project to achieve sufficient dosage, one of the nine characteristics of effective prevention programs (Nation et al., 2003).*
- 2** *Most experts agree that “one and done” workshops are not sufficient to affect the underlying attitudes and behaviours that cause teen dating violence.*

## 3 HEALTH EQUITY APPROACH

Our research and program development will use a health equity approach to develop the mainstream materials that will be inclusive for a diverse audience. We will also be working with specific groups of youth (See: *Who?* section) to adapt materials with community consultation where necessary.

**WHY?** *Because different community groups face different risks for violence, we recognize there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution for all youth.*

## 4 ADDRESS MEN'S GENDER ROLES

This project will include ways to decrease male students' adherence to traditional gender roles as a method to reduce dating violence.



### WHY?

- 1 A recent systematic review of risk and protective factors associated with perpetration of sexual violence found that gender-related cognitions such as hostility toward women, traditional gender role adherence, and hypermasculinity are all strongly associated with perpetration (Tharp et al. 2014).

## 5 PROVIDE RESOURCES

- A) Our project will also provide teacher and school support materials. The resources will include a template for advising parents about the workshops and workshop contents; information to familiarize school staff with policies around handling disclosures; a process to alert school social workers and counselors.
- B) As our project is scaled up, we will develop a workshop facilitation manual explaining the learning objectives for each workshop, webinars and guidebooks for teachers on best practices in dating violence education, realities of teen dating violence, and how to handle disclosures.

### WHY?

- 1 The resources and facilitation manual will enable teachers and school support staff to deliver the curriculum without the need for outside experts.
- 2 Building the capacity of teachers and school staff will extend the potential benefits of the project past the original timeline.

## REFERENCES

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