

# Preventing and Responding to Teen Dating Violence: A National Study of School Principals' Perspectives and Practices

## WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

- Teen dating violence (TDV) is a problem among adolescents and can have long-term effects on their mental and physical health.
- Schools are a key site for TDV prevention efforts.
- However, very little is known about what school administrators know about TDV, how they feel about TDV prevention in schools, and if they are prepared to support TDV prevention.
- Therefore, this study asked school principals about their current perspectives and practices on preventing TDV in schools.

## **WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?**

- According to principals, most schools (in the United States) are not adequately prepared to play a role in TDV prevention efforts.
- Schools need clear direction on TDV prevention practices, clear direction for policies for responding to TDV, and TDV prevention training for school staff.

## WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

- In this study, 396 high school principals in the United States completed a survey.
- The survey covered: principals' knowledge of TDV; the school's TDV prevention practices and policies; whether there was TDV prevention training for school staff; beliefs about the role schools play in preventing TDV; and what they thought were barriers to helping students experiencing TDV.



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## **WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?**

- Most principals had never received formal training on TDV, had limited knowledge of TDV, and did not provide formal training to their staff on TDV issues.
- Most principals reported their school did not have a protocol to respond to incidents of TDV, and that the school violence prevention policy did not specifically address TDV.
- However, most principals did report assisting a student with TDV victimization in the past 2 years; most often, principals would refer the student to a school counselor, inform parents/guardians, or inform police or legal authorities.
- Most principals believed that school counselors have a role in preventing TDV.
- Principals identified a variety of barriers to TDV prevention in school, including lack of training and appropriate protocols to respond to TDV incidents.

## **HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?**

- Schools need support to develop TDV prevention practices and policies, to train school staff on TDV prevention, and to educate school staff on how they can play a role in TDV prevention.
- Policy makers should require that schools create policies for how to respond to incidents of TDV, and to train school staff on TDV prevention.

## **ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS**

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## **KEYWORDS**

teen dating violence, principals, school-based prevention, adolescence, school health service

## **FULL REFERENCE**

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