ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abuse among Adolescents: The Facts

- Research indicates that adolescents and young adults experience the highest degree of intimate violence of any age group and that, as a sub-group, young women ages 16-24 are most likely to be victimized (FVPF, 2004)

- Among these women, teen mothers are especially vulnerable

- In one study, teen mothers reported IPV rates of 27% compared to 15.9% of adult women (Rosewater, 2003)
Abuse among Adolescents: The Facts

- Poverty, past abuse, low education, and isolation also contribute to intimate violence among teen mothers.

- Teens and young mothers can be simultaneously abused by family members and intimate partners.

- Policies, such as housing stipulation attached TANF, may perpetuate violent living situations for these vulnerable mothers.
Abuse among Adolescents: The Consequences

- Increased unintended pregnancies, HIV and STIs
- Increase rates of depression and suicide thoughts
- Increased use of cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs
- Youth experiencing child and family abuse, as well as IPV in their family of origin, will be impacted well into adulthood
- Abused teen parents may be less able to parent effectively, feeling withdrawn from their children, thus perpetuating a cycle
Abuse among Adolescents: Specific Challenges

- Dating violence may be just one issue among many that pose more imminent danger and challenges for our most marginalized youth; families, communities may pose violent threats.
- Condom negotiation in the presence of an abusive relationship is particularly challenging.
- Pregnant and parenting teens have similar relationship dynamics as adults but fewer skills.
- There are higher rates of IPV with unintended pregnancy—few teen pregnancies are intended.
- Pregnant and parenting teens may be very isolated; have housing issues related to TANF that force them to stay in abusive situations.
Abuse among Adolescents: Specific Challenges

- Teens can think possessive behavior means “he/she loves me”
- Challenging to address needs of all youth with one curriculum/intervention
- Technology presenting new and rapidly changing means to control a partner’s behavior or sexually abuse them through “sexting” and the like
One in four teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cellphones and texting.

One in five teen girls and one in ten younger teen girls (13 to 16) have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves. Even more teen girls, 37 percent, have sent or posted sexually suggestive text, email or IM (instant messages).

More than half of teen girls (51 percent) say pressure from a guy is a reason girls send sexy messages or images, while only 18 percent of teen boys say pressure from a girl is a reason. Twelve percent of teen girls who have sent sexually suggestive messages or images say they felt “pressured” to do so.
Abuse among Adolescents: Other marginalized populations

- Marginalized populations of youth are at greater risk for abuse and generally have fewer resources available to them.
  - LGBTQ youth scared of being ‘outed’, not taken seriously
  - Homeless and runaway youth staying somewhere that isn’t safe out of necessity
  - Trading sex for sustenance, etc.
- Where do we find these youth?
- What kind of resources and supports are available?
Abuse among Adolescents: Our Approach

- Age appropriate
- Strictly confidential—don’t assume family members are “safe”, e.g. give pregnancy test results in private
- Understand policies that affect this population
- Know resources in your community
- Context, context, context
Abuse among Adolescents: Our Response

- Assure confidentiality, be non-judgmental and empathetic
- Have current information for referral agencies and community resources
- Conduct danger assessment and safety planning
- Consider using the Stages of Change model as your guide, i.e. establish realistic goals for each intervention that move the young person toward taking action
Resources

- Interpersonal Violence and Adolescent Pregnancy: Implications for Practice and Policy
- Boys will be Boys: Understanding the Impact of Child Maltreatment and Family Violence on the Sexual, Reproductive, and Parenting Behaviors of Young Men
- Widening Our Lens: A Comprehensive Strategy to Address the Impact of Child Maltreatment, Interpersonal, and Family Violence on Youth
- All available at HealthyTeenNetwork.org