

# INJURY UPDATE

*A Report to Oklahoma Injury Surveillance Participants\**

March 21, 2011

## Dating and Sexual Violence Among Oklahoma High School Students

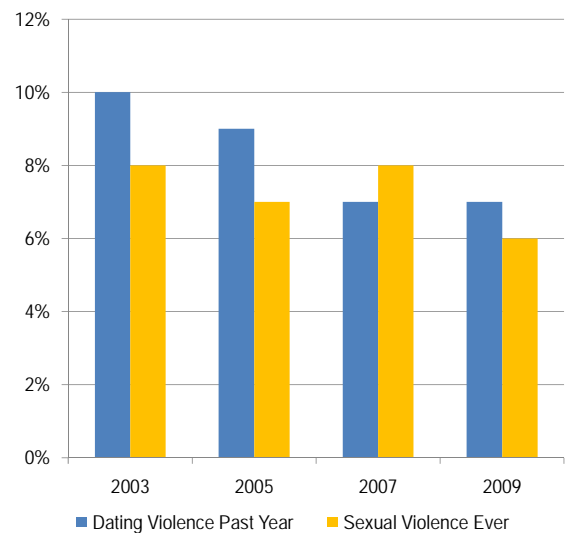
Dating violence and sexual violence among teens are major public health concerns in the United States. Both physical and sexual intimate partner violence are risk factors for poor health outcomes including depression and substance abuse. Nationally, it is estimated that 22% of women and 7% of men 18 years and older have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some time in their life. Additionally, 17% of women and 3% of men have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Rape has been described as a “tragedy of youth.” More than 50% of female rape victims were less than 18 years old when they experienced the first rape. Research shows that experiencing dating violence and/or sexual assault at a young age is a risk factor for intimate partner violence (IPV) in adulthood.

Dating violence is the use of harassing, controlling, and/or abusive behavior to maintain power and control over a partner in a romantic relationship. It can take the form of emotional/verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, stalking, or a combination of abusive behaviors. Anyone can be a victim of dating violence regardless of age, race, or gender. Teens are particularly vulnerable to dating violence due to their young age and inexperience with romantic relationships.

The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) system estimated that 10% of high school students nationwide had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the last 12 months. The prevalence of dating violence varies across states from a low of 7% in Oklahoma and Vermont to a high of 18% in Louisiana. Overall, dating violence was more prevalent among black (14%) and Hispanic (11%) students than white (8%) students. Males reported slightly higher rates of dating violence than females, 10% and 9% respectively. Additionally, 7% of students reported they had been forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to. The prevalence of sexual assault was more than two times higher among females than males, 11% and 5% respectively.

The dynamics of abuse in adolescent romantic relationships likely differs from adult relationships. The National Violence against Women Survey found that the percentage of adult women reporting IPV (25%) was more than three times that for men (8%). In contrast, YRBS data show that teen boys and girls report dating violence at similar rates.

Figure 1. Prevalence of Dating Violence and Sexual Violence by Year among High School Students, Oklahoma, 2003-2009



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, 2003-2009

\*The INJURY UPDATE is a publication of the Injury Prevention Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. This and other IPS information may be obtained from the Injury Prevention Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health, 1000 N.E. 10th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73117, 405-271-3430 or 1-800-522-0204 (in Oklahoma). IPS publications are also available at <http://ips.health.ok.gov>

The consequences of teen dating violence are different for boys and girls. Compared to boys, girls are more likely to sustain injuries and require medical attention from physical abuse, experience greater fear for their safety, and perceive dating violence physically or psychologically threatening. Anger is the most frequently reported motivation for violence by both boys and girls, but the second most reported motivation for boys is to gain power over their dating partner, while for girls it is self defense.

Regardless of gender, the consequences of physical and sexual dating violence can include depression, suicide attempts, and performing poorly in school. Teens who experience dating violence are also more likely to report binge drinking and physical fighting. Patterns of violence may also be carried into future relationships.

### OKLAHOMA YRBS

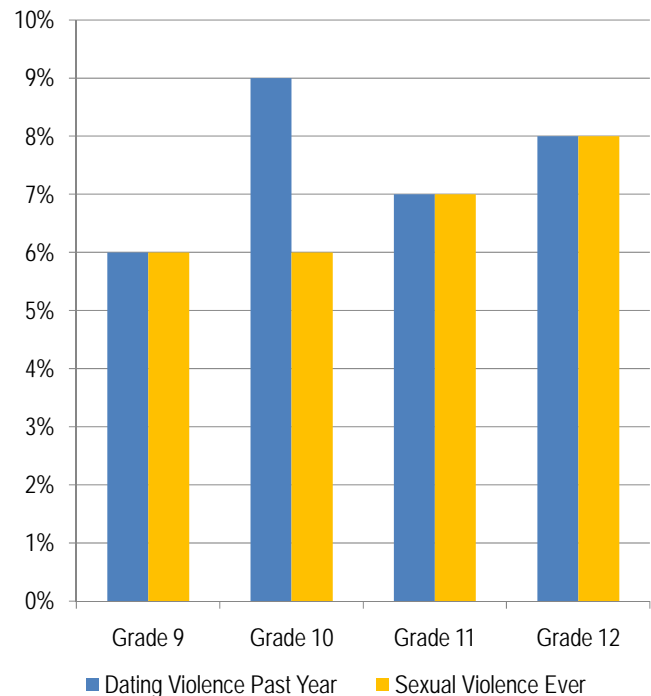
The prevalence of dating violence in Oklahoma declined from 10% in 2003 to 7% in 2009 (Figure 1). During 2009, an estimated 13,000 students had experienced physical dating violence in the last year. The percentage of Oklahoma students reporting dating violence was less than students nationally, 7% vs. 10%. Boys reported past year dating violence more often than girls, 9% vs. 6% respectively. The highest rates of dating violence were reported by students identifying themselves as mixed race (13%) and Hispanic students (10%). Black and white students had similar rates of dating violence (8% each). Students in 10th grade reported the highest rates of dating violence at 9% (Figure 2).

The prevalence of sexual assault among high school students declined from 8% in 2003 to 6% in 2009 (Figure 1). In 2009, the rate of sexual assault reported by high school students in Oklahoma (6%) was similar to the national rate (7%). Similar to national data, the prevalence of sexual assault was more than two times higher among girls than boys, 9% vs. 4%. The highest rates of lifetime sexual assault were among students identifying themselves as mixed race (11%) and white students (7%), followed by Hispanic and black students (6%). Students in grade 12 had the highest rate of lifetime sexual assault (Figure 2).

Students reporting past year dating violence also reported other violent victimizations. One in four (25%) students who reported past year dating violence also reported sexual assault in their lifetime. Additionally, more than one-third (35%) reported they had been bullied on school property in the past year and 42% reported experiencing sadness for more than two weeks in the past year.

Similarly, among students reporting sexual assault in their lifetime, nearly one in three (30%) also reported experiencing dating violence, 38% reported being bullied, and 65% reported sadness lasting two weeks or more.

**Figure 2. Dating and Sexual Violence by Grade among High School Students, Oklahoma, 2009**



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, 2009

## PREVENTION

Teen dating violence is preventable. Comprehensive violence prevention programs involving families, schools, faith organizations, healthcare providers, communities, and the media can help teens build skills for healthy relationships. Multi-session coursework in elementary and middle school using evidence-based curricula on healthy relationships and non-violent interactions can help prepare teens for dating interactions. However, healthy relationship models need to be reinforced by family members, faith organizations, and the media. Activities to encourage respectful behavior and build self-esteem can be included as part of comprehensive school violence prevention programs including bullying and suicide prevention.

By helping teens learn about how healthy relationships look and feel, we can empower them to make good choices about their relationships. Teens learn about relationships from the media and their friends and the messages are often about unhealthy relationships. Talking to teens and pre-teens about the qualities they want in a dating partner can help them build the self-esteem to recognize abusive behaviors and reject abusive partners.

The Oklahoma Rape Prevention Education (RPE) program supports a wide range of educational programs and materials to prevent sexual assault, including teen dating violence prevention, for schools, colleges, communities, churches, and professional settings throughout the state. The RPE program focuses on changing individuals and their environment to prevent teen dating violence through: 1) strengthening individual knowledge and skills to prevent violence and promote safety, 2) educating the community, 3) educating providers, 4) fostering coalitions and networks, 5) changing organizational practices, and 6) influencing policy and legislation. Activities at all levels should be integrated to strengthen the effect of each.

## RESOURCES

### **National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline**

Phone: 1-866-331-9474 (24 hours)

TTY: 1-866-331-8453 (24 hours)

<http://www.loveisrespect.org> (live internet chat 4pm-2am CST)

### **Oklahoma Safeline**

1-800-522-7233 (24 hours)

### **Centers For Disease Control and Prevention**

Understanding Teen Dating Violence Factsheet

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/TeenDatingViolence2012-a.pdf>

### **Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence: Program Activities Guide**

[http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/ipv\\_sv\\_guide.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/ipv_sv_guide.html)

### **Break the Cycle**

<http://www.breakthecycle.org/>

### **Safe Dates**

<http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/safedates.page>

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