

Relationship Education for Youth Who Have Faced Adversity

An Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

Caring and intimate relationships are critical to individuals' well-being throughout their lifespan.^{1,2} Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) programs are designed to build skills that improve relationship quality for adult couples, individuals, co-parents, and youth. Historically, a segment of HMRE programs has focused on relationships for adolescents and young adults (generally ages 15-24). However, in 2020, the Administration for Children and Families launched an initiative^a designed to help young people successfully transition to adulthood by promoting their socio-emotional development and strengthening their relationship and other life skills.³ This focus is motivated by research suggesting that intervening during adolescence—before young people's relationship habits are solidified and they make marital commitments—is an important strategy for promoting healthy adult relationships.^{4,5} These skills are also transferable to other relationships important for youth development.

Offering extra support on developing healthy relationships is particularly important for youth who have faced interpersonal trauma and adversity (for example, youth aging out of foster care, those who are or have been involved with the juvenile justice system, those who are parents, and those who are or have experienced homelessness); these experiences may place young people at increased risk for poor relational and other outcomes. However, few HMRE programs have been created or adapted to meet the specific needs of youth with these experiences.

This annotated bibliography is intended to provide practitioners and researchers within the HMRE field



MAST CENTER RESEARCH

The Marriage Strengthening Research and Dissemination Center (MAST Center) conducts research on marriage and romantic relationships in the U.S. and healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs designed to strengthen these relationships. This research aims to identify critical research gaps, generate new knowledge, and help programs more effectively serve the individuals and families they work with. MAST Center research is concentrated in two areas:

- **Relationship Patterns & Trends.** Population-based research to better understand trends, predictors, dynamics, and outcomes of marriage and relationships in the United States.
- **Program Implementation & Evaluation.** Research that helps build knowledge about what works in HMRE programming, for whom, and in what context.

^a Relationships, Education, Advancement, and Development for Youth for Life (READY4Life).

with useful information that may help them adapt, develop, and test new or refined strategies for working with diverse groups of youth, including those who have faced adversity. It includes literature on (1) outcome evaluations of HMRE programs with youth who have faced adversity, (2) program implementation research with these populations, and (3) descriptive research that provides important contextual information for working with these adolescents and young adults.

Terminology

This annotated bibliography focused on programs oriented to a wide variety of youth, including those currently or previously involved in the criminal justice system, pregnant and parenting teens, youth in the foster care system, youth transitioning out of the foster care system, refugee youth, youth who have dropped out of school, youth who have experienced trauma, and youth who are experiencing (or have experienced) homelessness. Although many researchers and organizations use the term “vulnerable youth” to describe these populations, we have chosen not to use this term here. As with the use of the term “*at-risk*” to describe youth, youth are often labeled as “vulnerable” without clear indication of what makes them vulnerable or what they are vulnerable to, as though their vulnerability were an inherent trait.⁶ However, the factors that make many of the youth studied “vulnerable” are external to them and can change over time. Additionally, the experiences of these youth are diverse. As such, we use “youth who have faced adversity” when referring collectively to the populations of youth included in this annotated bibliography.^b

Methodology of Annotated Bibliography

To identify the articles and resources included in this annotated bibliography, we first searched the academic and gray literature (e.g., research reports, working papers, government documents) via Google and Google Scholar using the following terms: “healthy marriage,” “relationship education/enhancement/skills training and vulnerable youth,”^c “youth involved in the criminal justice system,” “pregnant and parenting teens,” “youth in the foster care system,” “youth transitioning out of the foster care system,” “youth in the child welfare system,” “refugee youth,” “school drop-outs,” “trauma-exposed youth,” and “homeless youth.” We then examined the reference sections of these initial reviewed resources to identify additional documents. To gather other resources not captured through these channels, we also searched the websites of organizations that focus on youth who have faced adversity, including the Administration for Children and Families, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Search Institute, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Dibble Institute.

To maximize relevance to the HMRE field, we limited the articles to (1) outcome evaluation studies, which examined the effects of relationship education on relationships and other skills among youth who have faced adversity; (2) implementation research focused on how relationship education programs were carried out, including barriers and facilitators to program execution and feasibility testing; and (3) descriptive studies providing information about the characteristics of youth who have faced adversity (and their context) that would be relevant for program design, including youths’ relational status and aspirations, knowledge, and need for support.

We included articles on programs if the program addressed relational skills (e.g., communication, conflict resolution, regulating emotions, setting boundaries, asking consent) and/or dating or intimate partner violence. Sometimes the central intent of a program was to promote positive romantic relationships, but we also included resources for which relationship skill-building was a secondary focus (e.g., natural mentoring or wrap-around support for youth transitioning out of foster care). We included studies that addressed relational competence and support beyond romantic relationships (e.g., mentors, case workers) if the skills

^b This term is distinct from “adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)” often examined in research. ACEs describe a specific set of traumatic events (e.g., growing up in a household with violence or substance abuse) that occur before age 18.⁷

^c We used the key term “vulnerable youth” to search for articles and resources since this term is commonly used in existing literature.

emphasized were consistent with those taught in HMRE curricula and could transfer in a highly relevant way to intimate partner relationships. Ultimately, 26 studies met our criteria: seven outcome evaluations, four implementation studies, and 15 descriptive studies.

Reflections

Although the empirical evidence is limited and formative, the articles summarized here provide some important contextual information and promising program approaches to support youth as they develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to build strong, supportive relationships and intimate connections. The majority of studies were based on focus groups and interviews with youth. Youth were interviewed about their knowledge and skills in relational competence; relationship status, stressors, and challenges; dating violence; social support; overall well-being; and relationship and fertility goals and milestones. Descriptive studies also addressed the well-being of youth, either at the time of the study or earlier in their lives, and examined their educational, employment, fertility, and socio-emotional outcomes during the transition to young adulthood. The articles summarized here identified both areas in which we have a depth of information and areas where more research is needed.



Importance of research funding initiatives

We found articles on programs for only three groups of youth included in our search: those transitioning out of foster care, pregnant and parenting teens, and youth involved in the criminal justice system. No articles were found for youth who are homeless or who have experienced homelessness. The research included was aligned with funding allocated for prominent public health concerns (e.g., dating violence, early childbearing and marriage) or social policies (e.g., extended access to services for youth aging out of the foster care system); this highlights the importance of federal government initiatives in addressing urgent social issues and advancing the research.

Need for longitudinal, prospective research

Few of the identified studies have longitudinal, prospective data observing youths' development of relationship skills and patterns in these relationships over time. The field would benefit by conducting more studies that follow youth over time, starting in early adolescence, to capture information about how and when relationship skills develop, along with how and when to intervene to support the development of healthy relationships.

Lack of rigorous program evaluations

Practitioners seeking to implement evidence-based programs that are supported and validated by rigorous outcome evaluations will be challenged, because no resource met this threshold. Only seven of the 26 studies included in this bibliography explored program outcomes; of those, only three randomly assigned youth to relationship programs or control conditions (the gold standard for program evaluation). All three programs that used randomized control designs considered their work formative and not ready for dissemination beyond pilot testing sites.

Limited information on implementation

There was little research on how to effectively implement relationship education with populations of youth who have faced adversity. One article discussed the challenges of following up with youth who are difficult to track because of their transiency.⁸ Another study noted the difficulties in engaging these populations, many are whom are overwhelmed with stress and prioritizing their basic needs (e.g., housing, jobs, health care, parenting) over relationship skill-building.⁹ More research is needed to understand the best ways for programs to recruit, engage, and retain these populations long enough to deliver a sufficient dosage. Additionally, more work is needed to identify innovative and flexible program designs that support youth, most of whom face barriers to program participation such as lack of transportation, child care, and money; additionally, most of these youth are not enrolled in traditional schools and are harder to recruit.

Need for trauma-informed programming

Trauma-informed programs for youth are urgently needed. Most youth described in the reviewed studies had experienced some form of interpersonal trauma, including physical or sexual abuse or neglect; parental absence due to addiction, mental illness, or incarceration; and lack of consistent role modeling and social support due to caretaker or residential instability. Trauma-informed relationship education is needed both to support healing from past trauma and to learn and enhance interpersonal skills and emotional regulation.

Addressing healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviors

A substantial proportion of the articles identified focused on preventing or reducing dating or intimate partner violence. Because the populations of youth included in this annotated bibliography are at high-risk for intimate partner violence (IPV),¹⁰ the prevalence of such articles is encouraging. Findings from this review suggest that relationship education should provide more than basic skills training (e.g., communication, conflict resolution), but should also help youth identify signs of harmful relationships, seek help, and safely exit dangerous relationships.

Programming for diverse racial and ethnic populations

A continued gap in the field is the lack of articles that discuss programs relevant to specific racial/ethnic and cultural groups. No programs identified in this review were designed for American Indian/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or Asian youth. Although some programs studied served a high proportion of Black/African American youth, there was little mention of how HMRE programs could support Black/African American youth facing circumstances such as racial discrimination and structural inequities.

Diverse intervention types

The review of the studies in this annotated bibliography shows that there is no “one size fits all” approach to relationship education programming. Structure, content, and delivery needs were tailored to the particular subpopulation being studied. Relationship education occurred through varied means, including a manualized curriculum, support groups, adult coaching, a standalone program, or services integrated into youth-serving agencies or organizations. Future research should explore which delivery mechanism(s) works best for which subpopulations, and how to design flexible menus of service options to fit youths’ unique needs.



HMRE and Other Relevant Program Evaluation Outcomes

Ball, B., Kerig, P., & Rosenbluth, B. (2009). "Like a family but better because you can actually trust each other": The expect respect dating violence prevention program for at-risk youth. *Health Promotion Practice, 10(1)*, 45S-58S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839908322115>

Objective: Dating violence is a serious problem among adolescents and school-based prevention programs can help prevent and address it. The Expect Respect program includes school-wide prevention initiatives, a leadership program to train youth in taking action against dating violence, and weekly support groups for adolescents who have experienced domestic, sexual, or dating violence. In this article, Ball et al. share results from the qualitative evaluation of the Expect Respect support groups which focused on adolescents' experiences in the groups and resulting changes in their personal relationships.

Method: Expect Respect support groups were separated by gender, took place at school or in juvenile detention, and met for 24 weekly sessions in 2004 and 2005. Groups were led by trained facilitators who were the same gender as group members to help support the members' sense of comfort and safety. Facilitators conducted an intake with all members before admitting them to the group to assess for eligibility and readiness. During the year, the facilitators guided the groups through a curriculum divided into five sections: developing group skills; choosing equality and respect; recognizing abusive relationships; learning skills for healthy relationships; and getting the message out.

For the qualitative evaluation, 10 out of the 28 support groups that took place in the 2004-2005 school year were purposively sampled for group interviews after the conclusion of the program. Groups were selected to represent the program's diversity of age group, gender, setting, and facilitators. Adolescents answered questions about their experiences in the support groups and resulting changes in their personal relationships. To analyze the interview data, the researchers used enumeration coding first, and then developed patterns and themes within each coding category.

Findings: Across support groups, adolescents described having strong, respectful relationships with the facilitators, and feeling understood and emotionally supported. The adolescents also described having an emotionally safe space, with a sense of belonging and acceptance, and shared experience among the group members. There was very little that the adolescents disliked about the support groups, but girls wanted more time to talk, and some boys found the groups challenging at first. The girls and a few boys expressed that support groups should take place twice a week instead of once, and facilitators should do more outreach because there were more students who could benefit from the groups.

As a result of the support groups, girls described being more aware of warning signs of abuse, and boys in the juvenile detention site became more aware of the effects of abusive dating behaviors on girls. These boys also began to see some behaviors they had previously regarded as “normal” as “wrong.” Boys and girls reported handling conflict more calmly and communicating more effectively. Girls also reported learning to stand up for themselves and having greater expectations that their partners treat them well. Overall, boys tended to report becoming more aware of their own abusive behaviors, and girls tended to focus on healing from abuse they had experienced.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The authors conclude that the mutually respectful relationships among facilitators and group members were essential to the success of Expect Respect and set a standard for group members’ expectations in other relationships. They also conclude that, for this population with experience of abuse, building trust within the groups was important and learning new relationship and communication skills was valuable. Despite group members’ changes as a result of Expect Respect, they still encountered abuse and disrespect in their surroundings. The authors recommend integrating expectations for respect through the group process and practice positive relationship norms within the group; creating opportunities for group members to build positive relationships with peers and facilitators; emphasizing skill-building over just knowledge acquisition; and continuing interventions beyond support groups, as prevention requires work at multiple levels.

DePrince, A. P., Chu, A. T., Labus, J., Shirk, S. R., & Potter, C. (2013). *Preventing revictimization in teen dating relationships* (Report No. 244086). U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/244086.pdf>

Objective: Revictimization (RV) is the experience of two or more acts of violence at the hands of different perpetrators and is a serious criminal justice issue. Adolescent girls in the child welfare system are at increased risk of RV in teen dating relationships. Furthermore, girls who experience RV during their adolescence are more likely to experience intimate partner violence in adulthood, suggesting the importance of early interventions. Most interventions for teens have focused on prevention of physical (usually not sexual) violence and have occurred in school settings. However, youth involved with the child welfare system experience frequent changes in care that interfere with school attendance and may miss opportunities to receive prevention programming. DePrince et al. compared two non-school-based interventions designed to decrease RV in teen dating relationships of adolescent girls in the child welfare system.

Methods: The two interventions stem from different theoretical approaches. The social learning/feminist (SL/F) intervention addresses interpersonal relationship skills and beliefs about topics such as power, sexism, and gender roles. The risk detection/executive function (RD/EF) intervention focuses on the ability to recognize and respond to risky situations. Researchers received referrals from case workers, service providers, or legal guardians around the Denver area and enrolled nearly 180 adolescent girls who were currently or previously involved with the child welfare system. Participants were randomized into the two interventions: SL/F (n=67) and RD/EF (n=67). Participants were assessed four times through trauma-informed interviews: pre-, immediate post-, 2-months, and 6-months after the intervention. The assessment included self-report measures on knowledge and beliefs and behavioral tasks designed to understand differences in the two interventions. Researchers also examined revictimization and aggressive conflict tactics in current dating relationships. A control group was not created, but 42 participants engaged in research assessments while not participating in interventions, which allowed researchers to include them as a post-hoc, non-randomized comparison group.

Findings: DePrince et al. found that participants in both intervention groups were almost five times more likely to not report RV compared to participants in the non-randomized group. Furthermore, participants in the SL/F intervention were 2.5 times more likely to not report sexual victimization compared to participants in the non-randomized group. Compared to the non-randomized group, the odds of not being physically revictimized were three times greater in the SL/F intervention group and two times greater in the RD/EF intervention group. Participants also reported on their partners’ as well as their own use of physical,

emotional, and sexual conflict tactics in dating relationships. Researchers found significant decreases in all types of conflict tactics. When considering a range of conflict tactics, participants in all three groups (including the non-randomized group) reported experiencing similar aggressive tactics by their partner. This suggests that some interventions may impact more severe aggression and not others.

Conclusions/Recommendations: This study shows that it is feasible to engage with hard-to-reach students, such as those in the child welfare system, in interventions that occur outside of school settings. Almost two-thirds of participants reported attending a school outside of the traditional, public school system, where most prevention programs are implemented. Furthermore, participants in the study came from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and had experienced complex trauma prior to the study, as well as significant financial challenges, yet attended an average of 70 percent of the sessions. This suggests that both interventions resonated with a diverse group of youth. From post-intervention to six-month follow-up, participants in both interventions showed a lower likelihood of reporting RV compared to the non-randomized group. This study also provides evidence in support of screening for and addressing trauma in mental and physical health care settings. Although some service providers may have hesitations with incorporating trauma screenings into practice, this study demonstrates that the benefits of conducting trauma-informed interviews that screen for violence and trauma can outweigh the costs of having such discussions with youth who have experienced complex trauma.

Florsheim, P., McArthur, L., Hudak, C., Heavin, S., & Burrow-Sanchez, J. (2011). The young parenthood program: Preventing intimate partner violence between adolescent mothers and young fathers. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 10*(2), 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2011.562823>

Objective: Pregnant adolescents and their partners have higher rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) than their peers who are not pregnant or expecting. The Young Parenthood Program (YPP) is a coparenting counseling program designed to support expectant adolescent couples in developing positive communication and emotional regulation skills. While the YPP is not designed specifically as an IPV prevention program, the skills taught in YPP may help prevent or reduce the occurrence of IPV. This article presents preliminary results on the efficacy of YPP for IPV prevention.

Methods: The YPP is a 10-week prevention program for couples focused on developing interpersonal skills to build and maintain a supporting coparenting relationship whether they remain romantically involved or not. The sample of couples for this study were recruited from medical clinics and schools with services for expectant adolescents. To be eligible for the study, pregnant adolescents had to be pregnant for the first time, be between 14 and 18 years old, be no further than 26 weeks along in their pregnancy, and the expectant father had to agree to participate in at least one interview. A total of 105 couples were recruited. Half of the couples were randomly assigned to “treatment as usual” (TAU) and half were randomly assigned to the YPP program. The couples participated in three rounds of semi-structured interviews during the second trimester, two to three months after birth, and 18 months after birth. The researchers calculated a combined IPV score for each couple and a Drug Use Index (DUI) score for each participant. Repeated Measures ANOVA was used to examine differences between the two groups over the three time points.

Findings: Baseline IPV scores for the YPP group and the TAU group were compared, and no differences were found. Fathers’ DUI scores were not correlated with couples’ IPV scores, but mothers’ DUI scores were correlated with couples’ IPV scores at all three



time points. Between time 1 and time 2, the YPP groups IPV scores remained consistent, whereas the TAU group IPV scores increased. This difference was significant. By time 3, however, the treatment effect had dissipated, the YPP group IPV scores had also increased, and the difference between the two groups was no longer significant.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The authors consider the program's results to be initial but promising and emphasize the importance of supporting adolescents in developing their ability to manage their emotions and express them directly. A key aspect of the YPP's success was implementing an intensive system for retaining couples. The authors also identify some areas in which to improve the program, including further tailoring the program for the distinct developmental needs of younger versus older teens, and providing case management services alongside the program to support the couples with challenges outside of their coparenting relationships.

Greeson, J. K. P., Garcia, A. R., Tan, F., Chacon, A., & Ortiz, A. J. (2020). Interventions for youth aging out of foster care: A state of the science review. *Children and Youth Services Review, 113*, 105005. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105005>

Objective: Due to the 1999 John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, many programs for youth aging out of foster care were created to improve outcomes related to education, employment, housing, health, and relationships in adulthood. Despite a growing number of programs, there is limited research on the effectiveness of such programs. This study aimed to identify and assess programs and interventions for youth transitioning out of foster care and provide recommendations for the field on how to promote youth well-being.

Methods: Researchers conducted a broad search of programs and interventions that address one of the five domains outlined in the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices: 1) education, 2) employment, 3) housing, 4) health/mental health, and 5) relationships. After a program was categorized into a domain, it was documented into a spreadsheet that contained various pieces of information on the program, including whether it targeted underserved populations, including pregnant and parenting youth, LGBTQ youth, youth of color, youth with disabilities, and youth involved in the child welfare and criminal justice systems. The research team entered each program name into the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare's Scientific Rating Scale (CEBC) website to determine whether it was rated (1 = Well-Supported by Research Evidence, 2 = Supported by Research Evidence, 3 = Promising Research Evidence, 4 = Failure to Demonstrate Effect, and 5 = Concerning Practice) according to the CEBC scale. If a program was not rated on the website, the research team assessed existing literature to determine whether they could assign a rating based on CEBC's published guidelines.

Findings: Through the initial search, researchers identified 86 programs. Of the 86 programs, 79 were categorized under the five domains in the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices. From the 79 programs, researchers were only able to assign a rating to 10 according to the CEBC guidelines through reviewing existing literature (i.e., the 10 programs were not already listed on the CEBC website). Four out of the ten programs received a rating of 2 ("Supported by Research Evidence"), which was the best rating of the examined programs. Furthermore, the relationships domain was the most rated (four out of ten programs) and the health/mental health domain was the least rated (one out of ten programs). The remaining 69 programs were not rated because they lacked research evidence. Lastly, 64 of the 79 programs mentioned targeting at least one population of interest (i.e., pregnant and parenting youth, LGBTQ youth, youth of color, youth with disabilities, and youth involved in the child welfare and criminal justice systems)

Conclusions/Recommendations: With the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act, the field has developed many programs for youth aging out of foster care. However, few have been evaluated. The findings suggest a critical need to evaluate unrated programs, especially programs that address health or mental health. To build evidence for existing programs and interventions, the field must ensure that organizations have the capacity to implement programs to fidelity and that programs that

target underserved youth are appropriately examined for effectiveness. Since there is a lack of funding and resources to evaluate all unrated programs, the field should collaborate to develop robust logic and theory of change models to describe why and how these programs are intended to work. In addition to evaluating unrated programs, the field should evaluate programs that are not rated as “1” according to the CEBC scale. For example, the field would benefit from knowing whether programs rated a “2” or “3” can be implemented with positive outcomes in different local contexts. Lastly, the authors suggest the child welfare field to examine the MY LIFE program as it addresses several domains (housing, employment, and education) and engages youth of color and youth with disabilities.



Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J., & Turner, L. A. (2012). The efficacy of an intimate partner violence prevention program with high-risk adolescent girls: A preliminary test. *Prevention Science, 13*(4), 384-394. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-011-0240-7>

Objective: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined as aggression or abuse between partners in a relationship and is a major public health concern. Research suggests that individuals living in poverty or experiencing teen pregnancy are at higher risk of experiencing IPV. To address the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) mission of preventing IPV, the researchers created an IPV prevention program called Building a Lasting Love (BALL), which is targeted for predominantly African American adolescent girls receiving teen pregnancy services. This study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of the BALL program.

Methods: The study recruited and enrolled 72 adolescent female participants from a teen center where they were receiving support for their pregnancy. Participants completed a pre-intervention assessment and were randomly assigned to the BALL program (n=39) or placed on a waitlist for the next group (n=33). Participants in the BALL program attended 1.5-hour group sessions per week for four weeks. Sessions covered topics such as signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships, communication and conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation, and coping skills. Within two weeks of completing the program, participants, including those on the waitlist, took a post-intervention assessment. Participants in the waitlist group were then invited to attend the next round of the program. Participants across both groups provided demographic information and responded to measures related to perpetration and victimization of psychological aggression and physical violence as well as experiences in close relationships.

Findings: Participants who completed at least 50 percent of the BALL program and the post-intervention assessment (n=24) reported significant reductions in their use of psychological abuse toward their child’s father compared to participants in the waitlist group (n=23). Furthermore, there was a decrease in reports of victimization from psychological abuse in the BALL program group and an increase in the waitlist group. While researchers did not find significant results for the reduction in the use of mild and severe physical violence, they found a significant difference in the number of severe victimization reports by participants in the BALL program group as compared to the waitlist group. Researchers also examined whether attachment styles affected levels of psychological abuse for participants in the BALL program and found that those with higher levels of avoidant attachment to their dating partner had less change in the amount of psychological abuse perpetrated or experienced.

Conclusions/Recommendations: This study provides evidence in support of designing and implementing IPV prevention programs for adolescents who experience multiple risk factors. Although there were initial concerns with fidelity, the BALL program was able to deliver the program with adequate fidelity by having the same instructor teach all the sessions and use session-specific workbooks. Throughout programming, participants faced challenges with consistent attendance due to numerous stressful events, including natural disasters, transportation, eviction, death of a relative, or imprisonment of the baby’s father. The

BALL program made extensive efforts to retain participants by conducting weekly check-in calls, providing transportation, and offering free childcare and incentives. Findings from this study demonstrate the need for HMRE programs to consider creative approaches to retain participants during programming.

Nesmith, A., & Christophersen, K. (2014). Smoothing the transition to adulthood: Creating ongoing supportive relationships among foster youth. *Children and Youth Services Review, 37*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.11.028>

Objective: Youth who age out of foster care are at higher risk than their peers for experiencing negative outcomes, such as unemployment and homelessness. Foster youth are also less likely than their peers to have supportive social networks and well-developed relationship-building skills, as both can be disrupted by their placement into foster care and traumas they have experienced. Training in traditional independent living skills (ILS) is one important component for supporting foster youths' transition to adulthood, but ILS does not address youth's need for a supportive social network or the skills to build and maintain relationships with supportive adults. Nesmith and Christophersen sought to evaluate CORE (Creating Ongoing Relationships Effectively), a three-part model for developing social supports among youth who plan to age out of foster care through promoting youth empowerment within the foster care agency, training youth and foster parents on trauma and its effects, and nurturing relationship-building skills between foster youth and their foster parents.

Methods: The study of CORE took place over three years and included 88 participants between the ages of 14 and 19, of whom 58 were in the foster care agency implementing CORE, and 30 were in a foster care agency receiving services as usual. The study team conducted interviews with youth at baseline and again around 10 months later. During the baseline and post-test interviews, youth responded to a *Relationship Competency Assessment*, which assessed their interest in developing supportive relationships with adults (motivation), their skills for developing and maintaining relationships (relationship skills), and the current level of support youth were receiving (current support). At the post-test interview, youth also responded to the *Quality Youth Relationship Assessment*, which assessed the quality of the relationship with the most supportive person in their life, and answered open-ended question about their satisfaction with the program. Nesmith and Christophersen used t-tests to compare mean scores on the assessments between the CORE and comparison groups at the two time points.

Findings: On average, the CORE group was more satisfied with their programming, which had been redesigned to be youth-led and empowering, than the comparison group, which experienced traditional, adult-led programming. On the *Relationship Competency Assessment*, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the three scales (motivation, relationship skills, current support) at pre or post, however, open-ended responses suggested that some CORE youth may have gained valuable information and skills around communication and identifying and reaching out to supportive adults. On the *Quality Youth Relationship Assessment*, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups either. However, overall, CORE youth were more likely to report that they felt prepared for the transition to adulthood than the comparison group.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The small sample size of this study limits its generalizability and precludes a more sophisticated analyses. The authors nonetheless conclude that CORE shows promise for meeting the socio-emotional needs of youth aging out of foster care, especially given the lack of research in this arena. The need for relationship skill-building opportunities among youth in foster care is relevant to HMRE providers, yet, as the authors note, relationship programming should complement and not replace traditional ILS training.

Toews, M. L., & Yazedjian, A. (2010). "I learned the bad things I'm doing": Adolescent mothers' perceptions of a relationship education program. *Marriage & Family Review, 46*(3), 207–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2010.490197>

Objective: Youth who are pregnant or parenting have increased risk of negative health, economic, and psychosocial outcomes. Several programs have been implemented to support adolescent parents, but some do not offer relationship education which can strengthen family relationships. Most studies on the effectiveness of relationship education programs have focused on adult couples rather than pregnant and parenting teens. Therefore, this study, which was part of a larger program evaluation exploring the effectiveness of the Strengthening Relationships program, assessed pregnant and parenting female adolescents' perspectives on the impact of programming on their communication and conflict resolution skills.

Methods: Researchers conducted 18 focus groups with a total of 148 pregnant or parenting adolescent mothers who participated in the Strengthening Families program. The majority of participants identified as Hispanic (88%) and ranged in age between 14-20. The focus group interviews were held in classrooms during school hours, with an average of eight participants per group. Using a semi-structured protocol, an interviewer asked questions related to programming and communication and conflict resolution skills while a notetaker transcribed and recorded the interviews. Researchers coded the transcripts and identified the most salient themes. Through ongoing discussion, researchers refined the codebook to best reflect the data.

Findings: Participants reported learning positive communication skills, such as the importance of listening to others, but did not always end up using the skills in their relationships. Pregnant and parenting adolescent mothers also shared that the conflict resolution strategies they learned, such as staying calm and taking time-outs, had improved their relationships. It is important to note that while participants reported using fewer negative communication and conflict resolution strategies, they did not report a corresponding increase in using positive strategies. In addition to learning communication and conflict resolution skills, findings suggest that participants developed a greater self-awareness. For example, participants gained a greater understanding of positive communication and conflict resolution styles as well as their own expectations for a partner in a relationship.

Specifically, some mothers described a growing realization that they did not have to stay in an unhealthy relationship only because they share a child. Participants also discussed their growing understanding of the impact of fighting in front of children.



Conclusions/Recommendations: The study findings demonstrate the importance of providing relationship education to pregnant and parenting teens. Although the study only included adolescent mothers, the authors suggest that having both partners participate in programming would increase the likelihood of partners' attempts to use positive communication and conflict resolution skills. The authors also note that future programs should provide more opportunities for participants to practice the skills taught and offer additional support after the program ends. Furthermore, staff who deliver relationship education programming should teach youth how to identify unhealthy relationships.



HMRE Program Design, Implementation, and Formative Research

Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., Mikell, D., Stevenson, B., Park, K., Harty, J., Feng, H., & Kindle, B. (2016). *CalYOUTH survey of young adults' child welfare workers*. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/caseworkers-say-lack-of-appropriate-placement-options-presents-challenge-to-implementing-extended-foster-care/>

Objective: This report shares results from the second survey, since the implementation of the California Fostering Connections to Success Act, of child welfare workers who have served youth in extended foster care. The survey sought to elicit caseworkers' attitudes and opinions about extended foster care, as well as their perceptions of the youth in extended foster care and their needs.

Methods: To be eligible for the survey, participants had to have had at least one youth in extended foster care who participated in the CalYOUTH longitudinal youth study on their caseload in June 2015. Of 306 case workers who were eligible, 295 participated. Participants responded to one survey about the county's services for youth in extended foster care and another survey specifically about the CalYOUTH participant(s) on their caseload. Caseworkers reported on multiple aspects of youth's lives, including their education, employment, and pregnancy and parenting history. In total, the 295 case workers responded to surveys about 493 youth.

Findings: The majority of caseworkers believed that youth needed services beyond age 18 and were supportive of extended foster care. However, caseworkers observed challenges to the implementation of extended foster care, particularly the lack of appropriate placement options. Caseworkers reported that the majority of CalYOUTH participants on their caseloads were in school or working, but they had concerns about how well prepared youth were for success in continued education and employment. Nonetheless, caseworkers reported that appropriate services were available to support youth's education and employment. In contrast, services that caseworkers identified as lacking included reproductive health education, relationship skill building programming, and services to address youth's safety concerns. These concerns are underscored by the high rates of pregnancy and parenting among the CalYOUTH participants on caseworkers' caseloads.

Conclusions/Recommendations: As California (and other states) continue to implement extended foster care, the CalYOUTH survey of caseworkers provides important insight into the ongoing needs of youth in extended foster care. The lack of appropriate placement options for youth in extended foster care was caseworkers' most significant concern. With regard to supports and services, however, caseworkers highlighted the need for reproductive health education, relationship skill building, and parenting support. These findings highlight the importance of continued support for foster youth during the transition to adulthood including the provision of tailored relationship education.

Greeson, J. K. P., & Thompson, A. E. (2017). Development, feasibility, and piloting of a novel natural mentoring intervention for older youth in foster care. *Journal of Social Service Research, 43(2), 205-222.* <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2016.1248269>

Objective: Youth who age out of the foster system are at heightened risk for a range of negative outcomes compared to their peers who are not in the foster system. Close relationships with supportive and caring adults, even if they are not legal guardians, are important protective factors for youth aging out of the foster system, but these relationships are not often promoted by child welfare programs. In this study, Greeson and Thompson sought to test the feasibility of implementing C.A.R.E., an intervention to promote natural mentoring relationships, with foster youth who are likely to age out of the child welfare system.

Methods: C.A.R.E. is a 12-week intervention designed to help child welfare systems engage older foster youth in developing natural mentoring relationships. In C.A.R.E., youth work with a facilitator to identify a natural mentor in their lives, the natural mentor receives training on nurturing their relationship with the youth, and the youth and mentor agree to regular activities and communication, including support sessions with the facilitator.

For the feasibility study, English-speaking youth in foster care at the time of the study were eligible to participate in C.A.R.E. The first 24 youth to sign up were enrolled in the study and randomly assigned to the intervention plus services as usual (n=12), or just to services as usual (n=12). Researchers collected qualitative data through participant evaluations, activity reports, and an interview with the facilitator, among other sources; they collected quantitative data through a pre- and post-survey.

Findings: Of the 12 youth assigned to the intervention, eight (66%) were able to identify an adult who could serve as a natural mentor for them. Among the eight adults identified, five verbally committed to being natural mentors and three were unable to commit due to pre-existing commitments and limited bandwidth. Ultimately, four of the 12 youth (33%) and their natural mentors participated in C.A.R.E. The four natural mentors were highly satisfied with their C.A.R.E. training, finding it useful, easy to understand, and relevant. The natural mentors varied in the consistency with which they participated in different intervention activities, with supervision sessions and community time with mentees having the highest consistency, and group activities, such as support groups and mindfulness sessions, having lower consistency. The four youth who participated in the intervention reported high satisfaction with the intervention, high satisfaction and close relationships with the facilitator, and had high consistency attending intervention activities. Over time, the youth reported increased communication and trust with their natural mentors, as well as using the mentoring relationship to work on life skills.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The authors determine that C.A.R.E. is a feasible intervention to implement with older foster youth because there are caring adults willing to provide natural mentorship. However, many of the potential mentors came from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds as the youth and experienced barriers to participating in the intervention despite their commitment to supporting the youth. The authors recommend making some changes to the intervention based on the feasibility study. This study highlights the importance of authentic engagement between youth and program facilitators, which is highly relevant to any HMRE programs for youth.

Hughes, D. M., Singleton, S., Gutzebahl, J., & Kingsley, C. (2015). *Oasis Center replication: Wyman's Teen Outreach Program® formative evaluation report*. The Center for Youth and Communities, The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.

Objective: In the early 2000s, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services passed several reforms related to congregate care settings, including limiting its use. Findings from a 2011 study suggested that several indicators related to safety, permanency, and well-being for children improved as group care setting were reduced. To support congregate care settings and provide staff development, the Oasis Center implemented the Wyman Center's Teen Outreach Program (TOP) in 2011, which is a youth development program designed to support youth in developing healthy behaviors and life skills. The resulting report is formative, designed to begin documentation of the program as well as inform improvements for programming.

Methods: The TOP program was implemented and evaluated at three sites: Florence Crittenton Agency, Madison Oaks Academy, and Omni Visions TASK. Across the three sites, six administrators, 10 facilitators, and 18 youth were interviewed on their experience with TOP. Oasis Center also collected quantitative data on youth and staff using an online survey tool and spreadsheet, respectively. For youth, information on the dates youth participated in the program, whether youth found permanent housing, and how many and what types of incidents youth were written up for (i.e., runaway, assault, contraband, physical restraint, and other) were collected. For staff, information on job title, date of hire, and data of separation were collected. In total, quantitative data on 812 youth and 192 staff were collected.

Findings: Findings from this formative evaluation suggest that the TOP program had a positive impact on youth and staff across the three participating sites. Staff who engaged in TOP training with support from Oasis Center staff applied the following techniques when working with youth: 1) offering neutral rather than punitive responses for disruptive behavior, 2) gaining greater appreciation for youth they are working with, 3) connecting with youth, 4) holding high expectations of youth, 5) fostering youth engagement and leadership, and 5) encouraging an improved sense of self-efficacy. Youth who participated in TOP programming experienced improved outcomes, including reduced number of incidents, increased communication skills, greater awareness of the connection between values and behavior, increased youth leadership and involvement in the TOP program, and greater belief in themselves as individuals who matter.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Administrators, staff, and youth across sites expressed appreciation and enthusiasm for the quality of TOP training and support. Staff felt that TOP's hands-on approach to learning and the flexibility of the curriculum was a major benefit. Furthermore, the interview findings suggest that participating youth develop skills that are associated with increased maturity. The strategies used in the TOP program by staff to engage youth can be replicated in HMRE programs that work with youth in congregate care. However, more rigorous outcome evaluation research is needed.



Toews, M., & Yazedjian, A. (2009). Relationship education with adolescent parents: Challenges and lessons learned. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 101(2), 62-64.

Objective: Many Pregnancy, Education, and Parenting (PEP) programs exist in high schools across central Texas, but they do not offer relationship education. One high school incorporated a relationship education program into an existing school program. This article provides information on challenges and lessons learned when implementing a relationship education program with pregnant or parenting adolescents.

Methods: In one high school, a modified version of a curriculum titled, *Connections: Relationships and Marriage*, was added to an existing school PEP program. The program served majority low-income, Hispanic pregnant or parenting adolescents. The relationship education program lasted 12 weeks and was offered once per year.

Findings: There were several challenges with implementing a relationship education program for pregnant or parenting adolescents. The greatest challenge was that attendance fluctuated, which affected group dynamics. Students would leave to give birth or move to another school or new students would join during the middle of programming. Another challenge was that participant's English proficiency was lower than anticipated, which impacted the study team's ability to collect complete questionnaires. The pre- and post-tests were later translated to both English and Spanish. Despite such challenges, the benefits of the program were evident. Participants reported enjoying the opportunity to connect with peers with similar life experiences and hearing from facilitators about their own experiences. The study team also noted several lessons learned from implementation. Providing free services, such as childcare, lunch, and incentives was well received by pregnant or parenting teens. Furthermore, participants appreciated having informal conversations with facilitators outside of programming. An added benefit to these conversations was that facilitators could reinforce teachings by incorporating "teachable moments." Lastly, participants shared that interactive, hands-on teaching was more engaging than lecture and workbook activities.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The lessons learned from this study demonstrate that providing pregnant or parenting teens with free childcare, lunch, and incentives may increase program attendance and retention. Using interactive activities and limiting the use of workbooks and lectures may also encourage students to remain engaged during class sessions. Facilitators should also receive training on cultural humility to better support the needs of youth with varying cultural backgrounds. Facilitators should also aim to foster a supportive environment where participants feel comfortable and are able to build strong relationships with each other as well as with the facilitator.





Descriptive Studies Relevant to HMRE for Youth who have Faced Adversity

Bermea, A. M., Rueda, H. A., & Toews, M. L. (2018). Queerness and dating violence among adolescent mothers in foster care. *Affilia*, 33(2), 164–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109917737880>

Objective: Queer youth are more likely than youth who are not queer to experience dating violence, pregnancy, and be in foster care. As such, Bermea et al. sought to examine the experiences of queer adolescent mothers in foster care who have faced teen dating violence in same-sex relationships. The authors also examined program staffs' perceptions of the adolescent mothers' sexual performativity and experiences with teen dating violence.

Methods: Data for this study were collected through 12, one-hour interviews with program staff and two, 75-minute focus groups with a total of 13 residents at a residential foster care facility for adolescent mothers. The authors used a mixed qualitative (QUAL + qual), phenomenological approach to analyze and compare staff and mothers' perceptions.

Findings: Staff were aware of same-sex relationships among the mothers and of some mothers' sexual fluidity; however, staff had negative views towards same-sex relationships among the mothers, viewing them as illegitimate, circumstantial, experimental, and problematic. In contrast, the mothers described their same-sex relationships as loving, romantic, trusting, and respectful. Given that staff minimized mothers' same-sex relationships, when teen dating violence occurred, staff tended to interpret it as innocuous peer conflict rather than emotional or physical violence between intimate partners. This was not true for the mothers, who recognized that serious dating violence occurred in some same-sex relationships.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The authors recommend that LGBTQ cultural competence training for staff should include content on youth who have relationships with partners of multiple genders, not only youth who have relationships with same-gender partners. Additionally, staff who work with youth should explore biases around sexual orientation and sexual fluidity, and how those biases prevent them from adequately addressing teen dating violence among queer youth. Of particular relevance to youth HMRE programming, the authors highlight one staff person who expressed the need for relationship education that is inclusive of and relevant to queer youth.

Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., Park, K., Harty, J., Feng, H., Torres-Garcia, A., & Sayed, S. (2018). *Findings from the California youth transitions to adulthood study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of youth at age 21*. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/cal youth-wave3/>

Objective: The California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH) is a large-scale evaluation of the California Fostering Connections Act, which extended foster care to age 21 for eligible youth. CalYOUTH seeks to understand 1) whether extending foster care through age 21 influences youth's outcomes in the transition to adulthood; 2) the types of support foster youth receive during the transition to adulthood and the factors that influence those supports; and 3) how services received during extended foster care, including living arrangements, affect youth's outcomes in the transition to adulthood. In this report, Courtney et al. describe youth's experiences of and views on extended foster care at age 21.

Methods: CalYOUTH used stratified random sampling to construct a sample representative of California's population of youth in foster care. Eligible youth (aged 16.75 to 17.75 at the time of sampling and in California foster care for at least 6 months) were surveyed three times using in-person or telephone interviews when youth were aged 16-17, 19, and 21. 727 youth completed the baseline survey at age 16-17 and 616 (85%) completed the Wave 3 survey at age 21, after leaving foster care. The survey collected information across a wide range of domains, including marriage and romantic relationships, children and parenting, sexual activity and pregnancy, and employment and economic hardship.

Findings: Among surveyed youth, most chose to remain in foster care until age 21 and generally thought the services received through extended care were satisfactory. Youth were most dissatisfied with services related to housing and financial literacy. Despite receiving extended foster care services, youth in foster care had poorer well-being outcomes, on average, across a host of domains at the transition to adulthood than their peers who were not in foster care. However, outcomes were varied: some youth in foster care had very favorable outcomes, while others experienced substantial challenges. Broadly, youth's experiences with the foster care system varied with their gender, race, and ethnicity.

Results that may be of particular interest to HMRE programs serving youth include:

- Over one in five respondents reported a sexual orientation other than "100% heterosexual or straight."
- Over nine in ten respondents had been sexually active and most had had multiple sexual partners.
- Almost three in five female respondents had ever been pregnant, under two in five had ever given birth, and one in three had one or more living children.
- Just over half of respondents were in a romantic relationship, among whom almost three in five lived with their romantic partner.
- Respondents were unlikely to be married (6%), but among those in a romantic relationship, 74% had ever lived with someone in a marriage-like relationship.
- Among respondents with children, 68% were in a relationship with their child's other parent.
- 17% of respondents in a relationship had experienced threats, pushing, or shoving from their partner at least once, and 14% had perpetrated these behaviors at least once. More severe forms of relationship violence were less common.

Conclusion/Recommendations: The authors' major takeaway from this descriptive analysis is that youth in California are utilizing the benefits of extended foster care. However, programs can do more to support them and meet their needs as they transition to adulthood. In particular, the report highlights the diversity of life experiences among youth in the foster care system and the need for a range of tailored supports, including "developmentally appropriate living arrangements," not a "one-size-fits-all approach."

Duppong Hurley, K., Trout, A., Wheaton, N., Buddenberg, L., Howard, B., & Weigel, M. (2013). The voices of youth in out-of-home care regarding developing healthy dating relationships. *Child & Youth Services, 34*(1), 23-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2013.766057>

Objective: Adolescents need support when learning how to develop and navigate healthy romantic relationships. This may be particularly true for adolescents in residential care due to an absence of relationship role models, the constraints of living in an institutional setting, and their increased risk of teenage pregnancy. This study collected qualitative data from adolescents in residential care on (1) challenges in dating and romantic relationships and (2) what topics healthy relationship programs should address to be relevant to their needs.

Methods: Youth who volunteered for the study were residents of group homes that used the Teaching Family Model. Of the 63 youth who volunteered, 18 received consent from their guardian and were available to participate in the focus groups at the scheduled times. A total of three two-hour focus groups were conducted, one with male youth and two with female youth. The focus group facilitators used the “nominal group technique” to engage participants in a collaborative decision-making process to identify problems teens face in dating relationships and topics that would make relationship programming relevant to teens.

Findings: In total, respondents and researchers identified 13 themes for the topic ‘problems teens face in dating relationships.’ Nine themes were identified in both the girls’ and boys’ groups, suggesting a high degree of similarity across gender. However, girls and boys did not rank all overlapping themes in the same order. Girls considered unhealthy relationship boundaries to be the most important problem, a low-ranked theme for boys, whereas boys considered trust and then communication as the most important problems. Girls also ranked trust highly, but not communication. The consequences of dating was another theme girls ranked as important, but was not identified by boys as a theme.

15 themes were identified for the topic ‘topics that would make healthy relationship classes relevant.’ Nine themes were identified by both boys and girls. Girls were most interested in information on forming healthy relationships, whereas this was a low-ranked theme for boys. The use of real-world examples was boys’ most frequently generated theme and was common for girls too. Both genders ranked opportunities to experience dating highly, with boys also wanting more open and informal meetings, whereas girls were interested in more co-ed activities and lessons.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Overall, most of the discussion across the groups focused on the development of healthy relationships, with high importance placed on issues around boundaries and trust. Notably, youth identified their lack of healthy relationship role models as a challenge and expressed the desire to explore dating relationships with support and guidance from trusted adults. This was in tension with residential facilities’ discouragement from dating. Findings from this study suggest that a healthy relationship class for youth in residential care needs to focus on setting healthy boundaries in relationships, building trust and respect, and learning how to date, with everything being grounded in real-world examples. The study also indicates that youth in residential care have unique needs in relation to dating that both HMRE programs and treatment providers need to be aware of.



Forenza, B., Bermea, A., & Rogers, B. (2018). Ideals and reality: Perceptions of healthy and unhealthy relationships among foster youth. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 35(3), 221-230. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-017-0523-3>

Objective: Adolescent dating relationships are a normative part of adolescent development and help build skills that are important for healthy relationships later in life. Many adolescents find dating relationships challenging. However, adolescents in foster care face a disproportionately high risk of experiencing violence in their dating relationships, as well as negative outcomes resulting from teen dating violence. Social learning theory argues that individuals learn behaviors through modeling; in other words, by observing how important people in their lives conduct relationships. Adolescents in foster care are more likely than those not in care to have seen relationships with violence and aggression being modeled and may benefit from relationship education. To inform these efforts, this study sought to detail the thoughts and experiences of youth in foster care regarding dating relationships and their perceptions of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Methods: The sample for this study (n=16) consisted of youth living in a supportive housing program for adolescents who were about to age out or recently aged out of foster care. Study participants were recruited through recruitment flyers distributed by a housing supervisor. Participants were majority Black (94%) and most were emancipated from foster care (75%). Their ages ranged from 19 to 21, and just over half (56%) were male. The authors conducted two focus groups (n=5 and n=6) with a total of 11 participants and individual interviews with five participants. Focus groups and interviews used the same six-question protocol, which asked about the qualities participants look for in friends and dating partners, how participants respond to violations of trust, what participants consider to be healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how participants would describe their own dating experiences. The authors analyzed the data by first conducting inductive, thematic analysis, then developing a coding structure, and discussing all coding until they reached a consensus.

Findings: Study participants described ideal, healthy relationships as ones with good communication. However, in their lived experience, participants found communicating with their dating partners to be a significant challenge. Communication is integral to conflict resolution, yet some participants described avoiding conflict entirely and not being willing to discuss points of conflict with their dating partners, sometimes as a result of lessons learned in previous relationships. Many participants shared that instead of fixing problems in a relationship they would tend to end the relationship and do so by “abandoning” the relationship. Regarding relationship education, participants suggested topics like identifying unhealthy relationships, including manipulative behaviors and manifestations of violence; building a strong foundation for a relationship; and deciding about engaging in sexual activity. Participants also thought the topics of knowing oneself well and knowing a prospective partner well were important.

Conclusions/Recommendations: This article points to the importance of intimate relationships during adolescence as a means to develop skills necessary for successful adulthood. Findings highlight the challenges youth in foster care face in relationships, particularly around communication skills, which, in turn, may be related to histories of trauma and abusive relationships. The authors also highlight the importance of using a trauma-informed approach and leveraging adult mentoring as important cornerstones to intervention. The article affirms the need for HMRE programs tailored for youth in the foster care system to include information on teen dating violence and be inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth.

Herrman, J. W., Palen, L., Kan, M., Feinberg, M., Hill, J., Magee, E., & Haigh, K.M. (2019). Young mothers' and fathers' perceptions of relationship violence: A focus group study. *Violence Against Women*, 25(3), 274-296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218780356>

Objective: Recent studies show that teens and young adults who are pregnant or parenting experience high rates of intimate partner violence (IPV). Given their increased risk for experiencing IPV, pregnant and parenting teens may benefit from participating in teen dating violence prevention programs. This study is

part of a larger project that aims to adapt an evidence-based teen dating violence prevention program for young parents. To understand what content resonates with teen parents for inclusion into the prevention program, Herrman et al. conducted a literature review as well as focus groups with teen and young adult parents.

Methods: To supplement existing literature, Herrman et al. conducted five focus groups (n=28), three with young mothers (n=22) and two with young fathers (n=6) to examine perceptions of and experiences with IPV. Participants were majority white (68%) or African American (29%) and ranged in age from 16-22 years old. Staff from three teen parent assistance agencies recruited teens by sending messages via Facebook or text or by talking with teens in person during programming. Two semi-structured focus group guides for mothers and fathers were created and included questions related to risk and protective factors for IPV, forms of IPV unique to pregnant and parenting teens, barriers to reducing IPV, supports for teen parents, and needs and issues specific to pregnant and parenting teens that prevention programs should consider. After data collection, researchers conducted content analysis and assessed the data through NVivo. Following thematic analysis, researchers organized and interpreted the data through framework analysis.

Findings: The literature review informed the creation of four major domains, which served as the foundation for focus group data analysis. The first domain focused on relationships between teen parents. Some focus group participants reported being in intimate relationships with the child's parent and were either cohabiting, living separately with their own parents, or living alone. Jealousy and concerns about infidelity were common. Participants also stated that leaving an abusive relationship was difficult since it can lead to decreased financial stability and can "break up the family." Participants also discussed the negative impact of witnessing their own parents' abusive relationships on their current relationships. The second domain focused on stressors and sources of conflict experienced by parenting teens. Findings indicate that many teens faced challenges with social isolation, financial stability, strain in coparenting relationships, and inability to communicate well, which participants linked to IPV. Many participants reported difficulties with "parenting while being parented." The third domain focused on forms of IPV specific to teen parents. Focus group participants discussed that verbal abuse regarding postpartum body shaming as a type of IPV that teen parents experience. Participants also shared that violence and control are perpetrated by women and men alike. The fourth domain focused on help-seeking and resources for IPV. Participants discussed not knowing where to go for help but felt that meeting other teen parents would be helpful.



Conclusions/Recommendations: This study provides valuable insights for future intervention programs designed to prevent and address IPV among young adults who are pregnant or parenting. For example, findings indicate that young parents face additional challenges with leaving an abusive relationship and experience unique forms of IPV and stress. Teen parents also discussed difficulties with asking for and receiving help. Tailoring intervention programs to address these unique experiences of teen parents may be a strategy for reducing IPV. Furthermore, intervention programs should address relationship skills, including communication, conflict resolution, coping strategies for stress, and ways to identify and address unhealthy and dangerous behaviors. It is also important to recognize that violence tends to be mutual, so programs should address both male and female experiences as users or survivors of violence. Finally, group classes may serve as one approach for service delivery since teen parents felt supported when interacting with other teen parents.

Jones, L. P. (2014). The role of social support in the transition from foster care to emerging adulthood. *Journal of Family Social Work, 17*(1), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2013.865287>

Objective: The transition between adolescence and adulthood is stressful for most youth, but it may be particularly stressful for youth in foster care as their social networks are most likely disrupted throughout their adolescence. Jones describes the challenges that youth in foster care face due to a lack of adequate social support and how child welfare systems can help youth who are transitioning to adulthood build stronger support systems.

Methods: Jones conducted a literature review on social supports and the role they play in the transition to adulthood. The literature review was focused particularly on youth in foster care.

Findings: The literature review was conducted using the stress buffering hypothesis, which states that individuals with strong social networks and social supports are better able to cope with challenges in life. Youth in foster care are likely to face frequent placement changes, which disrupts continuity in their social relationships, including school-based relationships with teachers and peers. There are several sources of support that can serve as protective factors for youth in foster care including family, systems of care (e.g., social workers, foster parents, therapists/counselors), adult mentors, and the community.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Findings from the literature review provide several recommendations for individuals who work with youth preparing to leave the foster care system. Social workers should help youth assess their social networks and develop discharge plans to maintain their social relationships. Furthermore, child welfare systems should connect youth with an adult that can support them through their transition to adulthood. If youth are not able to identify supportive adults, the child welfare system should consider developing a formal mentoring program. Youth in foster care would also benefit from participating in support groups with peers to share experiences and build relationships. In addition, the child welfare system should encourage youth to engage with multiple organizations, build connections across systems of care, and empower youth to continue education since school-based relationships are shown to provide support for students. Lastly, child welfare systems should address the varied needs of youth, especially those with complex trauma histories. More research is needed to understand what types of social supports are helpful for youth transitioning out of foster care and what interventions are needed to improve outcomes for these youth.

Lesser, J., Oscós-Sánchez, M. A., & Davis, C. (2010). Latino adolescent mothers and fathers in south Texas managing violence. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 31*(2), 96–102. <https://doi.org/10.3109/01612840903308523>

Objective: Latino adolescent mothers and fathers who live in the inner-city experience high rates of multiple forms of violence. In this study, Lesser et al. sought to understand how adolescent mothers and fathers in South Texas experience and prevent violence, for the purpose of informing risk reduction programming.

Methods: Data from this study were collected through five semi-structured group interviews and seven individual interviews, as well as a self-administered questionnaire, with 18 Latino adolescent mothers and 15 Latino adolescent fathers who attended teen parent support programs at a San Antonio charter school for high-risk youth. The authors used chi-square analysis to examine gender differences in responses to the questionnaire and open and axial coding to analyze the interview transcripts.

Findings: Data from the questionnaire showed that a majority of the participants had been in a fight in the last six months and at least half had used marijuana or cocaine. There were no statistically significant differences by gender on experiences with violence or substance use, possibly due to the small sample size (n=33). Qualitative analysis revealed that, broadly, the young parents grew up in violent environments, with pervasive poverty that often interrupted their education. Many of the young parents came from families

in which at least one parent was absent, often due to the father being incarcerated. As a result, many of the young mothers had taken on care-taking responsibilities of their siblings. Young mothers' feelings of abandonment by their own parents led them adopt strategies to avoid being abandoned by others, including "taking care of others" and "sometimes, even accepting abuse," despite to not wanting to do so. In contrast, young fathers' strategies for navigating a violent environment included "avoiding situations" and "never showing weakness." Young fathers also described how their negative feelings and feelings of hurt would manifest as rage. Becoming a parent was a pivotal moment in many of the young mothers' and young fathers' lives, and they made changes to reduce the level of violence in their lives for the sake of their children's well-being.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The authors recognize that preventing the pervasive violence young Latino parents from the inner-city experience is a "larger social and political issue," however they assert that health promotion interventions have a role in supporting young parents in making changes to ensure their children's well-being. Youth HMRE programs may be a strategy to reduce the level of violence in young parents' relationships and support healthier relationships dynamics, particularly if the HMRE programs embrace the positive role young parenthood can play in changing disadvantaged youth's lives. It is important that these programs be culturally appropriate and consider youths' experiences of trauma.

Myrick, M., Hercik, J., & Patterson, P. (2010). Relationships matter: *Strengthening vulnerable youth - proceedings summary*. National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth. <https://www.dibbleinstitute.org/Documents/RelationshipsMatterVulnerableYouth.pdf>

Objective: Maintaining healthy relationships in young adulthood is critical, especially for youth that experience homelessness, have low income, or are involved in a gang or the criminal justice system. Although the youth development and relationship education fields both recognize the value of supporting strong relationships for youth, they have historically worked in silos. To increase collaboration between both fields, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center convened a group of 35 relationship education and youth development leaders and practitioners to identify the needs of underserved youth and discuss strategies to help youth have healthy relationships. This paper summarizes the findings from this conference.

Methods: Innovation Center for Community & Youth Development, a nonprofit organization, facilitated a gathering between practitioners, researchers, and funders from the youth development and relationship education fields. Across a two and a half day meeting held from October 5-7, 2009, professionals participated in interactive plenary sessions and presentations to accomplish three objectives: 1) engage in interactive dialogue about relationship education, especially for underserved youth, 2) identify issues specific to underserved youth, and 3) develop strategies to support youth in having healthy relationships.

Findings: Seven key themes emerged from the conference around relationship education for youth:

- Relationship education is important, and participants have a shared commitment to drive the work forward.
- The relationship education field must focus on the positive impact that intimate relationships can have on young people's lives rather than the negative outcomes of unhealthy relationships.
- The definition of "relationship education" is fluid and is both an advantage and challenge. To move the relationship education field forward, professionals must come to a shared understanding of the term, but the flexibility in definition suggests that the field can address the varied needs of underserved youth.
- A holistic approach to relationship education is ideal, but funding sources are limited since they usually support a specific aspect of youth development.
- Direct service providers teach relationship skills and model healthy relationships.

- There are several delivery methods for relationship education, including through an evidence-based curriculum or through experiential learning activities.
- Relationship education, including the content and delivery method, must align with the varied backgrounds and needs of youth.

Conclusions/Recommendations: This paper highlights several implications for practitioners, researchers, and funders in the youth development and relationship education fields. First, practitioners must consider the unique experiences and backgrounds of the youth that they work with to make relationship education more relevant for youth. Second, the relationship education field must engage youth at all stages of development and implementation of a program. Third, relationship education professionals should develop different types of resources, including trainings, skill-building activities, and knowledge and position papers to support the field. Fourth, existing relationship education curricula must be updated, and staff should be appropriately trained to deliver programming. Fifth, to advance the relationship education field, researchers must clearly articulate the theory of change and develop indicators and measures for positive relationships. Sixth, professionals should begin to identify stakeholders in the policy field to bring national attention to the importance of relationship education.

Newman, B.S., & Campbell, C. (2011). Intimate partner violence among pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 26*(13), 2635-2657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510388281>

Objective: Pregnancy during adolescence is often associated with higher rates of intimate partner violence (IPV). Studies vary on whether race or ethnicity are associated with rates of IPV during adolescence, but some research indicates that Latino youth experience higher rates of IPV than other groups. Prior research also suggests that among adolescents, rates of mutual aggression are high. Newman and Campbell sought to understand 1) whether pregnant and/or parenting female adolescents engage in physical and psychological violence at comparable rates to their partners; 2) whether pregnant and/or parenting female adolescents experience higher rates of sexual victimization and serious injury than their partners; and 3) whether pregnant female adolescents are more likely to be victims of IPV than parenting female adolescents.

Methods: Data for these analyses were a subset of data from a larger program evaluation of a community-based parenting program collected between 2006 and 2008. To be included in these analyses, participants had to report currently being in a relationship or having been in the relationship within the past 6 months. The Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS-2) was used to measure both participants' use of violence and their partners' use of violence across five subscales: negotiation, psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury. 83 participants completed the CTS-2, of whom 73 (88%) were Hispanic and were included in these analyses.



Findings: The most prevalent forms of aggression in this sample, both for participants and their partners, were minor psychological aggression and minor physical conflict. For both psychological and physical aggression, rates were comparable for participants and their partners, and responses indicated a high rate of mutuality, or both partners engaging in acts of aggression towards each other.

Participants were more likely to report that their partner had engaged in minor sexual coercion against them (21%) than they had engaged in minor sexual coercion against their partner (15%). Additionally, partner-perpetrated sexual coercion was more common than participant-perpetrated sexual coercion.

Participants were more likely to have caused a minor injury against their partner (21%) than to have suffered a minor injury from their partner (14%).

Pregnant participants were slightly more likely (44%) than parenting participants (39%) to report acts of physical conflict by their partners, and pregnant participants were more likely (64%) to have directed physical conflict toward their partners (57%). However, there were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of use of physical conflict tactics by participants or their partners between pregnant and parenting participants.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Prevalence and mutuality for psychological and physical violence were high in this sample. Pregnant and parenting female adolescents were victims and perpetrators of psychological and physical violence, though tended to perpetrate psychological and physical violence at higher rates than they were victimized. Importantly, these data do not include information about the context in which violence occurs, so the authors were unable to assess the character of the violence, for example, whether it was situational violence, resistant violence, or mutual violence. Overall, the data do reflect high conflict contexts for adolescent relationships. The authors hypothesize that adolescents have not yet developed the communication and negotiation skills needed to navigate intimate relationships, and thus turn to violent conflict tactics, which may be exacerbated by the stresses of pregnancy and parenting. The results may also indicate a youth culture in which violence is prescribed, or cyclical relationship dynamics in which partners reciprocate violence conflict strategies.

Implications for relationship programming with adolescents include using gender neutral language about violence perpetration, showing scenarios in which violence is perpetrated by women and within same-sex relationships, and focusing on the context and cycle of violence rather than using perpetrator/victim language. The authors suggest that helping adolescent develop communication skills, with their partners and with their children, may help increase relationship quality.

Nugent, C. N., Ugwu, C., Jones, J., Newburg-Rinn, S., & White, T. (2020). *Demographic, health care, and fertility-related characteristics of adults aged 18–44 who have ever been in foster care: United States, 2011–2017* (Report No. 138). National Health Statistics. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr138-508.pdf>

Objective: Studies on outcomes of youth previously in foster care are limited in that they focus only on young adults or specific geographic locations or depend on data that are more than two decades old. This report builds on previous studies by using National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) data to provide descriptive information on associations between foster care experiences in childhood and demographic, health care, and fertility-related characteristics later in life.

Methods: Results are based on combined NSFG data over a six-year period (September 2011 to September 2017), which includes 14,439 women and 11,527 men between the ages of 18-44. To analyze differences in demographic characteristics and health service access and use between adults who experienced foster care to those who have not, Nugent et al. conducted bivariate analyses and used the Kaplan-Meier procedure to calculate probabilities of fertility-related milestones.

Findings: According to survey responses, 2.6 percent of adults aged 18-44 had experience in the foster care system in the United States. At the time of the survey, adults who had ever been in foster care were less likely to be married (29.8% for men and 22.4% for women) than those who had never been in foster care (40.3% for men and 42.2% for women). They were also more likely to have experienced their first marriage before the age of 20 and father or birth their first child at a younger age than those without a history of foster care. Furthermore, adults who had ever been in foster care had lower levels of education and were more likely to only have a high school diploma or GED than adults who had never been in foster care (24.9% compared with 12.0% for men; 21.3% compared with 9.6% for women). In terms of health care access and use, a higher percentage of adults who experienced foster care were covered by Medicaid (22.9% compared with 10.0% for men; 45.5% compared with 16.8% for women) and did not have health insurance at some

point in the past year (43.2% compared with 28.9% for men; 30.5% compared with 24.3% for women) than those who had never experienced foster care.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Adults who ever experienced foster care differ from those who have never experienced foster care; they have lower rates of high school graduation, higher rates of being uninsured, higher rates of Medicaid usage (which indicates lower income), lower rates of marriage, and first pregnancies at younger ages. These differences require specific and tailored supports relevant to this population. Programs serving individuals who ever experienced foster may also benefit from additional behavioral and social services.

Pergamit, M. R. (2012). *Locating and engaging youth after they leave foster care: Experiences fielding the multi-site evaluation of foster youth programs* (Report No. 1). Urban Institute. https://devd8.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/locating_engaging.pdf

Objective: In 2010, the Administration for Children and Families began requiring states to collect data for the National Youth in Transition Database on outcome measures of current and former foster youth. However, youth who have transitioned out of foster care can be hard to track over time because of their high rates of mobility, homelessness, and incarceration. This brief offers lessons from one site of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs on how states can track and collect data on former foster youth.

Methods: The Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs evaluated four Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA)-funded programs, including the Los Angeles Life Skills Training (LST) program, which is the focus of this brief. The LST sample consisted of 467 youth who were 17 at the time of the baseline interviews and were 18 and 19 during the two subsequent rounds of interviews. Through the strategies described in this brief, the LST evaluation was able to conduct the second follow up interview with 411 (82%) of the youth who participated in the baseline interviews. Each interview was 90 minutes long, was computer-assisted, and was conducted by a professional interviewer. Incentives were \$30 for the first interview and \$50 for the two follow-up interviews.

Findings: Pergamit emphasizes the importance of connecting with youth before they leave foster care so that they will be interested in maintaining contact and follow up with researchers down the road. Other strategies include collecting information on multiple friends and family members who youth expect to know their whereabouts in the future; collecting multiple forms of contact information for youth themselves; providing youth with contact information for the research team to be able to update their own information; and providing incentives that make participating in the study attractive to youth. Importantly, all strategies must be grounded in rapport building.

Pergamit describes a separate set of strategies for locating youth after they have left foster care. Youth may be difficult to track through commercial or government databases as few of them have credit cards, utility accounts, or leases in their own name. However, these databases can be useful for tracking down family members who may know how to contact youth. The Department of Motor Vehicles is one state agency that is likely to have current information on some youth as some will have up to date driver's licenses. Due to the high rate of incarceration among former foster youth, contacting the criminal justice system and reviewing case files can also help locate some youth. Educational systems may also be useful in tracking down youth as many youth do continue their education after leaving foster care.



Conclusions/Recommendations: This study indicates that former foster youth can be tracked over time but require deliberate strategies to be implemented while youth are still in care. The most important elements of success are building rapport with youth while they are still in care, obtaining consent and information to contact multiple friends and family members, keeping in touch with youth, providing multiple methods for youth to contact the research team, and giving youth an incentive to stay in touch. Tracking former foster youth over time requires resourcefulness and creativity, a willingness to try multiple methods or people, and the ability to build relationships both with youth and with government agencies.

Russell, K. N., & Taylor, M. (2017). Juvenile justice system involvement and relationship outcomes in adulthood. *Justice Policy Journal*, 14(2). http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/juvenile_justice_system_involvement_and_relationship_outcomes_in_adulthood_jpj.pdf

Objective: Research has shown that youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system are at higher risk of negative health outcomes in adulthood. However, it is unclear whether there is a link between involvement in the juvenile justice system and relationship outcomes in adulthood. This study explores the difference in relationship outcomes for youth who have experienced the juvenile justice system compared to those who have not.

Methods: Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), this study examined the connection between juvenile justice involvement and relationships outcomes. This study analyzed data on 4,953 males aged 12 to 16. The authors performed t-tests on relationships outcomes (i.e., cohabitation and marriage) during each stage of system involvement (i.e., arrest, court, and detention) as well as ordinary least squares and logistic regression models to predict relationship outcomes for each stage of system involvement.

Findings: Findings show that youth involved in the juvenile justice system are less likely to be married and more likely to be in a cohabiting relationship compared to youth who are not involved in the juvenile justice system. This was true for youth who had been previously arrested, involved with the court, or detained. Moreover, youth involved in the justice system were more likely to cohabit at a younger age than youth who were not involved in the justice system.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The authors suggest that relationship education programs for youth involved in the juvenile justice system may be a promising strategy to help youth form healthy relationships in adulthood. Furthermore, continuing relationship education programming when youth are no longer involved in the justice system may promote strong relationship skills.

Scott, M. E., Moore, K. A., Hawkins, A. J., Malm, K., & Beltz, M. (2012). *Putting youth relationship education on the child welfare agenda: Findings from a research and evaluation review*. *Child Trends*. <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2012-47RelationshipEducFullRpt1.pdf>

Objective: Romantic relationships during adolescence are important to adolescent development, well-being, and for romantic relationships later in life. Youth in foster care may experience unique challenges around romantic relationships, may be particularly vulnerable to negative consequences from poor relationships, and may benefit greatly from positive relationships. Youth in foster care may also have a greater need for support in developing relationships skills than youth not in foster care. As such, Scott et al. sought to review and classify the extant evaluation research on relationship education programs for youth in foster care.

Methods: Scott et al. conducted a broad search for program evaluation literature from published and unpublished sources. The review was inclusive of relationship education programs for youth in foster care, relationship education programs that could be implemented with youth in foster care, and other programs

for youth in foster care that could be adapted to include a relationship education component. Programs were coded based on target population, intervention type, program component type, evaluation rigor, and outcomes examined. The final categories were organized around the level of evaluation evidence for promoting healthy relationships among youth in foster care.

Findings: This review identified no evidence of relationship education programs that were rigorously evaluated for youth in foster care. The review identified four relationship education programs that had been rigorously evaluated with any youth and had demonstrated positive effects on romantic relationship outcomes. The review also identified one program for youth in foster care that had been rigorously evaluated, had a relationship component, and had demonstrated positive effects on social support and mental health outcomes. The remaining 21 programs were either not evaluated for relationship outcomes, were not formally evaluated, or did not include a relationship component.

Conclusions/Recommendations: This review finds compelling evidence for the importance of romantic relationships among adolescents, and the need for supporting youth in foster care in building relationship skills. However, the review identified no relationship education programs that had been designed for youth in foster care and had been rigorously evaluated. The review did identify other relationship education programs that had been rigorously evaluated with other youth populations and could be adapted for youth in foster care. The review also identified positive youth development programs with relationship education components that could evaluate relationship outcomes. Scott et al. propose that integrating relationship education into teen pregnancy prevention programming may be an effective approach to reaching more youth who would benefit from both sets of content.

Scott et al. conclude with recommendations to fund the development and rigorous evaluation of relationship education programs tailored for youth in foster care, to assess relationship outcomes in positive youth development programs, and to implement relationship education programming using a tiered approach in which programs are incorporated into existing services for youth in foster care.

Singer, E. R., Berzin, S. C., & Hokanson, K. (2013). Voices of former foster youth: Supportive relationships in the transition to adulthood. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(12), 2110–2117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2013.10.019>

Objective: Youth who age out of foster care have often experienced significant disruptions to their social support networks and are likely to lack close relationships with supportive adults during emerging adulthood. Child welfare systems typically support these youth in developing independent living skills (such as cooking and budgeting) but do not focus on helping youth to develop *interdependent* living skills, like those need to build and maintain a supportive social network. Singer et al. sought to understand not only the composition of youths' relational networks, but also type and quality of support provided by different network members, from youths' perspectives.

Methods: The study included 20 youth from two community-based programs for youth currently in or recently emancipated from the foster care system. Ten youth were purposively sampled from each program using on-site recruitment. Roughly three-quarters of the youth were male, almost half were Black, and just over half were still in foster care. Youth participated in hour-long semi-structured interviews that focused on their social relationships, who provided them with support, the types of support they provided, the permanency of those relationships, and how they communicated. Youth also completed a Network Map, documenting the individuals who comprised their inner, middle, and outer circles of relationships. Singer et al. used the Consensual Qualitative Research approach to analyze the data they collected.

Findings:

Network map relationship patterns: Youths' support networks included formal (individuals associated with the child welfare, education, and mental health care systems) and informal (friends and family) members. Formal network members tended to be placed in the middle circle of youths' network maps, whereas informal members tended to be placed in the inner circle. All youth could identify at least one adult who provided them with support.

Types of support: Youth received four types of support from their networks: Informational (guidance, advice), instrumental (time, resources), emotional (companionship, trust), and appraisal (feedback, self-worth). Youth received informational support from both formal and informal network members, whereas instrumental support tended to come mostly from formal members. Emotional support was very important to youth and tended to come from informal network members, but some youth also received emotional support from formal network members. Only about half of youth received appraisal support from both formal and informal network members.



Quality of support: Roughly half of the youth could identify at least one member of their network who provided them with unconditional support. Many youths described strong relationships with their families of origin, but these were often strained. Singer et al. identified a discrepancy in youths' perceptions of the permanency of their relationships with formal network members compared to the likelihood of those relationships being permanent. For example, some youth described their relationships with child welfare professionals as "permanent."

Conclusion/Recommendations: Singer et al. identify important gaps in the networks of youth aging out of foster care that are relevant for service providers: 1) Youth tend to receive emotional support but not instrumental or appraisal support from informal network members, which translates to significant gaps in material resources and encouragement, which are essential for youth in emerging adulthood; 2) Youth rely heavily on formal network members for multiple forms of support and perceive these relationships as permanent, despite the high likelihood that these relationships are impermanent. Overall, the findings suggest that foster youths' support networks are not lacking in members, but that the composition of their support networks have important gaps. Findings also suggest that youth may need assistance building the skills to form, strengthen, utilize, and assess healthy, permanent relationships, which is a gap that relationship education programs may be able to fill.

Toews, M. L., & Yazedjian, A. (2014). Psychological and physical dating violence perpetrated by pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents. *Violence and Victims, 29*(5), 872-884. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-13-00024>

Objective: Despite findings from a study that show that 84 percent of pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents used psychological dating violence and 56 percent used physical dating violence, not much is known about what predicts dating violence among pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents. As such, Toews and Yazedjian aimed to explore what predicts Latina adolescents' use of psychological and physical violence against their partners.

Methods: A sample of 126 pregnant or parenting Latina adolescents participated in a 12-week relationship education program and were asked to report on several measures related to communication with their parents and psychological and physical abuse between themselves and their partners. Toews and Yazedijan ran frequencies, a correlational analysis, and hierarchical regression models to analyze relationships between five study variables: communication with parents, perpetration of psychological dating violence, victimization of psychological dating violence, perpetration of physical dating violence, and victimization of physical dating violence.

Findings: The study found that, within the past three months, 85.7 percent of pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents perpetrated at least one act of psychological abuse against the father of their child and 47.6 percent had perpetrated at least one act of physical abuse. Furthermore, 70.6 percent reported that they had been a survivor of psychological abuse, while 16.7 percent had been a survivor of physical abuse in their current relationship with the father of their child. Additionally, Latina adolescents who reported negative communication with their parents or identified as both a survivor and user of physically abusive tactics with the father of their child were more likely to report using psychologically abusive tactics in their relationships. Latina adolescents who used psychologically abusive tactics with their partner were more likely to use physically abusive tactics as well.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The findings suggest that pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents and their partners could benefit from learning the effective communication and conflict resolution skills taught in relationship education programs. Programs should recognize that women and men can be users and survivors of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, since communication with parents is linked to the likelihood of using psychologically abusive tactics with partners, HMRE programs should consider involving the whole family. In particular, the authors emphasize the need to fill a gap in culturally responsive prevention and intervention programming for pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents.



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About the MAST Center

The Marriage Strengthening Research and Dissemination Center (MAST Center) conducts research on marriage and romantic relationships in the U.S. and healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs designed to strengthen these relationships. The MAST Center is made up of a team of national experts in marriage and relationship research and practice, led by Child Trends in partnership with Public Strategies and the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University.

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