

Attachment H

**Expect Respect Safety Procedures and Mandatory Reporting
Requirements**

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((2)) Risk Assessment and Safety Planning for Youths in Abusive Relationships

Conducting a risk assessment and developing a safety plan can help students increase their ability to protect themselves and others in their home. This assessment and planning can occur during the intake or any time you discover a student may be in danger.

The safety plan contains phone numbers for police, other helping agencies, family members or friends who can help in an emergency, and any 24-hour hotlines a student can call anonymously for emotional support and additional referrals.

The process of developing the plan is therapeutic as well as practical. It can help a young person think through options in an emergency situation and identify specific help-seeking behaviors. If a student has been minimizing the risk for or level of violence, creating a safety plan can help the student assess the situation in a more realistic manner. When you report abuse to authorities, you can use a safety plan to help the student prepare for a potential increase in violence as a result of your report.

Always give students the option to leave the safety plan with you, tear it up, or throw it away if they feel uncomfortable taking it with them for any reason.

((2)) Security and Mandatory Reporting Requirements

((3)) Security

Clear guidelines for protecting the security and privacy of group members are absolutely necessary. Unless students trust that what they say will stay in group, they will be unwilling to join and reluctant to speak freely. If students don't trust you as the facilitator, they will not develop trust in the group. Students will be guarded, censor their real feelings, keep to themselves, or distract one another with unrelated stories and unfocused behavior. You can avoid this problem by establishing clear guidelines about security and privacy and assuring that these guidelines are understood and upheld by all group members. From the beginning, stress the need to keep private any personal information revealed in the group.

((3)) Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

The mandatory reporting law for child abuse holds adults responsible for contacting authorities when a child has been harmed or is in danger of harm. Explain to group members that when you believe a student is in danger of harm from self or others, you will secure help for the students involved by alerting others to the problem.

You may have to break privacy in other situations. A group member, for example, may disclose participation in a violent crime. Or you may learn about potential danger to someone not in the group. A group member may disclose, for example, that a sibling has

been abused or that another student has a weapon at school. Discuss with students situations that would cause you to break privacy guidelines.

Whenever possible, inform a student in advance before discussing the situation with authorities. Give the student the opportunity to participate, for example, by making the report with you or by being present during discussion of the incident with authorities, parents, law enforcement, or others. Allowing students to describe an incident in their own words and express their wishes will also help the authorities take the most appropriate actions.

Although you are bound by law to report child abuse, your report will not always result in increased protection for the student. In some cases it will have the opposite effect. A formal report may provoke additional violence toward the student by the abuser. As a result of the investigation, the abuser may physically punish the victim for telling someone about the abuse, forbid participation in the support group, or further isolate the student from friends or supportive adults. Be prepared to help the student develop a safety plan and provide ongoing support after the report.

((3)) Suicidal or Homicidal Threats

Be alert to students' feelings of anger and depression and take seriously all threats to commit suicide or homicide. When a student shares suicidal or homicidal thoughts in group, ask to meet individually with the student immediately after group. Seek outside help for the student, particularly when it appears that a student already has a plan to hurt self or others. Notify the school counselor and the parent or guardian as indicated. Contact your local mental health agency without delay. A mobile crisis team may be able to come to school for this purpose, or a parent may need to take the student to a community agency. Convey your concern for the student's safety, explain what you will do to help the student be safe, and emphasize your commitment to help in whatever ways you can. Don't make promises or commitments you cannot keep.

When you contact outside agencies, involve the student as much as possible. Doing so shows the student how to obtain outside services and demonstrates your confidence in the student's ability to take self-protective actions. In some cases, a student may feel betrayed or even hostile toward you for breaking privacy guidelines and want to drop out of the group. The student may believe that your action has made life unbearable. If the student drops out of the group, ask for an individual meeting with you. Encourage the student to return to the group, and look for ways to connect the student to other sources of support such as outside counseling, shelter, or other services.

((3)) Security Policy

For the intake and subsequent group sessions, each student – and the facilitator – sign a security policy, such as the one below.

Security Policy

What you talk about to me (the facilitator) is private. That means that I will not repeat what you say to others including your teachers, counselors, other students

or your parents. There are some kinds of information that I cannot keep private. If you tell me that you or another minor has been abused or assaulted, I am required by law to report this information to the [Department of Protective and Regulatory Services] or the [Police Department]. If you tell me, or I suspect that you are in serious danger of hurting yourself or someone else, I will contact outside professionals to help you and to keep you and others safe. In each of the above cases, I will also discuss the situation with my supervisor, you, your school counselor, and your parent/guardian so that we can work together for your safety and the safety of others.

When the facilitator becomes aware of the following information, it cannot be considered private:

- If you have been abused or assaulted by an adult in the past and never reported it to an authority.
- If you are in serious danger because someone is hurting you or you are hurting yourself. (This includes violence and sexual assault from one youth toward another.)
- If you are going to hurt someone else, or you believe that another person is in serious danger.
- If you give your permission to share information with other adults.
- If court orders and subpoenas are issued.

I understand the security policy. I will also keep security and privacy of other group members.

Student signature

Expect Respect facilitator signature

((2)) Protective Orders

Teens generally have little information about their legal rights as victims of interpersonal violence (Jaycox et al., 2006). As a result, when teens report ongoing dating violence, provide them with information on their legal rights, and, if indicated, help them file a petition for a protective order. Regulations vary from state to state and may require that a parent or guardian file the petition on behalf of the teen. The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC, 2005) provides information about each state's regulations on protective orders for teens.

((sidebar))

For more information about state regulations on protective orders for teens, visit

www.ncvc.org

((end sidebar))

((2)) Parent Involvement

Expect Respect support groups focus on working with teens in a peer group and do not generally involve parents. However, parent involvement may occur at the request of a student or when you determine a student is in danger. In that case, you work closely with the student or school personnel to arrange a parent meeting.

When indicated, Expect Respect facilitators provide resources and referrals for the whole family. It is helpful to collaborate closely with community agencies or wrap-around programs in the schools.