

## American schools unable to handle teen dating violence, study finds

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(Phys.org) -- Preventing and addressing adolescent dating violence is not a high priority for most American schools, even though the majority of counselors have assisted survivors, says a new study from Ball State University.

"[Adolescent Dating Violence: A National Assessment of School Counselors' Perceptions and Practices](#)," to be published in the August edition [Pediatrics](#), is based on a [national survey](#) of school counselors, says Jagdish Khubchandani, a community health education professor in Ball State's Department of Physiology and Health Science and a faculty fellow with the university's Global Health Institute.

This research found the vast majority (81.3 percent) of the school counselors reported that they did not have a protocol in their schools to respond to an incident of [dating violence](#). Yet about 61 percent of school counselors reported that they had assisted a survivor of dating violence in the past two years.

"The lack of formal training is the most important barrier to assisting student [survivors](#) of [adolescent](#) dating violence," Khubchandani said. "School counselors also perceived that dating violence is a minor issue and even if they want to help, the parents might not approve of school's interference.

About 90 percent of respondents also said training to assist survivors of dating violence has not been provided to personnel in their schools in the

last two years, and 76 percent of respondents said their school did not have a committee that meets periodically to address health and safety issues that include dating violence.

The study also found:

- Most of the survivors who received assistance were female.
- The most common method of responding to a survivor of adolescent dating violence was calling the parents and guardians or referral to legal authorities.
- Slightly more than one in 10 school counselors actually assisted a survivor by referral to child protection agencies and school nurses, for legal and medical assistance.
- School personnel who received formal training on adolescent dating violence and perceived dating violence to be a serious problem were significantly more likely to assist survivors of dating violence.

Khubchandani points out that the study is the first national assessment of the role of school personnel in preventing and responding to adolescent dating violence.

"It is also the first research project to identify the need of formal training on adolescent dating violence for school personnel," he said. "Hopefully, this study will be a pioneer in helping establish school policies, protocols and procedures for adolescent dating violence prevention."

Provided by Ball State University

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