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Justice Department Research Shows That School-Level Interventions Reduce Dating Violence by up to 50 Percent

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today announced new research from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) that finds school-level interventions reduced dating violence among middle school students by up to 50 percent in 30 New York City public schools.

This study was originally conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum and funded by the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The study used a multi-level, randomized control trial to find out what is effective in preventing dating violence and sexual harassment among over 2,500 sixth- and seventh-grade students.

“The success of school-level interventions is particularly important because they can be implemented with very few extra costs to schools. The scientific methods in this study were rigorous,” said John H. Laub, Ph.D., Director of the National Institute of Justice. “They show the potential for science to support successful, cost-effective options.”

School-level interventions include using temporary school-based restraining orders, higher levels of faculty and security presence in areas identified as “hot spots,” and posters to increase awareness and encourage reporting of incidents to school officials.

Classroom-level interventions, when delivered alone, had no effect. The classroom-level curricula included sessions that addressed the consequences for perpetrators of dating violence and sexual harassment, state laws and penalties, and discussion of gender roles and healthy relationships.

Other critical findings included:

- The combination of the classroom and the school-level intervention alone led to a 32-47 percent lower sexual violence victimization and perpetration six months after the intervention.
- Students receiving the school-level intervention were more likely to say they would intervene as a bystander six months after the intervention.

Focus groups helped the researchers understand how the interventions were employed and received. The focus groups confirmed that interventions were straightforward to put in place, were implemented as planned, were supported by teachers, and reinforced positive survey results.

This study was co-funded by the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education.

TITLE: *Shifting Boundaries: Final Report on an Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in New York City Middle Schools*

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WHERE: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/236175.pdf>

*Dr. Taylor began working as the Principal Investigator (PI) of this study while serving as the Director of Research at the Police Executive Research Forum. Dr. Taylor has since transferred to the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.

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