

Promote It



Provide education about policies that promote healthy relationship behavior and prevent dating abuse.

Why?

Individuals, groups, and organizations have the potential to affect what happens in their community. One way we exercise this influence is by voting. Policy advocacy—using our power to bring about changes in policies, regulations and laws—is another way to influence what happens in your community. The goal of this play is to use your knowledge to encourage other groups and organizations within your community to become aware of and strengthen existing policies to protect youth and promote healthy relationship behavior.

Where and When?

Education and advocacy efforts can begin at any time, but need to be sustained over time to be successful. There are some limitations. Most state and federal laws and rules bar the use of government funds for lobbying by grantees. However, they do not restrict the right of grantees or contractors to undertake these activities with private resources.

How?

Sample postcards, letters, and e-mails can be found in the Zone 4 resources on the USB Flash Drive that comes with this Playbook.

Set your target.

You can focus your educational and advocacy efforts narrowly or broadly. This play is intended for your local community. Your target can be:

- A single group or organization within your neighborhood, such as the church you attend or the recreation center your children use
- A company or institution within your community, such as your employer or the nearby mall where youth hang out
- A multi-unit system in your city, such as the public schools or libraries

Decide what's most realistic for you.



Plays in Action:

Alexandra House Shelter

In February of 2007, Alexandra House Shelter took their youth partners and Choose Respect to the state senate for first hand experience in advocating for change. In the *Girls Rock the Capitol* program, girls went to the capitol to meet local senators, talk about healthy relationships, and do hands-on advocacy. To prepare the girls, Alexandra House trained the girls to meet the senators and speak in their own words about the importance of setting up a positive environment for kids. Minnesota senators got to hear from the girls themselves how they could help protect youth and prevent dating abuse. These youth advocates also learned about the legislative process, asked questions of elected officials, and participated in mock debates.

Do some research.

Once you set your target, use the *Analyze It* play in this zone to determine what policies are already in place and where they might be improved. Decide what policy changes you want to advocate based on what you learn. Also, prepare yourself for success. Assume that your efforts will succeed and be prepared to recommend specific wording for policies and/or to help create or revise policies when the opportunity arises.

Identify the decision-makers.

Education and advocacy efforts generally target key decision-makers—individuals in positions of leadership who have the authority to make decisions or act on a particular matter. This includes politicians, leaders of groups, and heads of organizations.

Get to know the key decision-makers for your target. These are the people who can make changes in policy and dating abuse prevention programs. Local, state, and federal decision-makers can often be located through an Internet search. Some Web addresses that can help you locate your key decision-makers are:

- www.naco.org/
- www.senate.gov
- www.house.gov
- <http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/home.asp>
- www.nga.org/portal/site/nga
- www.ncsl.org/public/leglinks.cfm
- www.usa.gov>Contact/Elected.shtml

The key to policy education and advocacy is to identify the key decision-makers and then mobilize individuals, groups, or organizations to use their influence to urge these decision-makers to “Say Yes to Respect.” They can do this by creating new policies or strengthening or enforcing existing policies that promote healthy, respectful relationships and prevent dating abuse among youth.

Create a game plan.

Regardless of the policy change you are advocating, the approach remains the same. You need to make your issue high-profile and bring the problem of dating abuse to the attention of the key decision-makers and your fellow community members. The game plan for making this happen may vary by community, but here are a few suggestions.

- **Start a letter writing campaign.** Draft a letter that clearly articulates why a change in policy is needed and what the change should be. Spotlight the letter to key decision-makers on your website and encourage visitors to participate in the campaign. Include a link to a draft of the letter and allow people to add their own thoughts so the letter conveys the strength of their personal commitment. A sample letter can be found in the Zone 4 resources on the USB Flash Drive that comes with this Playbook.
- **Send e-mails.** If letter writing is too time consuming or expensive, encourage your supporters to send e-mails instead. E-mails often fail to have the impact of a written letter, but certainly can be effective. It is possible to send a larger number of e-mails than letters, since e-mail takes only a few minutes. A sample e-mail can be found in the Zone 4 resources on the USB Flash Drive that comes with this Playbook.

Want to Do More?

Here are two suggestions for doing more with this activity.

- Partner with other organizations to build a broader support base for the proposed policy changes.
- Take the message to a larger audience by targeting political and legislative bodies at the local, state, or national level. Decision-makers include the mayor, city or county council, governor, state legislature, or the U.S. Congress.

- **Offer your support and expertise for wording policy changes.** Try to arrange a face-to-face meeting with key decision-makers to work together on new or revised policy. Stay in touch with the key decision-makers; be prepared to offer examples of effective wording and advice on policy changes.
- **Once on the agenda, use postcards.** Once a proposed policy has been scheduled for a vote or adoption, encourage your supporters to flood key decision-makers' offices with postcards asking for their vote/support on the issue. Send postcards in the mail or can use an e-postcard. A sample postcard can be found in the Zone 4 resources on the USB Flash Drive that comes with this Playbook.
- **Use the media.** Use the play *Media Blitz* in this Zone to learn how to get your message out using the media.

Resources Needed:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | List of supporters and their contact information | <input type="checkbox"/> | List of key decision-makers to target |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sample postcard | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sample letter or e-mail |

Evaluation:

Document what you accomplish using Choose Respect tracking tools:

- **Stand Up & Be Counted**

Keep track of play participants and audience members. The Zone 4 Evaluation Tools contain a sign-in sheet.

- **Cheers & Changes**

After the play is complete, note your successes, challenges, and opportunities for the future. The Zone 4 Evaluation Tools contain a worksheet to help you do this.

Choose Respect feedback tools are recommended if you implement multiple plays. Take time to reflect on how far you have come in implementing Choose Respect in your community after completing a series of Choose Respect activities using Choose Respect feedback tools:

- **Policy Education and Advocacy Impact Survey**

After completing a series of activities, collect information for your evaluation. The Zone 4 Evaluation Tools contain a feedback form to help you do this.

E-mail Example 1



This is a sample e-mail. In this e-mail you give advice to parents, as well as give them a call to action. Your may tailor this e-mail to fit your audience.

Treat others just as you want to be treated. That's a rule we all want kids to follow. In fact, the older they get, the more important it becomes for them to respect themselves and others. Unfortunately, youth—just like adults—often end up in unhealthy relationships. The facts about dating abuse among youth are alarming. Did you know that 1 in 11 youth reports being a victim of physical dating abuse?

The good news is, if youth learn the importance of self respect and respect for others at a young age, these skills can carry over into adulthood and reduce the likelihood of dating abuse. That is where you come in. Parents and other caring adults can make a big difference by doing a few small things. Some of the actions you can take include:

- Talking with your child
- Getting involved in your child's day-to-day routine
- Setting rules
- Being a good role model
- Teaching your child to choose friends wisely
- Monitoring your child's activities

[*Insert your organization name*] is trying to take these efforts one step further. We are [*insert action*] and need your help. Please [*call, write*] your [*give person or agency*] to help us achieve [*whatever it is you are working towards*]. Give your child a head start for success. Encourage him or her to choose respect!

Visit www.chooserespect.org to find out more!

E-mail Example 2



E-mail support is often shorter than snail mail letters. Decision-makers get hundreds or even thousands of e-mails per day and we want to be short and to the point. Use this type of e-mail to advocate for changes in policy.

Dear [Insert the Specific Name of the Contact]:

I am writing you today to ask for your support of [**specific information here, like HB 345 or the Act Respectfully school policy amendment**]. Encouraging our children to have healthy relationships is an important issue for me, and I believe an important one for our community to embrace. With your help and support of [**same action as above**], we can begin to make a difference and have a standard of encouraging healthy relationships in our community.

Please contact [**insert the appropriate agency representative**] at [**insert contact information**] for additional information or if you have questions or concerns. You can also visit www.chooserespect.com.

Sincerely,

[**Insert Your Name**]

[**Insert Title**]

[**Insert Name of Your Organization**]

[**Insert Area Code and Phone Number**]

[**Insert E-mail Address**]

Promote It Letter Template



Community support and participation are critical to successfully launching and promoting the Choose Respect initiative in your community. You may use or adapt this letter template. We recommend using letterhead with Choose Respect logo.

[insert date]

[insert name of contact]

[insert organization name]

[insert business mailing address]

Dear [insert the specific name of the contact]:

Treat others just as you want to be treated. That's a rule we all want kids to follow. In fact, the older they get, the more important it becomes for them to respect themselves and others. Unfortunately, youth—just like adults—often end up in unhealthy relationships. The facts about dating abuse among youth are alarming. Did you know that 1 in 11 youth reports being a victim of physical dating abuse?

Dating abuse is a pattern of violent behavior—physical, emotional, or sexual—by one partner in a dating relationship toward the other. It can be as subtle as controlling behaviors or as overt as physical abuse. Dating abuse has been linked to a variety of negative consequences such as binge drinking, substance abuse, suicide, physical fighting, sexual activity, poor academic performance, depression, and anxiety.

The costs of intimate partner rape, physical assault, and stalking exceed \$5.8 billion each year:

- Nearly \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health care services
- Nearly \$0.9 billion in lost productivity from paid work and household chores for victims of nonfatal intimate partner violence
- Nearly \$0.9 billion in lifetime earnings lost by victims of intimate partner homicide

The good news is, if kids learn the importance of self-respect and respect for others at a young age, these skills can carry over into adulthood. That's why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is bringing Choose Respect—a national initiative to promote positive, healthy relationships—to your community. This research-based effort is designed to motivate youth to challenge

harmful beliefs about dating abuse and develop a foundation of respect in all of their relationships.

Some examples:

- We are encouraging the **[name of local school board]** to implement Choose Respect as part of the health education curriculum in all middle schools.
- We invite **[insert name of potential partner organization]** to be a part of Choose Respect by **[insert a paragraph describing your local event and what role the partner can play].**
- We are asking you to support **[details of policy]** in the upcoming session. **[Provide details of how this will either promote healthy relationships or deter disrespectful behavior.]**

With your help, **[insert your organization name]** will make important strides in building an environment where mutual respect is simply what is expected. We encourage you to learn more about Choose Respect by visiting [www.chooserespect.org!](http://www.chooserespect.org)

Best regards,

[insert your name]

[insert title]

[insert name of your organization]

[insert area code and phone number]

[insert e-mail address]

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Costs of intimate partner violence against women in the United States. Atlanta (GA): CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2003. [cited 2006 May 22]. Available from: URL: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/ipv_cost/ipv.htm.
2. Max W, Rice DP, Finkelstein E, Bardwell RA, Leadbetter S. The economic toll of intimate partner violence against women in the United States. *Violence and Victims* 2004;19(3):259–72.

Choose Respect Postcards Example 1



Postcards are a simple way to follow up and be very specific in what action you want your audience to take. While the initial letter or e-mail should give details about WHY you want your audience to take action, the follow-up postcard simply restates the call to action.

For example, use a Choose Respect postcard with these messages on the back:

- Remember to attend the [insert event] on [insert date and time and location].
- Please contact [insert name of decision-maker] at [insert contact information] to ask them to support [insert policy or action].
- Attend the [insert event] on [insert date and time and location]
- Please remember to sign the on-line petition for community-wide implementation of Choose Respect on [insert Website address].



Choose Respect Postcards Example 2



Postcards are a simple way to reach decision makers with your message and get your supporters engaged in education and advocacy efforts. Populate postcards with your message and allow your supporters to add their information.

Some examples:

- We are encouraging the [insert name of local school board] to implement Choose Respect as part of the health education curriculum in all middle schools.
- We invite [insert name of potential partner organization] to be a part of Choose Respect by [insert a paragraph describing your local event and what role the partner can play].
- We are asking you to support [details of policy] in the upcoming session. Provide details of how this will either promote healthy relationships or deter disrespectful behavior.
- With your help, [insert your organization name] will make important strides in building an environment where mutual respect is simply what is expected. We encourage you to learn more about Choose Respect by visiting www.chooserespect.org!



Take Action Letter Template



This letter should be distributed widely to gather support for the action you want. This letter could be used when advocating for a change in policy.

[insert date]

[insert name of contact]

[insert organization name]

[insert business mailing address]

Dear [insert the specific name of the contact]:

I am writing you today to ask for your support of **[specific information here, like HB 345 or the Act Respectfully school policy amendment]**. Encouraging our children to have healthy relationships is an important issue for me, and I believe an important one for our community to embrace.

Unhealthy relationships take a toll on all members of our community. Dating abuse is a pattern of violent behavior—physical, emotional, or sexual—by one partner in a dating relationship toward the other. It can be as subtle as controlling behaviors or as overt as physical abuse. Dating abuse has been linked to a variety of negative consequences such as binge drinking, substance abuse, suicide, physical fighting, sexual activity, poor academic performance, depression, and anxiety.

The costs of intimate partner rape, physical assault, and stalking exceed \$5.8 billion each year:

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Unfortunately, youth—just like adults—often end up in unhealthy relationships. The facts about dating abuse among youth are alarming. Did you know that 1 in 11 youth reports being a victim of physical dating abuse?

With your help and support of **[same action as above]** we can begin to make a difference and have a standard of encouraging healthy relationships in our community.

Sincerely,

[insert your name]

[insert title]

[insert name of your organization]

[insert area code and phone number]

[insert e-mail address]

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Costs of intimate partner violence against women in the United States. Atlanta (GA): CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2003. [cited 2006 May 22]. Available from: URL: www.cdc.gov/nicipc/pub-res/ipv_cost/ipv.htm.
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