

Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

PARENT PROGRAMS: AT-A-GLANCE

The **Healthy Relationships Toolkit Parent Programs**—one component of the Healthy Relationships Toolkit (HeaRT)* comprehensive prevention model—provide parents and caregivers of 11- to 14-year-olds with skills for positive parenting and healthy, effective parent-child communication. They also help parents and caregivers engage in dialogue with their kids about healthy, safe relationships. Teaching parents and other caregivers how to have difficult conversations with teens helps caregivers communicate messages about healthy and safe dating relationships. These conversations also allow parents and caregivers to convey accurate information about safe relationships and open the door for continued positive discussions throughout adolescence.

Parents and other caregivers are critical for preventing violence in adolescence. Parents are uniquely positioned to help their children live stronger, healthier lives. By establishing and modeling healthy relationships of their own, parents can impart their desired values and expectations for the relationships their children will have throughout their lives.

HeaRT includes three programs designed for parents of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to:

- encourage positive, strong parent-child communication,
- educate parents on violence their child might experience and ways they can help protect their child, and
- help parents engage in open, ongoing dialogue with their teens that communicates their values, expectations, and support related to healthy relationships.

Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships is a comprehensive model to prevent violence in adolescence. HeaRT focuses on 11- to 14-year-olds and is based on the best available evidence on what works to prevent violence in adolescence. It includes multiple components that target individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. These components work together to promote respectful, nonviolent teen relationships.

In addition to the Parent Programs, the HeaRT model also includes:

- General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool
- Youth Programs
- Guide to Informing Policy
- Training for Educators
- i2i Youth Communications Program
- Guide to Using Indicator Data

HOW WILL PARENTS BENEFIT FROM THE PROGRAMS?

The HeaRT Parent Programs teach skills and knowledge to promote respectful, nonviolent relationships through strong parent-child communication and relationships. Through a mixture of information sharing, discussion, role plays, group exercises, and at-home practice, HeaRT Parent Programs are designed to improve parents' understanding of violence in adolescence and healthy relationships. These programs also provide parents with the skills they need to address these tough issues with their preteens and teens.

*The Healthy Relationships Toolkit was previously referred to as Dating Matters.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT PARENT PROGRAMS?

HeaRT includes three parent programs that teach skills and strategies to help parents protect their middle school students from teen dating violence. These programs were developed for parents of youth in grades 6, 7, and 8 as part of the HeaRT model. However, the tools and ideas in these programs will likely be helpful for parents with children of all ages.

● **Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents**

(6th Grade) is designed to increase parents' ability to be an effective resource for their children regarding healthy relationships and to provide opportunities for parents to build positive parenting skills. Parents are empowered to increase their awareness of the issues children face; improve their ability to communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sexuality; and develop parenting practices that will decrease the likelihood of their children being exposed to unhealthy relationships. This program was adapted for HeaRT from another CDC-developed parenting program (Parents Matter!).

● **Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (7th Grade)**

is designed to provide strategies helpful in parenting adolescents. It includes strategies and skills to help parents communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sexual behaviors. HeaRT for Parents includes both group and in-home sessions. The in-home sessions are designed to give parents an opportunity to practice the skills learned in the group setting. This program was developed by CDC.

● **Families for Safe Dates**

is an evidence-based program delivered to parents of 8th graders. Participating families receive six booklets, one for parents only and five for parents and their teens to explore together to learn about different topics regarding teen dating violence.

● **Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Training for Parents**

is a free, self-administered online training for parents and caregivers developed by CDC to ensure that all families have access to core content from the HeaRT parent programs at no cost. Schools and community organizations can promote this parent training in addition to offering the in-person, facilitated programs or instead of those programs to reach as many families as possible.

Ideally, parents will have an opportunity to participate in all three years of HeaRT programming while their children are in middle school. However, engaging parents in in-

person programs can be challenging and may require more resources than your community has available. The online parent training provides a no-cost alternative that allows families to enhance their parenting skills and knowledge about violence and healthy relationships from the comfort of their own home, at their convenience.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT PARENT PROGRAMS?

HeaRT Parent Programs are designed to help parents:

● **Build Knowledge** by educating them on:

- healthy, unhealthy, and unsafe teen relationships;
- warning signs for unhealthy teen dating behavior; and
- the role of technology in teen dating (texting, social media, etc.).

● **Empower** their children to:

- trust in what they know;
- listen to their inner voice instead of outside pressures; and
- define their own healthy, safe boundaries and comfort levels in teen dating and relationships.

● **Take Action** by empowering them to promote the growth of healthy relationships and discourage engagement in unhealthy and unsafe relationships.



HOW IS EACH PROGRAM DELIVERED?

HeaRT includes three programs developed for parents of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Each program consists of six sessions or modules with a combination of in-person sessions and at-home sessions. The in-person sessions are delivered in a community setting at convenient times for parents, and are carried out by teachers, school staff, or outside program facilitators coordinated by the local health department or lead organization. The **HeaRT Guide to Implementation** provides more detailed information on program delivery.

| | HeaRT Parent Programs | | | Online Parent Training (optional) |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| | Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (6th Grade) | Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (7th Grade) | Families for Safe Dates (8th grade) | HeaRT Training for Parents |
| Total sessions | 6 in-person sessions | 3 in-person and 3 at-home sessions | 6 modules completed at-home by the parents with their teens | 2 modules completed by parents online |
| Session length | 2.5 hours | 1.5 hours for in-person sessions | 45 minutes each | 1.5 hours each |
| Session topics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive parenting skills ● Effective parent-child communication on healthy relationship development and sexual health topics ● Relational and sexual risk behaviors of youth ● Healthy relationship modeling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive parenting skills ● Open and effective parent-child communication ● Parental monitoring and supervising ● Constructive conflict resolution skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent-child communication skills ● Conflict resolution skills ● Teen dating violence ● Sexual dating violence ● Parental monitoring skills | <p>Includes key content from the parent programs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive parenting skills ● Communicating about healthy relationships and sexual development ● Dating violence, sexual violence, and bullying |

STAFFING

Multiple staff are important to implementing the HeaRT Parent Programs as part of the HeaRT comprehensive prevention model—from a Prevention Lead who coordinates all activities at the community level to HeaRT coaches and program facilitators who carry out the programs with parents. The key responsibilities and skill sets for each of the staff roles are described below. The HeaRT Guide to Implementation provides more detail on each of these roles. The online Training for Parents does not require any staffing; however, the Prevention Lead may require resources to promote the training to families in their schools or community.

- **Prevention Lead:** The Prevention Lead should have the skills and experience to oversee a comprehensive prevention initiative and engage community partners in violence prevention.
 - Oversees implementing HeaRT at the health department or community-based organizational level
 - Enhances the community's capacity to carry out violence prevention programs
 - Recruits and builds relationships with local schools
 - Engages community partners through a community advisory board
 - Supervises coaches and facilitators
 - Monitors the budget and ensures sustainability

- **HeaRT Coach:** Coaches are staff of the health department or community organization overseeing HeaRT who are responsible for supervising and supporting youth and parent program facilitators. Coaches should have experience providing health education to parents and supervising prevention program implementation.
 - Supervises and supports parent program facilitators
 - Oversees access to facilitator training and program materials for parent program facilitators
 - Completes in-person interactive portions of training for parent program facilitators
 - Observes parent program facilitators to provide ongoing feedback and skill development in program facilitation
 - Completes fidelity checks to ensure adherence to session content

- **Parent Program Facilitators:** Parent program facilitators should have experience and skills working with parents, especially parents of teens. They should feel comfortable delivering health education and facilitating engaging, open dialogue about difficult topics. Parent programs can be carried out by health department staff or other community-based health educators.
 - Complete facilitator training
 - Engage in ongoing efforts with a HeaRT coach to improve program quality and fidelity
 - Deliver session content to parents of youth in grades 6, 7, and 8

FACILITATOR TRAINING

Organizations can access free training for HeaRT coaches and parent program facilitators through the [Healthy Relationships Toolkit website](#). Facilitator certification is required to carry out the HeaRT 6th and 7th grade parent programs. Facilitator training, including online modules and in-person supplemental activities with a HeaRT coach, should take about 10 hours.

PROGRAM MATERIALS

The CDC provides all materials needed to carry out HeaRT Parent Programs for 6th and 7th grades at no cost. Printing costs, estimated below, may apply. Materials include:

- Parent Program Facilitator Guides
- Parent Handbooks
- Coaches' Playbook

Families for Safe Dates (8th grade) materials include a set of six printed booklets mailed home to parents in succession. A self-printable PDF version of the program is included with purchase of the Safe Dates youth program from the publisher.

For more detailed information on accessing HeaRT parent program materials, please see the [Healthy Relationships Toolkit website](#).

FACILITY NEEDS

In-person sessions for the HeaRT Parent Programs can be held in a classroom setting after school or at another community facility, like a recreation center, church, or library. A comfortable location convenient for parents with easy access to parking or public transit is ideal. Access to projection equipment on-site is helpful. Some communities may choose to provide childcare during the program to help parents participate. If so, facilities with a separate space for childcare would be needed.

COST

Costs associated with carrying out the **HeaRT Parent Programs** are specific to the community and can vary depending on staffing, administrative, facility, and printing costs as well as the number of parents and classrooms served.



| Type of Cost | Specific Costs | Estimated Cost |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Staffing | Prevention Lead | 1 full-time employee per community ¹ |
| | Coach | 1 full-time employee per community ¹ |
| | Parent Program Facilitators | .5 full-time employee per community |
| Program Materials | HeaRT Parent Programs (6th and 7th Grade) | |
| | Posters, 6th Grade Parent Program | Self-print (cost varies) |
| | Parent Handbooks | Self-print (cost varies) |
| | Facilitator Guides | Self-print (cost varies) |
| | Families for Safe Dates (8th Grade) | |
| | Parent Booklets (set of 6) | \$3 per family to print |
| | Postage to mail booklets to parents | \$3 per family |
| Facilitator Training | Online Training Course | Free |
| | Staff Time | Approx. 10 hours |
| Facilities | Space at school or a partner organization | No additional cost |
| Participation Support and Incentives | Child care on-site | Cost varies (optional) |
| | Meals or snacks during group sessions | Cost varies (optional) |
| | Door prizes or cash incentives | Cost varies (optional) |

See the **Healthy Relationships Toolkit Guide to Implementation** for more detailed guidance on staffing recommendations and budgeting.

¹ Only one Prevention Lead and Coach are needed per community; these costs are not replicated for each component.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT!

The Healthy Relationships Toolkit—with all of the materials, guidance, and tools you need to implement HeaRT—is available on CDC's VetoViolence website at <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/heart>. The Toolkit is your one-stop-shop for everything HeaRT.