



Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month Action Toolkit
Take action on Orange Day (February 8, 2022) and all month

Hello all,

According to Kidsdata.org, in 2018, a total of 166,890 domestic violence-related calls were made to law enforcement in California—a rate of **6.3 calls per 1,000 adults ages 18-69**. And in [recent research](#) In California, 8 percent of 11th graders were victims of physical abuse by a dating partner. When talking about “what adults should understand about youth” many wanted adults to understand that youth have feelings and we can experience the same thing adults experience. Dating violence is a big problem that teens deal with. To change the rate of 166,890 teens experiencing domestic violence, we need your help! Try talking to your local Senate Senator, Assemblymember, City council members, school board members, and more!

Alyssa Fuellas Ayala, Jeneration J – Jenesse Center

Orange Day is a great opportunity to educate elected officials about teen dating violence, prevention, and the issues impacting youth in their communities. This toolkit will get you started with tips on contacting your Senate Senator and Assemblymember and can also be used for contacting other policymakers including your City Councilmembers, school board members, and more!

Every Californian has one State Senator and one Assemblymember representing them in Sacramento. Legislators can propose new laws about the issues most important to them, and have the opportunity to vote on hundreds of proposed bills every year. The Assembly has just 80 members, and the Senate has half of that amount, with 40 total members. Every one of their votes impacts our communities, so community-member engagement is critical to influencing their actions. That's why taking action today and in the future can be so important.

Getting Started

Find your Senate Senator and Assemblymember's contact information by [clicking here](#) and entering in your home address. Then click the link for your Assemblymember and Senator to learn more about them and find their contact information.

Each legislator's website is full of details, including a biography. It's helpful to read through this and see if there are details you can connect with. Are they a parent? If so, they likely care deeply about making sure their children are healthy and happy. Were they a teacher? If so, they are probably interested in making sure schools are places for learning and supporting youth, and may understand how challenging school years can be.

You can also find an email form on their website – look for the Contact tab, which is sometimes underneath the "About" tab. We have tips below for what to include in an email.

You'll find their office phone numbers at the bottom of their webpage. Usually they list two offices – one based in their district and closer to home for you, and the other for their Sacramento office. Either one is great to contact. When we're asking a legislator to vote on a particular bill, we're focus on the Capitol office. When you're hoping to have the legislator to meet with you or attend an upcoming community event, the district office can be the best option. Keep reading for tips on making calls to their offices.

You'll often also find their social media account information on these websites. Most legislators are active on twitter, but also often use Facebook and Instagram.

Tips for Both Calls & Emails

- Know what you want to achieve with your message. Do you want them to vote a certain way on a bill? Do you want to educate them about what young people in your community need? Do you want to share a personal experience? Invite them to an event? Whatever it is, knowing what your goal is before you start will make your communication that much stronger.
- Practice! It's never a bad idea to write out a draft of what you want to say first. For phone calls, practice saying it out loud.
 - **Adult preventionists:** this is a great piece to support youth with. Be their sounding board as they practice.
- Make an "ask" that ties back to your goal – what is the action item for the legislator? This is something they (and their staff) expect in any communication.

Data & Statistics You Can Use

Telling your personal story is always powerful, and is more than enough for a phone call or email. But, if you'd like to amplify your message with some research and statistics, here are some you can use.

- Each year, an estimated 1 in 10 high school students is physically hurt on purpose by a dating partner.ⁱ
- According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships, 1 in 3 adolescents report verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual dating abuse each year.ⁱⁱ
- American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children suffer exposure to violence at rates higher than any other race in the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 43% of LGB teens reported experiencing physical dating violence, compared to 29% of heterosexual youth;^{iv} 59% of LGB teens reported emotional abuse, compared to 46% of heterosexual youth;^v and 50% of Transgender youth reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives.^{vi}
- Survivors of teen dating violence have increased risk for truancy, dropout, teen pregnancy, suicide, having eating disorders, and engaging in other harmful behaviors such as use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.^{vii}
- Nearly half of students who experience dating violence have reported that some of the abuse took place on school grounds.^{viii}

Phone Calls

- Find a quiet place, and take a deep breath as you make the call
- When the staff person answers, introduce yourself and your organization or your leadership role.
- Tell them right away what you're calling about, and then provide more details.
- Keep the initial call to 3-4 sentences. If you'd like to have a longer conversation, ask for a meeting with a staff person or the legislator.
- Here's a sample script if you'd like to educate the legislator about Teen Dating Violence & Prevention, and what you wish adults knew about these issues.
 - *Hello, my name is _____ and I'm ___ (a student at XX school, the leader of XXX healthy relationships club, etc. Today is Orange Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness about Teen Dating Violence and Prevention. As a youth in your district, this is an issue that is very important to me. It is important to me that the Assemblymember/Senator understand _____ (fill this in with what's most important to you) _____.*
- Here's a sample script to call about the importance of funding prevention:
 - *Hello, my name is _____ and I'm ___ (a student at XX school, the leader of XXX healthy relationships club, etc. I'm calling to urge Assemblymember/Senator LAST NAME to support \$15 million in funding for sexual and domestic violence prevention in this year's budget. This funding supports community-based work to help prevent violence before it starts, and ensure that young people like myself form healthy, respectful relationships. _____ (give an example of the work you're involved with, if that's relevant) _____. Can I count on the Assemblymember/Senator's support?*
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Emails

- You can use essentially the same scripts for phone calls to instead send an email. Most offices are responsive and will reply.
- If you send an email about the prevention budget request, you can also include the Partnership's policy team – policy@cpedv.org - as a contact for more information.

Social Media

- This is a great way to engage your legislators. Many legislators actively post and check their accounts, and so do their staff.

- **Adult preventionists** – this is also a great tool for your organizations to utilize and continually engage legislators.
- On any platform where they are active, post and tag them. You can also tag the Partnership on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).
- Here are some sample prompts to use in developing your posts.
 - What is one of your biggest accomplishments in 2021?
 - Suggestion: This is a time to celebrate what you’ve done! Include photos or videos too, if you have them.
 - What positive changes have you seen in your communities that help you know #PreventionWorks? What are the impacts of your work?
 - Suggestion: It’s very helpful to share the impact your work is having. It’s the #1 question we get from the legislature. Share some concrete examples of the changes your work has made in your community. Answer the question of how you know that prevention works.
 - How can state leaders and community members help to support your work?
 - Suggestion: This is a great time to mention the importance of funding for prevention, as well as other things they can do. For community members, you can also share any information about how they can get involved in your work.
- Don’t have a Twitter account? [We can tweet for you.](#)

Questions?

We’re happy to support you in this process. Contact us at policy@cpedv.org.

ⁱ Emily F. Rothman & Ziming Xuan (2014) Trends in Physical Dating Violence Victimization Among U.S. High School Students, 1999–2011, *Journal of School Violence*, 13:3, 277-290, DOI: 10.1080/15388220.2013.847377

ⁱⁱ Liz Claiborne Inc and The Family Fund. “Teen Dating Abuse 2009 Key Topline Findings.” http://nomore.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/teen_dating_abuse_2009_key_topline_findings-1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ “Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence: Ending Violence so Children Can Thrive,” https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/defendingchildhood/pages/attachments/2014/11/24/aian_executive_summary.pdf

^{iv} Dank, M., Lachman, P., Zweig, J.M. & Yahner, J. Dating Violence Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth. In Press: *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. On-line at <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-013-9975-8>

^v Dank, M., Lachman, P., Zweig, J.M. & Yahner, J. Dating Violence Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth. In Press: *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. On-line at <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-013-9975-8>

^{vi} James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.

^{vii} Silverman, J.G., Raj, A., Mucci, L.A., & Hathaway, J.E. 2001. Dating violence against adolescent girls and associated substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy, and suicidality. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 286 (5): 572-579

^{viii} Molidor, C., Tolman, R. Gender and Contextual Factors in Adolescent Dating Violence. *Violence Against Women*. Vol. 4 No. 2, April 1998, 180-194