

Exploring the role of healthy relationships in preventing teen suicide



KANSAS PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 16, 2025 | WICHITA, KS

Kaiti Blackburn, MPS

Executive Director

Whitney Gerstner

Marketing &
Engagement Specialist

jana's
CAMPAIGN™

THANK YOU!



1. Analyze the relationship between teen dating violence and suicide through discussion of risk factors and common warning signs by interpreting data from Jana's Campaign programming to identify unhealthy behaviors amongst teens.
2. Apply best practices for promoting healthy relationships, engaging bystanders, and implementing community-based interventions aimed at reducing teen dating violence and suicide risk among youth and young adults.

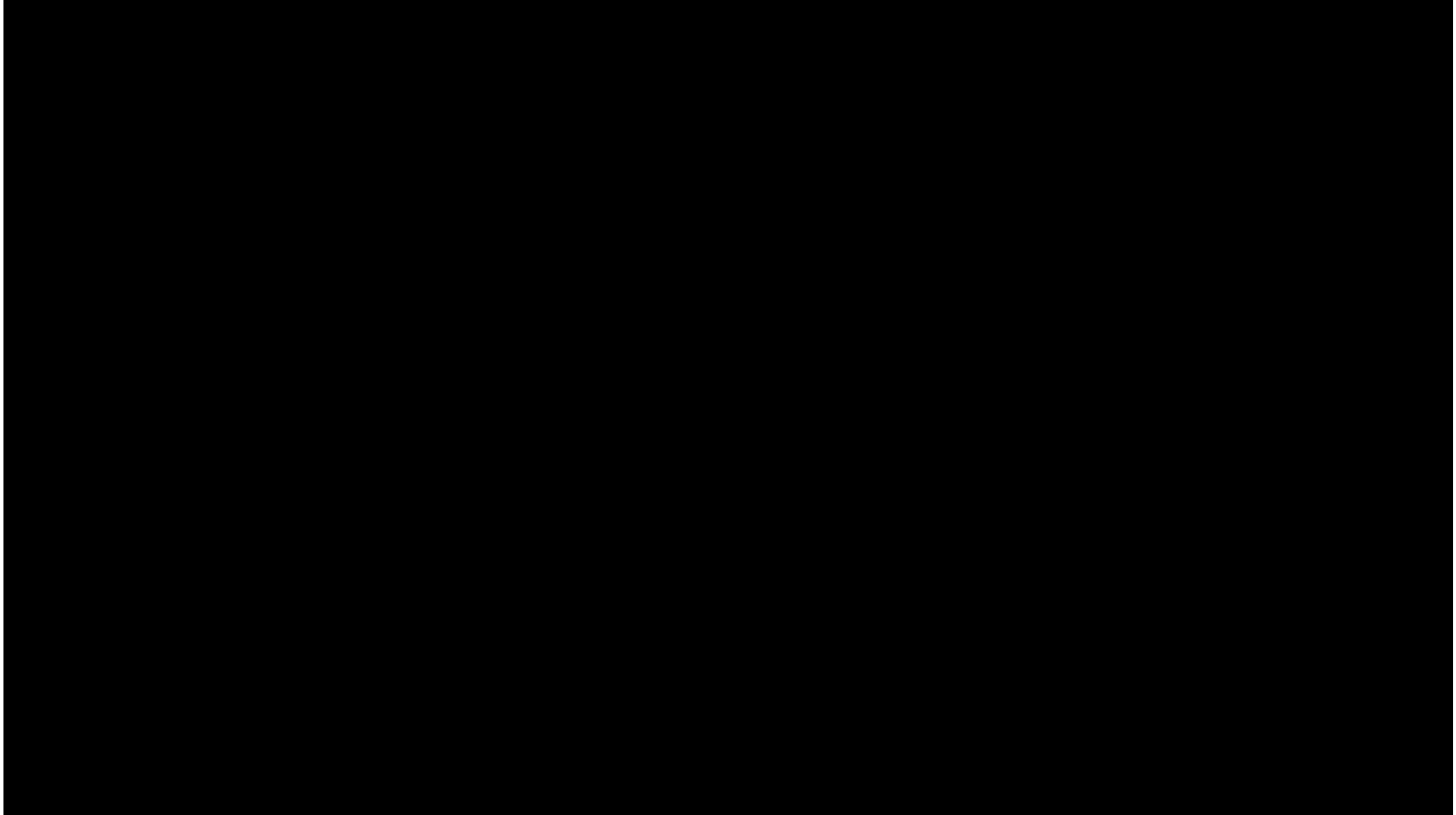
ABOUT US

- Whitney Gerstner

- Marketing & Engagement Specialist - Nearly 2 years
- Bachelors of Fine Arts Degree in Graphic Design
- 14 years of experience in Graphic Design
- 9 years of experience in Marketing

- Kaiti Blackburn, MPS

- Executive Director - 6 years
 - Education & Prevention Specialist - 3 years
- Bachelor's & Master's Degrees in Organizational Leadership
- Experience in the field of violence prevention since 2015



ABOUT JANA



■ **BORN: JULY 20, 1982**

■ **DIED: JULY 3, 2008**

■ **HAYS HIGH SCHOOL - 2000**

■ **KU: VOCAL MUSIC
WOMEN'S STUDIES - 2004**

■ **VOLUNTEER VICTIM ADVOCATE**

■ **LOBBYIST AT KANSAS STATE CAPITOL**

■ **KU LAW SCHOOL**

■ **HIM?**



OUR WORK AT JANA'S CAMPAIGN



EDUCATION *about* and **PREVENTION** *against*
relationship-based violence.



SECONDARY EDUCATION



HIGHER EDUCATION



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

OUR IMPACT

44

States Impacted

678

Middle and High
Schools Impacted

103295

K-12 Students Impacted

574

Colleges and
Universities
Impacted

Over
175

Community
Partnerships and
Collaboration

Numbers reflect Jana's Campaign activities 2013 – present

jana's
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PREVENTION PHILOSOPHY & MODEL

GENDER & RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE.

WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF

building strong partnerships to deliver our programming.

PREVENTION EFFORTS MUST ADDRESS ALL LEVELS

of the social-ecological model - individual, relationship, community, and societal levels.

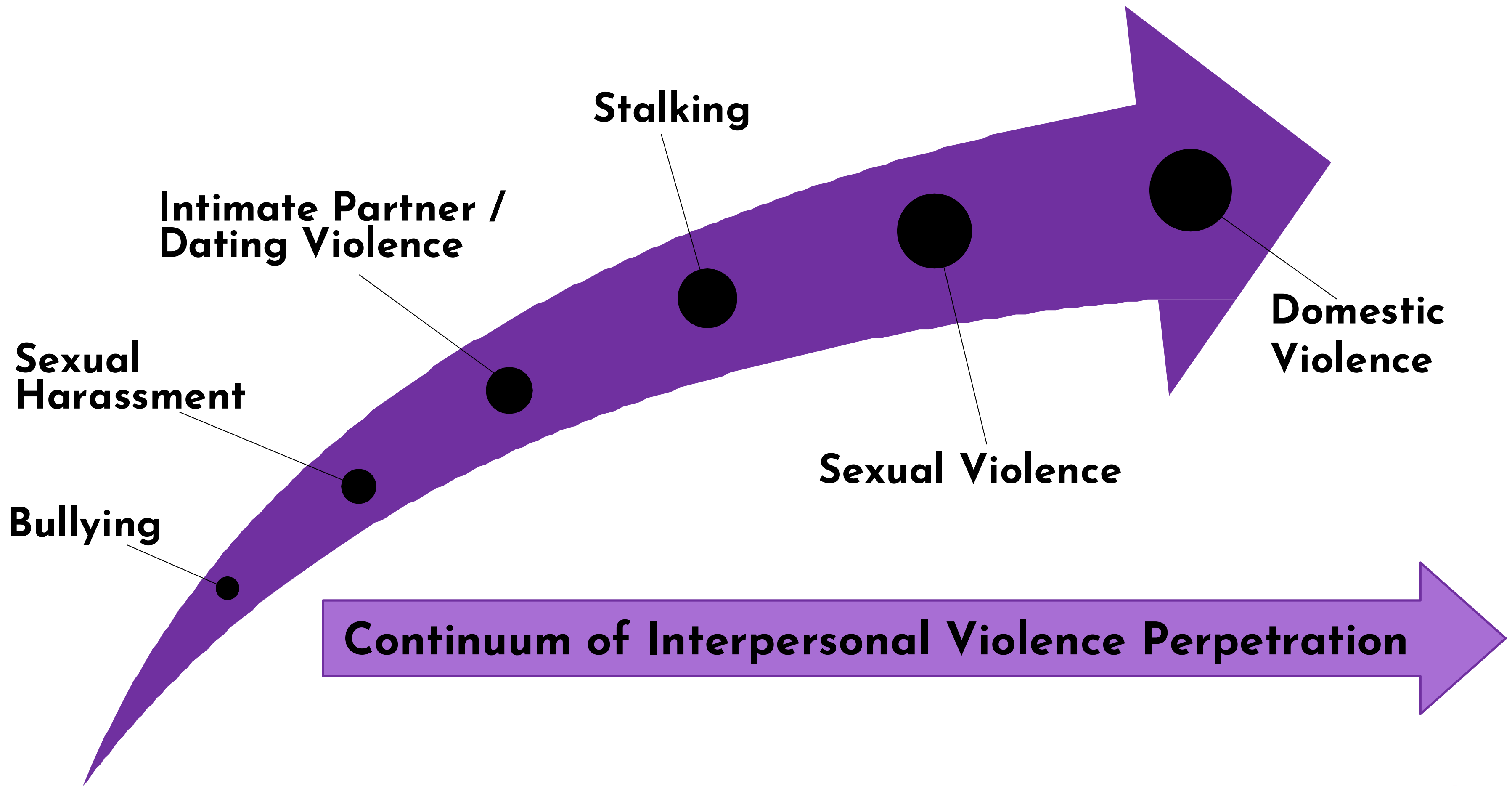
WE UTILIZE EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION STRATEGIES

that illustrate the greatest impact.

PREVENTION PHILOSOPHY & MODEL

“Our direct work with students and citizens is possible by partnering with/and through allies. Our model is based on delivering our prevention work through secondary schools, colleges and universities and community-based organizations. By building strong and collaborative relationships/partnerships, we can better leverage resources, build on each other’s strengths and talents and enhance organizational capacity that encourages sustainability.”





(Recktenwald, E. (n.d.). Primary Prevention Programs in Educational Settings. Retrieved from <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/ipv/Part1/Sessions/2/>)

BACKGROUND

**OVER 70% OF WOMEN
AND OVER 60% OF MEN
FIRST EXPERIENCED
INTIMATE PARTNER
VIOLENCE (SEXUAL OR
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE,
AND/OR STALKING)
UNDER THE AGE OF 25.**

**(NATIONAL INTIMATE PARTNER AND
SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVEY)**

BACKGROUND

**APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 9
FEMALE AND 1 IN 36 MALE
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
HAVE REPORTED
EXPERIENCING SEXUAL
DATING VIOLENCE,
ACCORDING TO DATA
FROM 2023.**

ADVERSE HEALTH OUTCOMES

There are strong associations between having a history of physical and/or sexual dating violence victimization and poor health during adolescence for both females and males such as:

**DEPRESSION
ANXIETY AND STRESS SYMPTOMS
SUICIDE IDEATION OR ATTEMPTS
SMOKING
ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE
DISORDERED EATING
LESSENERD QUALITY OF LIFE
DIMINISHED EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

A series of acts designed to gain power and keep control over another person.

TDV includes four types of behavior:

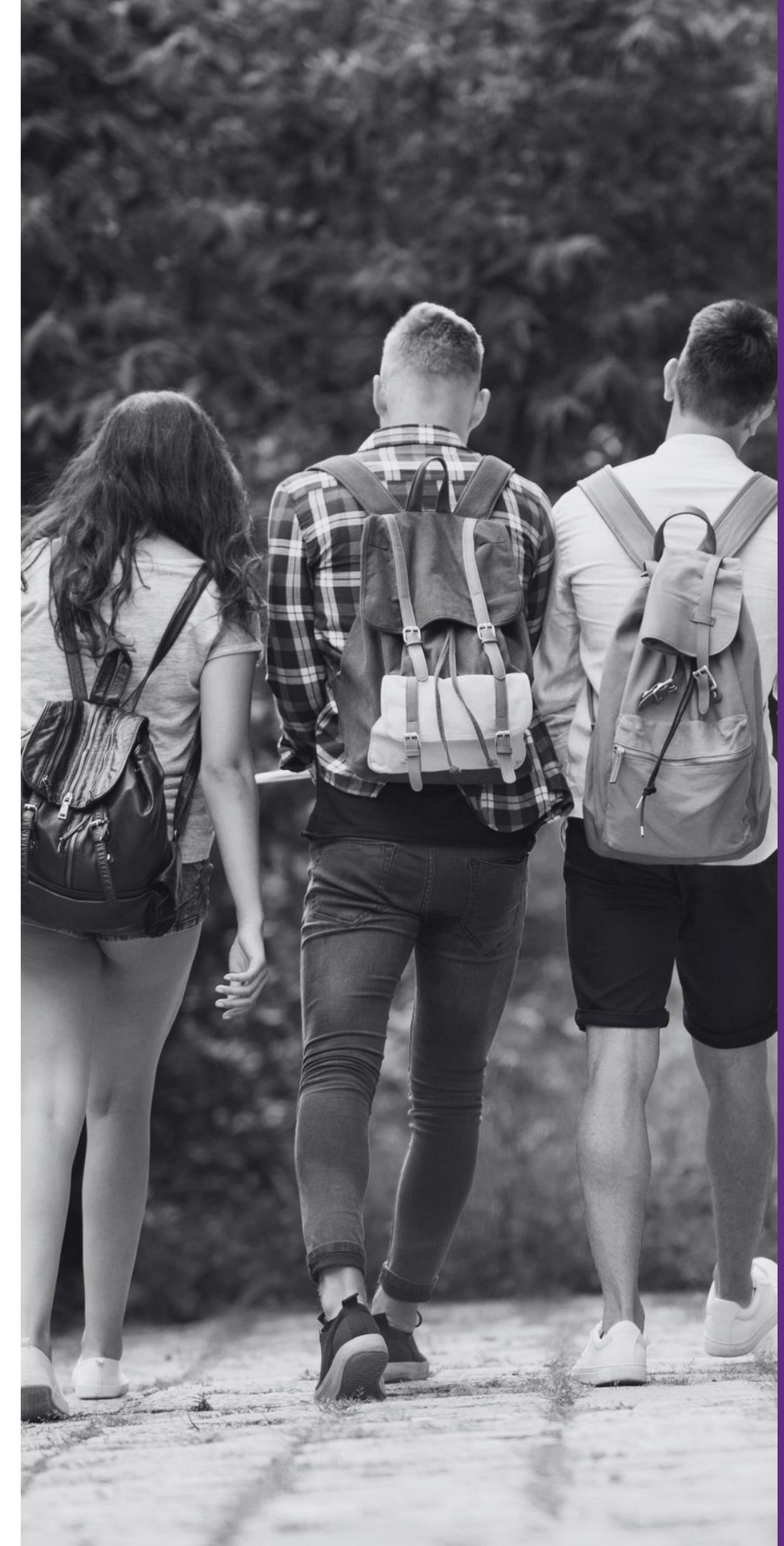
**PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE**

**SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**

**STALKING/
CYBER-STALKING**

**EMOTIONAL
(PSYCHOLOGICAL
AGGRESSION)**

Dating violence can occur both in person and online, including behaviors like persistent texting or requesting and sharing sexually explicit photos.





HOW BAD IS IT?

1 IN 12 TEENS report physical violence each year. (CDC, 2021)

1 IN 3 TEENS report verbal, emotional, sexual, stalking, and cyber-stalking. (Futures Without Violence, 2023)

AND YES, IT IS HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS

A Kansas student reported her coach harassment and touching. School leaders try to keep quiet.

Comanche County school board leaders, principal strive to blunt report

BY: TIM CARPENTER - SEPTEMBER 2, 2018 2:57 PM

The Wichita Eagle
81°
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EDUCATION AUGUST 2, 2018 1:36 PM

Victim of East High bathroom assault sues principal, school board

Providence principal: No student

By Greg Botwin
Updated 4

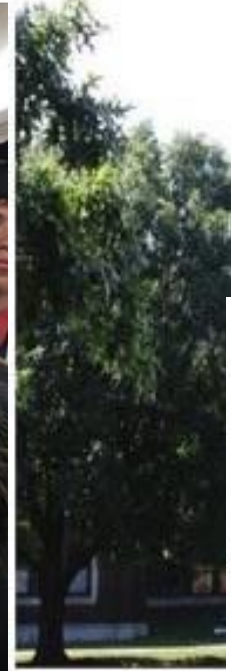


The Youngest Sexual Violence

Conversations about Title IX are abundant among K-12 students are abundant

Story highlights
NEW: Colorado and 29 other states have pending laws and rely on pornography laws

District attorney says it might be unfair to punish only those directly linked or who cooperated with authorities

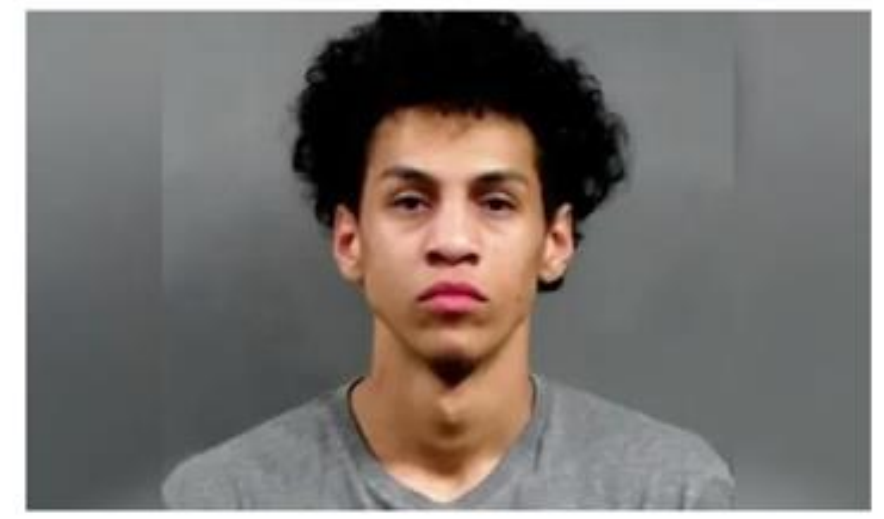


An East High student who is a photo

BY SUZANNE I
stobias@wich

Police: Wichita man dragged teen to pond, held her head underwater

Tuesday, September 22nd 2020, 9:52 AM CDT
Updated: Tuesday, September 22nd 2020, 11:31 AM CDT
Written by KAKE News



Dominic Thomas (Sedgwick County Jail)

consequences if it happens again.

Thom LeDoux, the district attorney for the state's 11th Judicial District, said investigators did not find



JIM WATSON/AFP/Getty Images

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

With the purpose of better understanding common gender-based violence behaviors (warning signs) and to gather data on the frequency of teen dating violence, Jana's Campaign administers this interactive activity from the 2007 edition of 'Building Healthy Relationships across Virginia: A Facilitator's Guide to Teen Dating Violence Prevention.'

2014-2025 Teen Dating Violence Activity in KS

<u>Problem in Relationship</u>	<u>How Many Experienced</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Too Serious, Too Fast	2866	54.01%
Isolation	2037	38.39%
Unpredictable	2032	38.62%
Extremely Jealous and Possessive	1941	36.58%
*Inappropriate Pictures	2564	48.96%
Controls Clothing	975	18.38%
Threatens Suicide	1749	32.96%
Threatens Them	767	14.46%
Physical Abuse	557	10.50%
Extremely Argumentative	1876	35.36%
A Problem for Teens	4775	89.99%
Total # of Students	5306	

2014-2025 Teen Dating Violence Activity in KS, NE, CO

<u>Problem in Relationship</u>	<u>How Many Experienced</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Too Serious, Too Fast	5544	51.03%
Isolation	3936	36.23%
Unpredictable	4131	38.02%
Extremely Jealous and Possessive	3787	34.86%
*Inappropriate Pictures	5468	50.33%
Controls Clothing	1922	17.69%
Threatens Suicide	3644	33.54%
Threatens Them	1811	16.67%
Physical Abuse	1270	11.69%
Extremely Argumentative	4042	37.21%
A Problem for Teens	9481	87.27%
Total # of Students	10,864	



81% OF PARENTS

surveyed, either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue.

Family Violence Prevention Fund & Advocates for Youth (2004).



HOW BAD IS IT?



4 IN 10 US HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS Report feeling sad or hopeless. (CDC, 2023)

Approximately **30.0% of female high school students and 14.3% of male high school students** had seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months before the survey. (YRBS, 2021)

In 2021, suicide was the third leading cause of death among U.S. high school **youth aged 14-18 years with 1,952 suicide-related deaths** resulting in a rate of 9.0 per 100,000 youths. (YRBS, 2021)

Suicide remains a leading cause of death for youth in Kansas ages 10-17, at rates above the national average.

RISK FACTORS FOR TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Teen dating violence risk factors broadly fall into four categories:

SEXUAL HISTORY, INCLUDING:

- Sexual activity before the age of 16
- History of experiencing sexual abuse

POOR SELF-REGULATION SKILLS, INCLUDING:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Anger management issues

FAMILY BACKGROUND, INCLUDING:

- Minimal to nonexistent parental supervision
- Exposure to interparental or family violence

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING:

- Interaction with peers who also engage in teen dating violence
- Participating in risky behaviors such as alcohol and substance misuse
- Growing up in a community that normalizes or accepts violence

RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDAL IDEATION



- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Childhood abuse, neglect or trauma
 - Generational trauma

HISTORICAL



- Depression
- Substance use problems
 - Bipolar disorder
 - Schizophrenia
- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships
 - Conduct disorder
 - Anxiety disorders
- Serious physical health conditions including pain
- Traumatic brain injury

HEALTH: MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs.
- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, or relationship problems.
- Stressful life events, like rejection, other life transitions or loss.
- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide.
 - Discrimination

ENVIRONMENTAL



**Social-Emotional Skills
- Empathy**

**Strong support networks
with friends and peers and
stable relationships.**

**Positive relationships
with parents/guardians.**

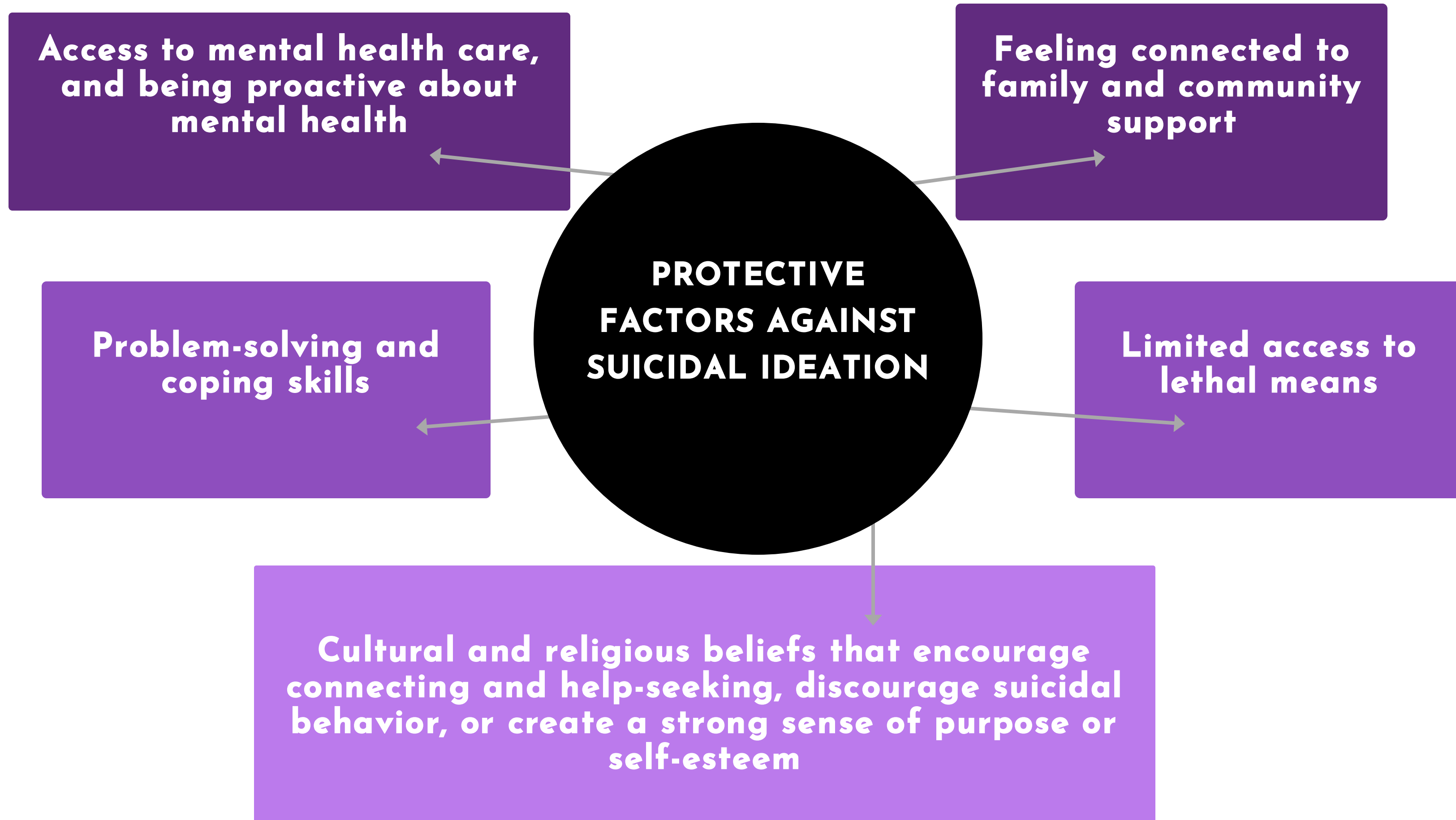
**Coordination of resources
and services among
community agencies.**

**Communities with access
to safe, stable housing.**

**Communities with access
to medical care and
mental health services.**

**Neighborhood collective efficacy,
meaning residents feel connected
to each other and are involved in
the community.**

**Communities with
access to economic and
financial help.**



SHARED RISK FACTORS

Teen dating violence and suicidal ideation share several overlapping risk factors that often stem from experiences of trauma, emotional distress, or lack of support. These factors can increase vulnerability and make it more difficult for young people to cope in healthy ways.

POOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION

LACK OF SUPPORT OR SOCIAL ISOLATION

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE OR HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS

LACK OF ACCESS TO RESOURCES

ADVERSE OUTCOMES OF EXPERIENCING ACES:

The short- and long-term outcomes of these childhood exposures include a multitude of health and social problems. As the number of ACEs increase, the risk for health problems later in life increase. The following health issues have been linked to adverse childhood experiences:

- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Illicit drug use
- Suicide attempts
- Risk for intimate partner violence

- Health-related quality of life
- Ischemic heart disease (IHD)
- Liver disease
- Lung Cancer

- Obesity
- Smoking
- Unintended pregnancies
- Adolescent pregnancy

- Autoimmune disease
- Migraines
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Early initiation of sexual activity

SHARED PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Just as there are shared risk factors, several protective factors can significantly lower the likelihood that young people will experience or perpetrate dating violence or struggle with suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE & CONNECTEDNESS

EMOTIONAL REGULATION & COPING SKILLS

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

SENSE OF PURPOSE & BELONGING

POSITIVE PEER NORMS & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

Protective factors work best when they are layered—when young people feel connected, supported, and empowered to make healthy choices, they're less likely to experience or engage in dating violence and more likely to seek help when they're struggling.

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

A **healthy relationship** is one in which both people feel **respected, safe, and supported**. Key characteristics include:

- 1. Respect:** Both individuals honor each other's boundaries, opinions, and feelings.
- 2. Trust:** Each person feels confident in the other's reliability and honesty.
- 3. Communication:** Open, honest, and constructive dialogue is encouraged, and conflicts are resolved without fear or intimidation.
- 4. Equality:** Decisions, responsibilities, and power are shared fairly; neither person dominates or controls the other.
- 5. Support:** Partners encourage each other's personal growth, goals, and emotional well-being.
- 6. Consent and Boundaries:** Physical, emotional, and digital boundaries are understood, respected, and communicated clearly.
- 7. Safety:** Emotional, physical, and digital safety are prioritized, with no tolerance for abuse, threats, or manipulation.





HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE & CONNECTEDNESS

EMOTIONAL REGULATION & COPING SKILLS

SENSE OF PURPOSE & BELONGING

POSITIVE PEER NORMS & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

Research consistently demonstrates that education on healthy relationships and proactive intervention programs can significantly reduce the incidence of teen dating violence and mitigate the risk of suicidal ideation and attempts among adolescents.

Comprehensive educational initiatives, have been shown to lower levels of teen dating violence perpetration and victimization, as well as the use of negative conflict resolution strategies among middle and high school students. Additionally, developing and encouraging strong, supportive relationships with adults has been identified as a critical protective factor, decreasing the risk of suicide among teens.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating relationship education and support systems into adolescent development to promote safety and mental well-being.

WHAT CAN WE DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL



ABOUT JANA

- ◆ Born: July 20, 1982
- ◆ Died: July 3, 2008
- ◆ Hays High School - 2000
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Lobbyist at Kansas State Capitol
- ◆ KU Law School

INDIVIDUAL

RELATIONSHIP

COMMUNITY

SOCIETAL

WHAT ARE SOCIAL NORMS?

- The values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are shared by a group of people
 - Informal, unwritten
- Common standards within a social group, community or society

Social norms can function as unspoken rules or guidelines for how people behave, and for how people are expected to behave. People generally follow social norms because they want to fit in with the people around them.



SOCIAL NORMS: *The Normalization of Violence*

The normalization of violence is the acceptance that violence is an immutable part of life, that depictions of violence don't have real life consequences, and that it is the responsibility of the victim, not the perpetrator to prevent violence.

Where do we see the glamorization of violence:

- In movies/tv shows
- Video games
- Pornography
- Advertisements
- Music/Lyrics

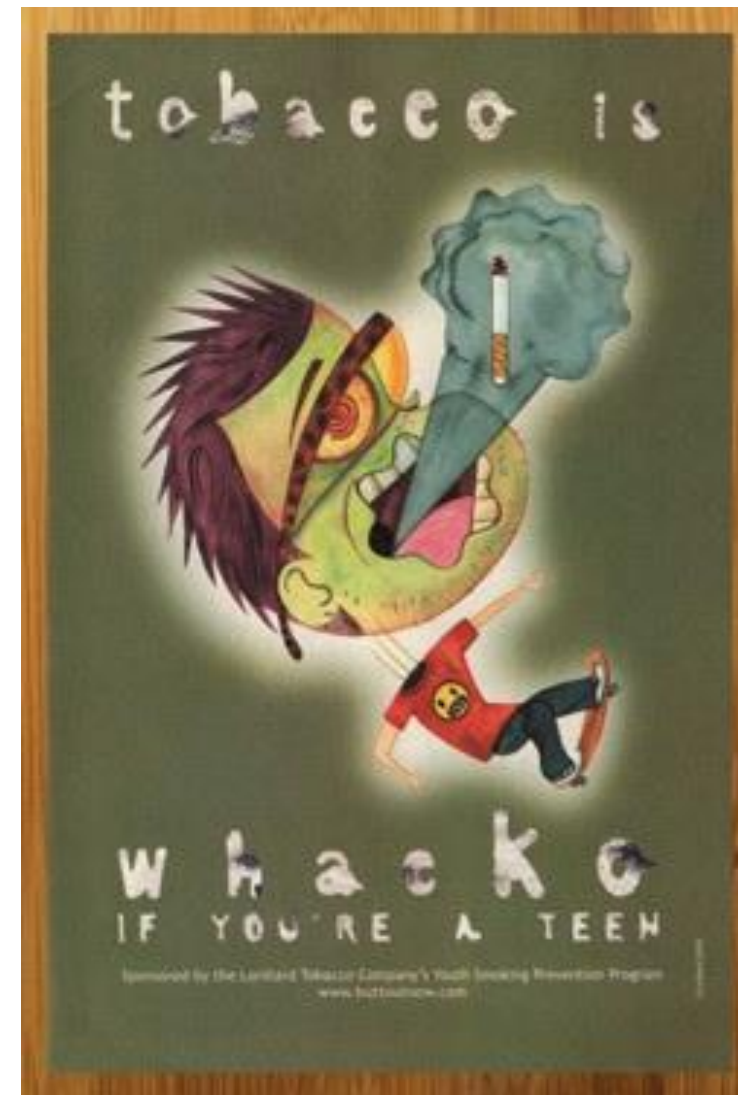
How do we experience it?

- Language that makes light of violent acts
 - "That test raped me."
 - "I'll shoot you an email."
 - "Just shoot me."

- Nearly 1 in 5 women in the U.S. have experienced rape or attempted rape some time in their lives.
- By the time the average child is 18 years old, they will have witnessed 200,000 acts of violence.
- Nearly 75% of violent scenes on television feature no immediate punishment or condemnation.

START WITH SOCIAL NORMS...

A SOCIAL NORMS APPROACH CAN MOTIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS TO ADOPT SOCIAL NORMS THAT RESULT IN POSITIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING.



THIS CAN BE DONE BY:

- correcting misperceptions about social norms that lead to harmful attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviors;
- changing or modifying negative or harmful social norms; and
- promoting positive social norms.

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY SOCIAL NORMS CAMPAIGN THAT REDUCED OR PREVENTED HARMFUL ACTIONS OR BEHAVIORS?

SHAPING SOCIAL NORMS TO PREVENT HARMFUL BEHAVIORS

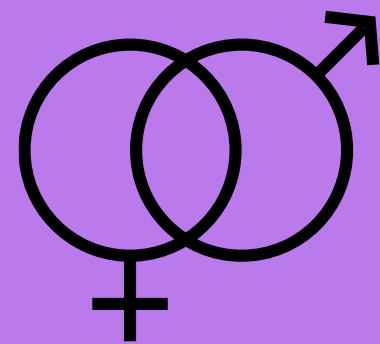
- CORRECT MISPERCEPTIONS THAT LEAD TO HARMFUL ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND/OR BEHAVIORS
- CHANGE HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS
- PROMOTE POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS



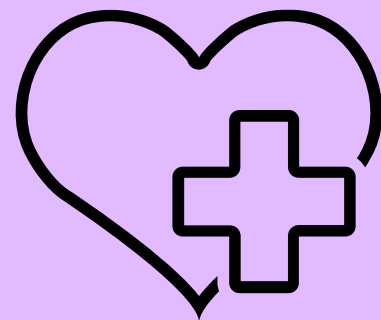
SOCIAL NORMS CAMPAIGN:

1. Describe the problem.
2. Collect data and identify social norms.
3. Develop a strategy.
4. Develop & test messages and materials.
5. Disseminate messages and materials.
6. Monitor activities and evaluate outcomes.

Sex Education



Health Education

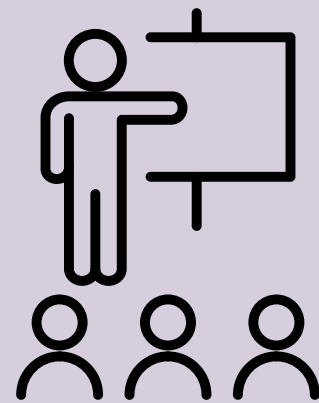


Social-Emotional Learning



- Leadership Strategies
- Bystander Intervention Training

Prevention Education



Importance of Dosages



EDUCATION



Our direct & indirect work with students and citizens is possible by partnering with and through allies. Our prevention model is based on delivering our prevention work through secondary schools, college & universities, and community-based organizations. By building strong and collaborative partnerships with these local entities, we can better leverage resources, build on each other's strengths and talents, and enhance organizational capacity that encourages sustainability.



WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS TO PREVENT TEEN DATING VIOLENCE.



**SUCCESSFUL
COLLABORATIONS**

jana's
CAMPAIGN™

KCSDV & JANA'S CAMPAIGN PARTNERSHIP



Jana's Campaign and the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) are partnering to implement a 3-year Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) grant project in all Kansas rural communities focused on preventing sexual violence and promoting healthy relationships. Key program components include:

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TRAINING:

Jana's Campaign will provide outreach and educational sessions to local schools and youth programs within the rural grant service area, focusing on sexual violence prevention and fostering healthy relationships.

VICTIM ADVOCACY REFERRALS:

Jana's Campaign will facilitate direct referrals to KCSDV member programs for victim advocacy services.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

KCSDV will provide training and technical assistance to Jana's Campaign and its member agencies in rural communities to better respond and prevent sexual violence.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

In rural northwestern Kansas, we're taking bold steps to confront sexual violence head-on. Through a pilot program in Ellis, Thomas, and Russell counties, we're bringing prevention education, community engagement, and survivor-centered support where it's needed most—right here at home. This effort is about planting seeds of change that will grow far beyond these three counties.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

addressing individual and societal factors contributing to sexual violence

CONDUCTED COMMUNITY-BASED NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Survey provided to citizens in Ellis, Thomas, and Russell counties
- Survey designed to inform our program initiative



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP



Provide prevention education and programming to address findings of needs assessment

ADVOCACY FOR

Alcohol-Related City Ordinance(s) - Hays, Colby, and Russell

- SafeBar Alliance Training for all drinking establishments

CONSENT EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

at Higher Education Institutes

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TRAINING

at Secondary Education Schools

DEVELOPMENT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAMS (SARTS)

in Russell and Thomas Counties

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACE TRAINING

Sexual Harassment Policy & Procedure Training



CCRTS + SARTS

COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAMS:

CCR model works with communities to develop more effective responses to the crime of domestic assault. It brings advocacy programs, law enforcement, criminal justice, human service and other agencies together to coordinate their responses, integrating best practices into the infrastructure of case processing, so that victims and their children are safer, offenders are held more accountable and the responsibility for ending the violence is shifted from the victim to the community.

SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAMS:

A SART is comprised of professionals who work to coordinate an immediate, quality, multidisciplinary, victim-centered response to sexual assaults in a community. This response prioritizes the needs of sexual assault victims and holds offenders accountable. Some SARTs also focus on providing sexual assault prevention strategies and education to the communities they serve.

JC + HAYS HIGH SCHOOL



BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TRAINING

to all Freshman for 9 consecutive years

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL CHAPTER

for young people who desire to grow their leadership skills, make a difference, and help end relationship violence

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

that we create and deliver to the specific needs of your school

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY EVENTS

"Dribble Out Domestic Violence"

MINI-GRANT SERVICE PROJECTS

allow students to put knowledge into action as they integrate issues of teen dating violence into awareness service projects

ATHLETES AS LEADERS

had the opportunity to facilitate lessons to Hays High Cheer for the past 2 years



JC + FCCLA & FACS



STATE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES

SAFE DATES TRAININGS

AWARDS

Community Partnership Award from the Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Teachers of Nebraska, 2018 & Kansas Association of Teachers of Family and Consumer Science (KATFACS)'s Award of Merit, 2017

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

Healthy Living, Relationships, Life Skills



JC + TOMMY'S EXPRESS CAR WASH



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH



BANNER



SOCIAL MEDIA



PURPLE LIGHTS IN CAR WASH TUNNEL



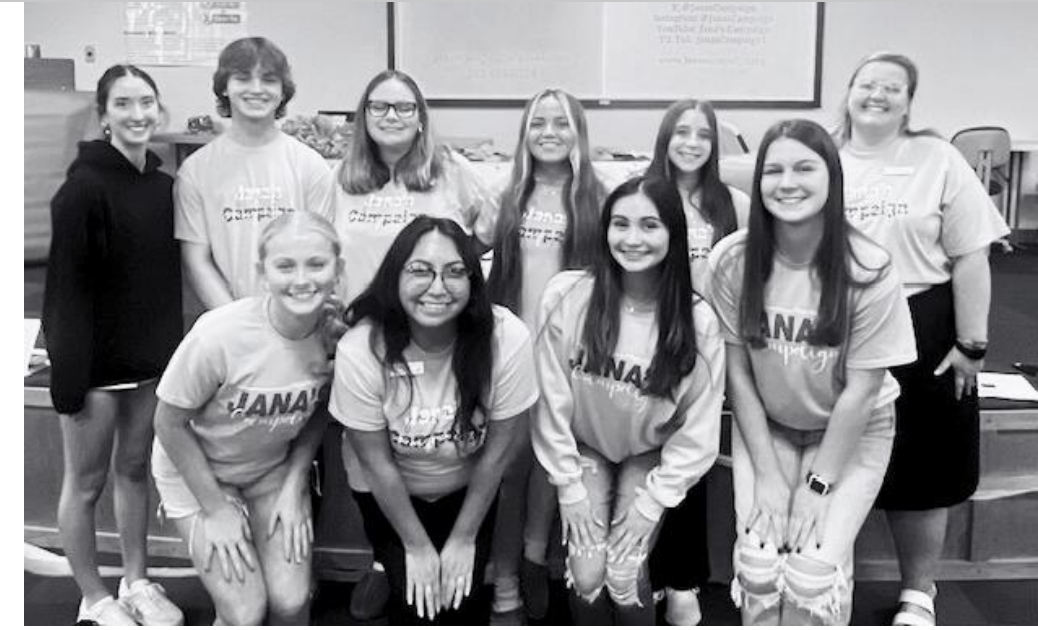
"TUNNEL OF TERROR"

Halloween Event hosted by car wash



JANA'S CAMPAIGN YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Jana's Campaign Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a service-learning and leadership development program comprised of 15-20 outstanding youth from across our service region of Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. This program brings teens together to learn about, advocate against, and educate on teen dating violence. The YAC should want to make a positive impact in their communities and be eager to share ideas to better prevent teen dating violence.



EDUCATION & AWARENESS:

Equip youth with knowledge and resources to recognize, prevent, and respond to teen dating violence.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Support to lead prevention initiatives in their schools and communities.

COLLABORATION & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

Encourage peer-to-peer mentorship, leadership skills, and partnerships with organizations working to end relationship violence.

SUSTAINABLE IMPACT:

Encourage long-term commitment to violence prevention efforts by engaging youth in meaningful and action-driven projects.

NEW COLLABORATIONS

Youth Leaders in Kansas (YLink) + Jana's Campaign

Clay Center YLINK Conference – Manhattan, KS | November 4th

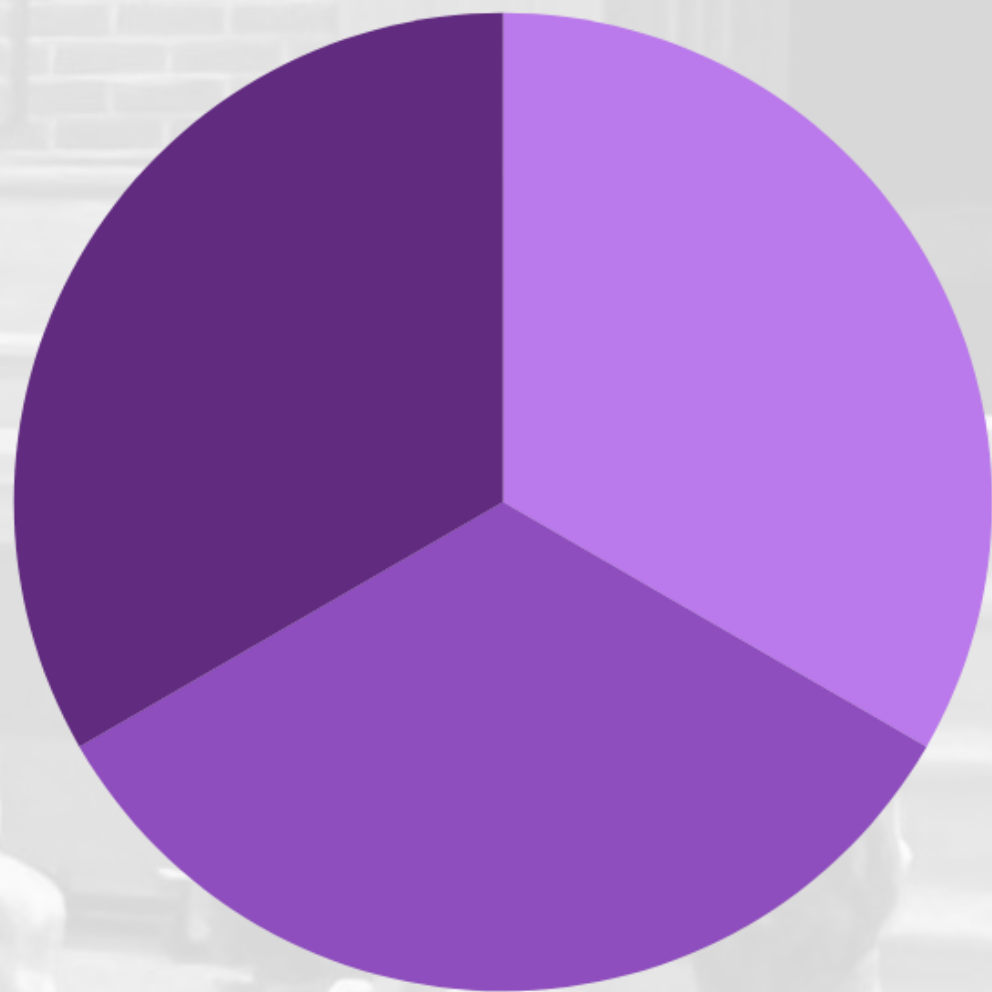
Kansas Suicide Prevention Coalition

Jana's Campaign joined as a member

What other collaborative opportunities are there?



COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION EDUCATION



Secondary Education

We are dedicated to helping middle and high schools, and youth organizations reduce teen dating violence by promoting healthy relationship behaviors to ultimately create a culture of strong respect among adolescents.



Higher Education

We believe colleges and universities can and should do more to prevent relationship violence. We work to provide higher education institutions with training opportunities and resources to improve their prevention and response efforts to sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking on campus.



Community Education

We believe in the power of speaking-out about the issues of relationship violence. In partnership with community organizations, we work to provide community-wide educational and prevention programs that reduce violence. Our efforts also include mobilizing others to volunteer and make a difference in their communities.

TREE OF VIOLENCE



Are we pruning the branches or uprooting the tree?

**Prevention is a Collective Effort.
It is a shared responsibility.**

Community matters. When we come together - advocates, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods - we can shift social norms.

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QUESTIONS?

kdinges@janascampaign.org

wgerstner@janascampaign.org

janascampaign@gmail.com

785-656-0324

CONNECT WITH US!



www.JanasCampaign.org



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