

January 2025 Webinar

**Sexual Cyberbullying & Healthy Romantic Relationships:
Activate's Sexual and Reproductive Health Resources**

Presenters:

**Rachel Rosenberg, Ph.D., Samuel Beckwith, Ph.D. and
Karlee Naylor**

Child Trends

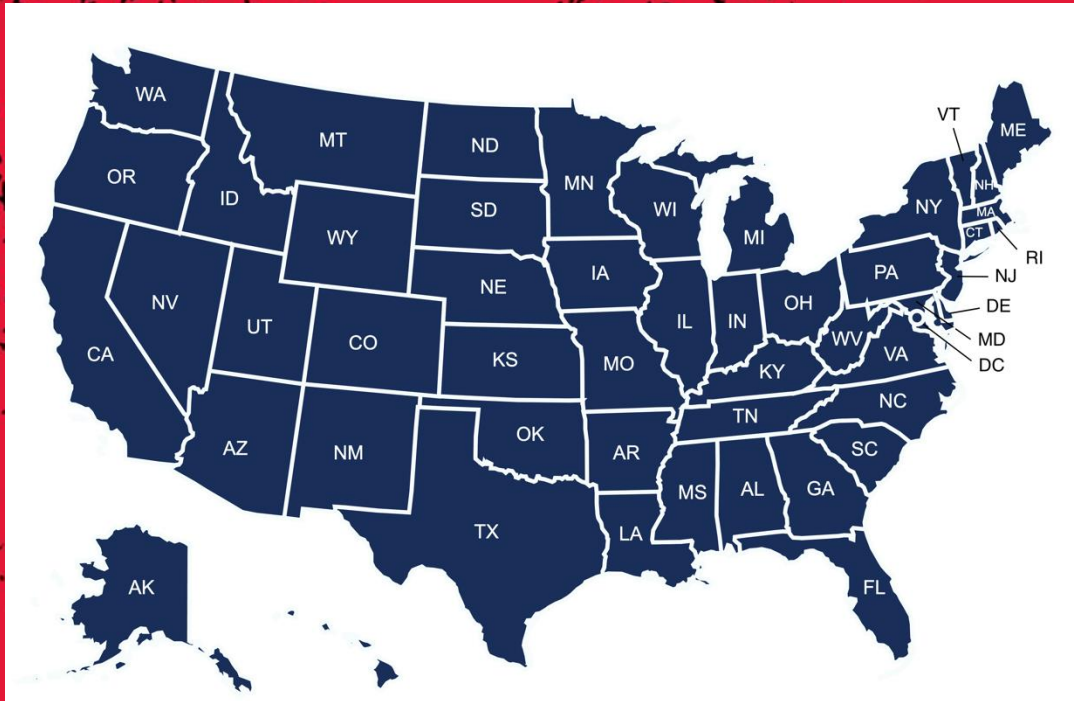
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Charlie and Helen Dibble



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The Dibble Institute is
a national,
independent non-
profit organization.

Our Mission

Empowering teens and young adults with knowledge and research-based skills to successfully navigate their intimate relationships.



We believe in research.



We believe in stable, safe, and nurturing families.



We believe that relationship education is for everyone.





ACTIVATE

THE CENTER TO BRING ADOLESCENT
SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RESEARCH
TO YOUTH-SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS

Sexual Cyberbullying & Healthy Romantic Relationships: Activate's Sexual and Reproductive Health Resources



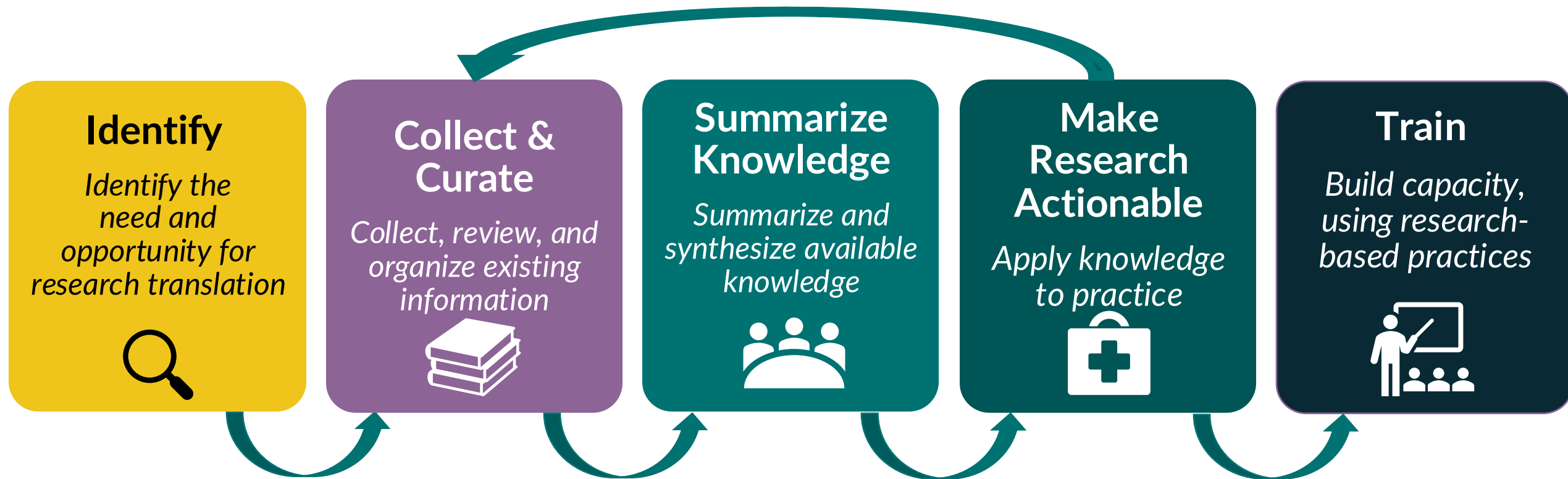
Learning Objectives

1. Understand the forms sexual cyberbullying may take and how youth-supporting professionals may be resources for young people experiencing it;
2. Recognize the components of healthy relationships and strategies for discussing healthy relationships with young people;
3. Identify helpful resources from the Activate Center on these and other topics.

Activate partners with youth-supporting professionals, young people, and researchers to translate research and create research-based resources for professionals who support young people experiencing the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work (i.e., opportunity youth).



Five Steps to Translate Research to Practice





Sexual Cyberbullying Resources



Sexual Cyberbullying Research Summary

Colleen Schlecht, Amanda M. Griffin and Rachel Rosenberg

Purpose

Sexual cyberbullying is any sexually aggressive or coercive behavior facilitated by electronic media. Professionals who support youth experiencing the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work (i.e., opportunity youth) identified a need for research-based information and resources to support their work with young people who may experience sexual cyberbullying. Sexual cyberbullying may have a detrimental effect on youth who have prior experiences with trauma,¹⁻³ unstable living arrangements,⁴ and/or a lack of supportive adults in their lives.^{5,6} Furthermore, some of these youth may rely on digital platforms to stay connected with family and friends from whom they have been separated, increasing their risk for being victims of sexual cyberbullying.^{4,7,8}

This research summary:

1. Defines various forms of sexual cyberbullying
2. Reports what we know about the prevalence of these online behaviors
3. Discusses the factors that increase the risk for or protect youth against sexual cyberbullying as well as the potential

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How to Decode Signs of Sexual Cyberbullying and Support Teens and Youth

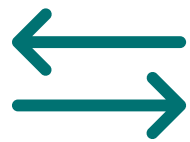
Colleen Schlecht, Amanda M. Griffin, and Rachel Rosenberg



Identifying a Need: Sexual Cyberbullying



Limited available resources on sexual cyberbullying among Activate's populations



Definitions and use of sexual cyberbullying are inconsistent



Lack of research on sexual cyberbullying behaviors

Identifying a Need: Sexual Cyberbullying



Sexual cyberbullying comes up often when talking with youth.



Staff need more information about social media platforms and sexual cyberbullying behaviors.



Youth do not use our terms when talking about sexual cyberbullying.



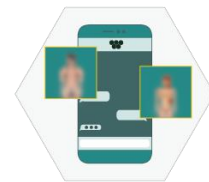
Sexual cyberbullying behaviors need to be explained to youth by staff.

Sexual Cyberbullying: What Is It?

Sexual cyberbullying is a broad term used to describe any sexually aggressive or coercive behavior facilitated by technology to intentionally harm, embarrass, threaten, or intimidate another person.



Sextortion



Revenge porn



Online Sexual Harassment



Cyberstalking



Nonconsensual sexting



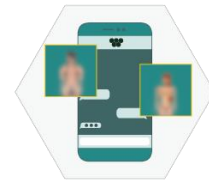
Cyberdating abuse

Sexual Cyberbullying: What Is It?

Sexual cyberbullying is a broad term used to describe any sexually aggressive or coercive behavior facilitated by technology to intentionally harm, embarrass, threaten, or intimidate another person.



Sextortion: Receiving or sending a message claiming that an explicit image will be shared online unless one complies with the sender's request



Revenge porn: Distributing photographs or videos of an ex-partner, obtained via hacking or other methods.



Online Sexual Harassment: Receiving or sending an unsolicited message on Instagram asking about what someone likes/is into sexually



Cyberstalking: Receiving/sending messages through a social media platform that one is being watched



Nonconsensual sexting: Receiving or sending a naked picture on Snapchat without consent



Cyberdating abuse: Finding hurtful comments about one's body on a partner's Instagram post

Sexual Cyberbullying Research Summary

Sections

Prevalence

Definitions

Risk and
protective
factors

Prevention

Laws on
sexual
cyberbullying

Available
resources

Where Does Sexual Cyberbullying Happen?

Sexual cyberbullying can occur through:

- Email
- Instant messaging
- Text messaging
- Public posts and direct messages

Social Media and Dating Apps



What Are The Signs of Sexual Cyberbullying?

Did you know that youth who experience sexual cyberbullying are more likely to...

Use social media more²¹

Be bullied in person,^{22,23,24} and have higher levels of stress and suicidal ideation²⁵ 😞

I also read that people can both experience and engage in sexual cyberbullying

Yes...and a low sense of empathy³¹ and high anxiety³²



Wow..I heard youth who engage in sexual cyberbullying use drugs and alcohol more²⁶

And have lower grades²⁷ 🙄

Yeah, having low self-control^{28,29} and self-esteem³⁰ are signs right?

I heard parental monitoring³³ and peer support³⁴ can help protect youth from experiencing or engaging in sexual cyberbullying!

What Might Youth Experiencing Sexual Cyberbullying Say?

Examples include vernacular terms/slang that young people may use:

"My bf insists I always have my location on and then always shows up where I am even if I haven't told him. He wants to check on me."

"My partner insists on looking through my text messages. They don't believe me when I tell them I am not flirting with other people"

"Someone online won't stop DMing me things that make me uncomfortable. I've asked them to stop."

"My ex-partner is threatening to share my nude with their friends if I don't continue to post pictures on social media with them."



"Someone DMed me a nude, but I didn't want the picture and we didn't talk about it first."

"A stranger online is asking me to send pictures and saying nasty things to me. It makes me uncomfortable."

What Might Youth Who Are Engaging in Sexual Cyberbullying Say?

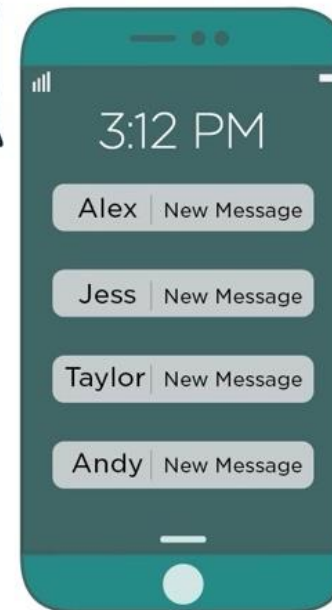
Examples include behaviors young people may talk about without realizing they are sexual cyberbullying others:

"I always make my partner share their location so I can know where they are and find them if I want to."

"I told him I'd share our sexts if he didn't [insert any form of ultimatum here]."

"I made a finsta to DM a person I saw at school and ask for n00dz."

"My friends loved the picture (e.g., n00dz, dirties) I sent them of my gf."



Recommendations for Providers

- **Talk** about online platforms and sexual cyberbullying with young people.
- **Learn** about sexual cyberbullying laws within your state.
- **Inform** young people about how consent relates to online behavior.
- **Support** young people who have experienced sexual cyberbullying.
- **Connect** youth with local services.





Healthy Romantic Relationships



Healthy Romantic Relationships and Youth Well-being

Rachel Rosenberg, Karlee Naylor, Katelyn Rust, Samuel Beckwith, and Nia-Simone Woods

Purpose

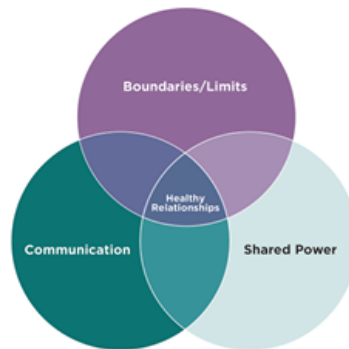
A wealth of research literature describes healthy romantic relationships among adults and youth, broadly, but there is more limited research about healthy romantic relationships among young people who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work (i.e., opportunity youth). Most of the available research focuses on youth in foster care and building healthy relationships with their families of origin, foster parents, or peers. Similarly, several practice resources, such as program curricula, describe the importance of healthy romantic relationships among youth. Few of these practice resources include cultural considerations, tools, and actionable techniques for helping young people at greater risk for negative relationship experiences communicate effectively, build and set boundaries, and establish shared power within romantic relationships. Gaps in the research literature—and, therefore, in research-based practice resources—about healthy romantic relationships among youth who experience the child welfare and/or justice systems, homelessness, and/or disconnection from school and work limit youth-supporting professionals' capacity to address risk for entering or being in unhealthy relationships among youths with these experiences.

This resource summarizes research and practice literature, provides practice guidance, and describes cultural considerations (e.g., religion, immigration status, and ethnic backgrounds) associated with three key domains of healthy romantic relationships:

- Communication
- Boundaries/limits
- Shared power

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Figure 1. Components of healthy relationships



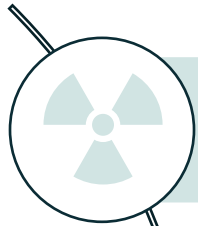
Crucial Conversations about Healthy Romantic Relationships

A Toolkit for Youth-Supporting Professionals

Rachel Rosenberg, Karlee Naylor, Nia-Simone Woods, Katelyn Rust, and Samuel Beckwith



Identifying a Need: Healthy Romantic Relationships



Vulnerable populations are at a higher risk of unhealthy relationships.



Current research and resources focused on preventing unhealthy relationships.



There is a lack of information on how to form a healthy relationship.



Youth and professionals noted the importance of communication, boundaries/limits, and shared power.

Identifying a Need: Healthy Romantic Relationships



Healthy romantic components are based on guidance from professionals who support young people and young people themselves.



Highlight the importance of cultural and systemic differences.



Provide youth-supporting professionals tangible tips for implementing the information with young people.

Components of Healthy Romantic Relationships

- **Communication:** allows one person to share how they are feeling or what they think with their partner(s).
- **Boundaries/Limits:** helps youth express to their partner(s) what conditions they need to feel content and safe in a relationship.
- **Shared Power:** requires a balance of support and responsibilities between partner(s).

Overlap in Components of Healthy Romantic Relationships

- Boundaries/Limits and Communication: healthy communication is needed to set and enforce boundaries.
- Boundaries and Shared Power: boundaries can help partners understand how to share responsibility in relationships and work toward equity.
- Communication and Shared Power: in relationships with shared power, partner(s) communicate to establish balanced responsibility/needs/wants.

Systemic and Cultural Considerations

- Use of nonverbal communication and communication styles
- Views about autonomy and independence within a relationship
- Societal bias against LGBTQ+ relationships, racism, and gender roles

Laying the Foundation to Talk to Young People About Healthy Relationships

You can establish the foundation for talking to young people about healthy relationships when you:

1. Develop rapport and trust with the young person.
2. Create a welcoming and private space.
3. Prepare for, engage in, and follow up with youth intentionally.
4. Remain self-aware and willing to reflect on your own assumptions.
5. Maintain your knowledge of state-mandated reporting policies.
6. Pay attention to cultural norms.



Conversation Starters: Communication

Active listening	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does active listening look like to you? In other words, how does someone show that they are really listening to you?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you approach a discussion with your partner(s) if you wanted them to listen to you more actively?• Have you and your partner(s) discussed words or actions that signal you are actively listening to one another?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How have you and your partner(s) used active listening since we last spoke?

Conversation Starters: Boundaries/Limits

Establishing boundaries/limits	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you and/or your partner(s) set a boundary or limit, how do you show you respect that limit?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is an example of a boundary/limit that you set and your partner respected?• How comfortable are you talking to your partner(s) about boundaries/limits you want them to better respect? What helps you feel more comfortable with setting a boundary or limit?• What does considering your partner(s)' boundaries/limits look like to you?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since we last spoke, what boundaries have you set with your partner and how were those boundaries respected?

Conversation Starters: Shared Power

Input in decision making	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are some examples of the input you have or want to have when making decisions?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you are having a conversation or making a decision with your partner(s), what kind of input do you want to have?• How comfortable are you talking with your partner(s) about the kind of input you have (e.g., spending time together and apart, day-to-day decisions, or decisions about sex and contraception)?• Do you think your partner(s) have the input in decision making they want? Why?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has the input in decision making with your partner(s) been since we last spoke?

Dos and Don'ts for Talking With Youth About Healthy Romantic Relationships

DOS	DON'TS
<p>DO ask nonjudgemental, open-ended questions.</p> <p><i>“Can you walk me through the interaction and how it made you feel?”</i></p>	<p>DON'T use language that can be interpreted by the young person as implying blame or shame.</p> <p><i>“It might not have been productive to react like that. You probably should have reacted a different way.”</i></p>
<p>DO encourage youth to explore the spectrum of identities and feelings.</p> <p><i>“It sounds like your partner may have made you feel unsafe or uncomfortable by doing that.”</i></p>	<p>DON'T rely on black and white labels.</p> <p><i>“Your partner was being abusive toward you.”</i></p>
<p>DO validate feelings, experiences, and fear.</p> <p><i>“Disagreements in relationships can be really stressful, and it’s possible for partners to disagree about something without overstepping each other’s boundaries.”</i></p>	<p>DON'T trivialize experiences, fears, needs, or wants.</p> <p><i>“It’s unrealistic to set a boundary to prevent disagreement or arguments from ever happening.”</i></p>
<p>DO ask the young person about their knowledge on a subject and fill in gaps.</p> <p><i>“It can be difficult for someone to know if they’re in an unhealthy relationship. What does a healthy relationship look like to you?”</i></p>	<p>DON'T make assumptions or generalizations about what a young person does or does not know.</p> <p><i>“Young people are too naïve and inexperienced to recognize when they’re in an unhealthy relationship.”</i></p>



Questions?



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Thank you!

For more information, contact

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Or

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