



Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

NATIONAL SURVEY DATA REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





ABOUT THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The Canadian Women's Foundation is Canada's public foundation for women and girls, and is now one of the ten largest women's foundations in the world. Since 1991, thanks to generous donors across the country, we've invested in over 1,300 community programs across Canada, and supported nearly 30,000 women and girls to move out of violence, out of poverty and into confidence and leadership. We take a positive approach to address root causes of the most critical issues facing women and girls. We study and share the best ways to create long-term change and bring community organizations together for training and to learn from each other. We carefully select and fund the programs with the strongest outcomes and regularly evaluate their work. We have a special focus on building a community of women helping other women. Supporting women creates safer families and communities, and a more prosperous society for all of us. We invest in the power of women and the dreams of girls. For more information please visit www.canadianwomen.org

This project has been supported by Status of Women Canada:



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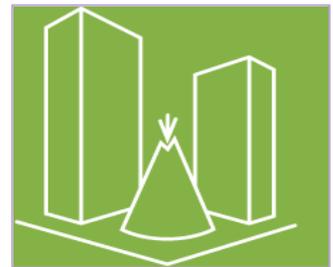
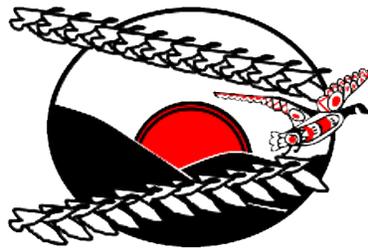
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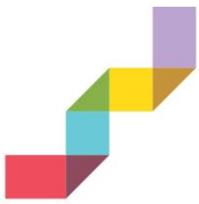
With thanks to our project partners:

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, National Association of Friendship Centres, Partners for Youth | Alliance Pro-jeunesse, PREVNet, and Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre



Report prepared by:





Background: Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

The Canadian Women's Foundation has received funding from Status of Women Canada to undertake a three-year partnership initiative (Oct. 2015 - Sept. 2018). The goal of the initiative is to make a contribution to **ending violence against girls and women in Canada**.

This Initiative

There is a growing body of evidence that shows that **collaborative approaches** to addressing complex social problems (of which gender-based violence is one) achieve greater and more lasting success than isolated efforts.

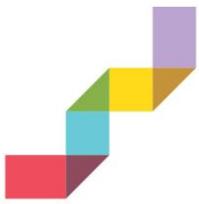
This initiative is an opportunity to facilitate increased collaboration among those operating in what might be regarded as the "Teen Healthy Relationships Field". For example, across Canada there are:

- ❖ Many organizations that deliver programs aimed at increasing teens' capacity for healthy relationships;
- ❖ A variety of funders/philanthropic organizations that fund such programs;
- ❖ A range of initiatives and policies at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government related to healthy youth development (including healthy relationships); and
- ❖ Individual researchers and academic institutions that are involved in generating evidence about what works to develop the capacity of teens for healthy relationships.

The focus of this initiative is to **increase and strengthen links and relationships** between these entities and thereby establish greater coordination, alignment, communication and knowledge sharing. As a result of such collaboration, young people will be better supported to lead healthy, violence-free lives.

Key Activities

1. **Conduct Research** - Develop a preliminary 'picture' of the people, organizations and work/initiatives that currently make up the "Teen Healthy Relationships Field" across Canada.
2. **Convene Two National Meetings** - With interested stakeholders: build a shared understanding of the current state of the "Teen Healthy Relationships Field"; identify actions that will facilitate collaboration and strengthen the field; and establish working groups to support the implementation of the highest priority actions.
3. **Implement Action** - With working groups, implement four to six of the highest priority actions.



National Survey: Notable Findings

Who completed the survey?

- ❖ An invitation to participate in the online survey was sent to **501 potential stakeholders** from four sectors - non-profit service delivery (205 contacts), research (83 contacts), philanthropy (29 contacts), and government/public sector (184 contacts).
- ❖ Of the **132 completed surveys** received:
 - 73% were from non-profit service delivery providers;
 - 12% were from university or community-based researchers;
 - 11% were from people working in the government/public sector; and
 - 4% were from people working in philanthropic organizations.
- ❖ As these figures suggest, **response rates by sector varied considerably**:
 - 47% response rate for the non-profit service delivery sector;
 - 19% for the research sector;
 - 17% for the philanthropic sector; and
 - 8% for the government/public sector.

What did the survey respondents tell us?

Teen healthy relationships programming is a national undertaking

Every province, and the Northwest Territories, was represented in the survey responses. However, few organizations have a national reach or operate in more than one province/territory: most work locally or regionally and some across their province.

The average length of time that respondents' organizations have been involved in teen healthy relationships work is 30 years

The mode (most frequent value in the data set) is 20 years.

Teen healthy relationships programming is delivered by many kinds of non-profit organization

The main kinds of organizations we heard from were:

- ❖ **Women-serving organizations** (i.e. providing a broad range of services/programs for girls and women generally) - 21 respondents;
- ❖ **Sexual/domestic violence organizations** (i.e. serving women and girls who have experienced sexual violence or intimate partner violence) - 19 respondents;

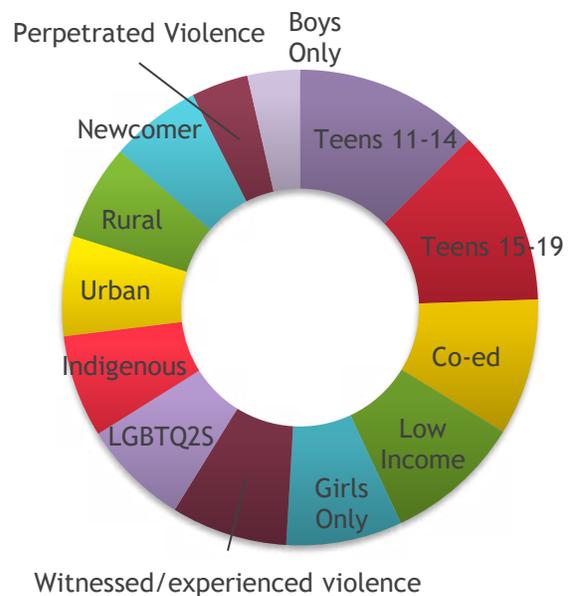


- ❖ **Community health organizations** (i.e. providing a range of healthcare services, including mental health supports, sexual health programming, and support for pregnant/parenting girls) - 12 respondents; and
- ❖ **Youth development organizations** (i.e. focusing on building young people’s skills and capacities, wellbeing and resilience) - 9 respondents.

We also heard from: 3 Indigenous organizations; 3 organizations working with newcomer youth; 3 justice/crime prevention organizations; 2 employment agencies; 2 arts organizations; 1 agency working with youth with disabilities; 1 agency providing family services; and 1 emergency response organization.

Teen healthy relationships programming:

- ❖ **Reaches a wide range of groups of teens** (as shown in the chart). Other groups mentioned included: children aged 6-11; pregnant and parenting teens; youth living with sexually transmitted diseases; teens who are members of religious groups; and teens experiencing challenges in any of their interpersonal relationships.
- ❖ **For the most part, takes place in schools.** 78% of service delivery respondents reported having at least one school-based program (i.e. programs that are delivered in schools either within the regular timetable and/or at lunch or afterschool). 22% indicated that all of their teen healthy relationships programming is delivered outside of the school environment (e.g. at their agency, community centre, health centre, etc.). In spite of this strong connection with the education sector, *only 1 respondent reported receiving funding from a Ministry or Department of Education.*



Through their teen healthy relationships programming, service delivery organizations are seeking to have an impact at several levels

The survey asked respondents to describe what they are hoping to achieve through their teen healthy relationships work. A thematic analysis of the answers given by the non-profit service delivery respondents indicate the following kinds of intended outcomes:

- ❖ **System level (e.g. social norms, policy landscape).** Goals include: establishing equality for women and girls; ending or preventing gender-based/sexual violence; building a “consent culture”; increasing the value that is given to the voice of youth in society; and ending or preventing systemic discrimination against particular populations of youth.
- ❖ **Community level (e.g. in families, schools, neighbourhoods).** Goals include: enhancing relationships between teens and parents; eliminating violence in schools; creating inclusive and safe neighbourhoods; supporting healthy relationships between students and school staff; and coordinating the work of local violence-prevention organizations.

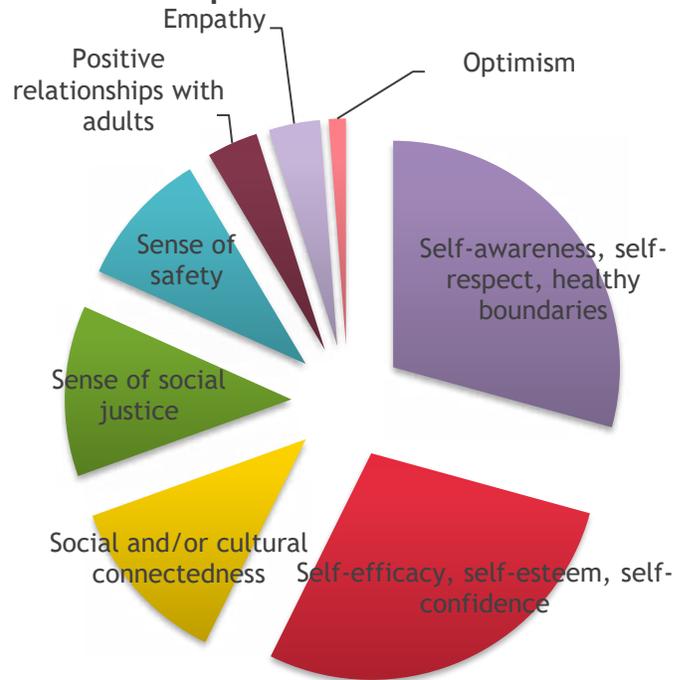


- ❖ **Individual level (e.g. individual beliefs, attitudes, competencies, etc. and capacity to be in healthy relationships).** Types of desired outcomes can be broadly categorized as: increased knowledge and skills for healthy relationships; and increased resiliency (i.e. building the factors that protect against experiencing/perpetrating violence). More details are shown in the charts.

Individual-level outcomes: knowledge and skills



Individual-level outcomes: protective factors



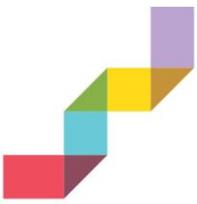
Funding for teen healthy relationships programming appears to be quite fragmented across multiple sources

The survey asked non-profit service delivery respondents to identify the main funders of their teen healthy relationships work. The 86 respondents who answered this question named just **over 70 distinct funders or sources of funding**. In most cases, organizations receive funding from multiple sources.

Philanthropic foundations and provincial/territorial governments were the most frequently mentioned groups of funders (33% and 27% respectively). The United Way/Centraide was the most frequently mentioned single funder of teen healthy relationships work (15%). Overwhelmingly, the philanthropic foundations named are local or provincial (not national).

Researchers located across Canada are working on issues that impact the field of teen healthy relationships

The interests and contributions of researchers working in the field include:



- ❖ **Teen dating violence** - rates of, dynamics of, contributing factors, effective prevention, vulnerability of particular groups of youth;
- ❖ **Bullying** - psychological impacts of, issues facing educators, effective prevention and intervention efforts, capacity of teachers' and communities to address;
- ❖ **Violence prevention programming for children and youth** - best and promising practices for violence prevention (generally) and for subsets of violence;
- ❖ **Healthy relationships** - creating healthy school communities, social and emotional learning, resources for teachers and students; and
- ❖ **Digital and media literacy** - research on and tools for being safe online, impact of networked technology on youth.

With so few respondents from the government/public sector more work is needed to engage with policy makers

Based on the small number of government/public sector respondents, current policy priorities of relevance to the field include:

- ❖ **Violence prevention** - domestic violence, sexual violence;
- ❖ **Reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors for teens** - with respect to teen violence and teens' capacity for healthy relationships;
- ❖ **Education policy and curricula** - renewing/reforming provincial health/healthy relationships curricula and school-based sex/sexuality education, enhancing mental health supports to students; and
- ❖ **Improved data collection and decision-making** - with respect to child and youth wellbeing.

There is considerable consensus across all four sectors on the kinds of challenges facing the field of teen healthy relationships work

Early stakeholder consultation identified seven challenges facing the field. There was broad consensus on the importance of all seven issues, with the overall ranking emerging as follows:

1. Current societal issues (e.g. cyber violence, hypersexualization of girls);
2. Too much is expected of front line providers with too few resources;
3. Enhancing teen healthy relationships is not a sufficient priority amongst educational and youth development policy makers;
4. Front line delivery people (e.g. classroom teachers, program facilitators) don't always have the particular skill set needed to effectively deliver healthy relationships content;
5. Funders and front line organizations don't always have access to or apply evidence of what works to their program development and delivery;
6. Different sectors (i.e. government, research, philanthropic funders, non-profit service providers) are working in isolation; and
7. Funders lack real understanding about the nature of the work.

Respondents also raised other issues. The top three themes arising from their comments are:



- ❖ *Systemic challenges* - including, lack of shared definitions, inconsistent school-based programming, insufficient focus on primary prevention;
- ❖ *Funding-related issues* - including, lack of sustainable funding overall as well as for specific aspects of programming, lack of long-term commitment from funders, insufficient evidence of effectiveness of programs for funders; and
- ❖ *Unmet youth needs* - including, education sector not prioritizing students' social health, limited community-based services for youth, lack of programming in rural areas.

There is broad agreement across all four sectors regarding the kinds of opportunities for building or strengthening the teen healthy relationships field

Early stakeholder consultation identified five opportunities for building the field. *Improve sustainability of funding* and *engage with teens on program and policy development* emerged as the clear frontrunners. The overall ranking was:

1. Improve sustainability of funding;
2. Engage with teens and youth to facilitate their input into program and policy development;
3. Undertake more collaborative, cross-sectoral and cross-regional efforts;
4. Increase capacity for evidence-informed practice; and
5. Enhance funder and service provider capacity for program evaluation.

Additional comments from respondents reinforced the importance of these five opportunities.