

The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

Document Title: Preventing Revictimization in Teen Dating Relationships

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Document No.: 244086

Date Received: November 2013

Award Number: 2009-MU-MU-0025

This report has not been published by the U.S. Department of Justice. To provide better customer service, NCJRS has made this Federally-funded grant report available electronically.

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Executive Summary

Problem Addressed: Revictimization (RV) refers to the occurrence of two or more instances of violence and poses an enormous criminal justice problem. Adolescent girls who were previously abused (particularly those who have come to the attention of the child welfare system) are at high risk of RV in teen dating relationships. In turn, RV in adolescence places girls at high risk for additional intimate partner violence in adulthood. In adulthood, the criminal justice costs resulting from intimate violence are staggering. Therefore, preventing RV in the teen years is one of the best ways to decrease long-term criminal justice (and public health) costs. Though RV is a major criminal justice issue, most interventions with teens have focused on *primary* prevention (that is, prevention in teens not previously exposed to violence) of physical (usually *not* sexual) dating violence. In addition, interventions have frequently targeted youth in school settings, though youth in the child welfare system experience frequent transitions in housing/care that disrupt regular attendance at a single school. Thus, child welfare youth at high risk of RV may not receive prevention programming as consistently as their peers. Further, researchers and practitioners still understand relatively little about the specific processes that underlie RV risk, particularly in high risk groups. Therefore, this study addressed the urgent need to target interventions to high risk groups, such as teen girls who have come to the attention of the child welfare system; rigorously test interventions grounded in empirical research on RV; and examine processes implied by RV theories. In particular, adolescent girls recruited from the child welfare system were randomized to one of two revictimization prevention conditions: social learning/feminist (SL/F) and risk detection/executive function (RD/EF).

Method Overview: To address these research needs, we tested two intervention programs designed to decrease RV in teen dating relationships in a sample of adolescent girls from the child welfare system. The interventions arose from two different theoretical approaches to the problem of RV: 1) social learning and feminist theory (from the teen dating violence literature); and 2) risk detection (from the adult sexual RV literature). Incorporating recent cognitive neuroscience research, we expanded the risk detection intervention to focus on improving teens' executive function skills (EFs). EFs include a range of cognitive abilities that are critical to detecting danger cues (e.g., noticing danger, planning and initiating responses) and often impaired in youth and adults previously exposed to violence. Both the SL/F and RD/EF interventions were modified from existing, empirically-supported interventions.

We enrolled 180 adolescent girls involved in the child welfare system. Participants were assessed four times: pre-, immediately post-, 2-months, and 6-months after the intervention ended. Assessment procedures included a comprehensive battery of self-report and behavioral tasks designed to assess the processes implicated by the two RV intervention approaches. We examined revictimization (that is, the presence/absence of sexual or physical assault in any relationship) as well as a range of aggressive conflict tactics in current dating relationships.

Four teens were excluded from the study after Time 1 due to exclusion criteria (e.g., presence of psychotic symptoms). One hundred and thirty-four participants were randomized to complete the RD/EF (n=67) or SL/F intervention (n=67). Given concerns from potential referral sources about randomizing youth to any sort of waitlist control or no-intervention conditions, we did not randomize to such a control condition; however, a group of youth (n=42) emerged who engaged in the research assessments and not the interventions. This offered an opportunity for a post-hoc, non-randomized comparison group. Teens in the three conditions (RD/EF, SL/F, assessment only) were comparable in terms of all

