# Teen Dating Violence Toolkit

## Education and Response Strategies to Support Refugee and Newcomer Youth

**switchboard**
connecting resettlement experts

# Defining Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence (TDV), sometimes called dating abuse or dating violence, refers to any pattern of behaviors used to gain or maintain power and control in a dating or romantic relationship between partners who are teenagers (between the ages of 12 and 20). TDV can happen in person or through technology and includes behaviors that harm, threaten, isolate, or control a partner. Many young people may not recognize these behaviors as unhealthy or abusive.

For newcomer youth, recognizing dating violence can be more complex. Cultural expectations, migration-related stress, having fewer trusted adults, and pressure to adapt quickly to U.S. norms can make it hard to identify what is typical, what is unhealthy, and what feels unsafe. Youth may also hold different understandings of jealousy, privacy, gender roles, or communication based on experiences in their home country, during migration, or in community settings.

This toolkit provides practical, ready-to-use tools for service providers, foster parents, and other adults supporting newcomer youth to start mindful conversations with teens, respond safely to disclosures, and support youth in building healthy relationships rooted in dignity and respect.

> **Normalize conversations about relationships before youth begin dating.** Early education builds trust, reduces stigma, and helps youth recognize healthy and unhealthy behaviors when relationships do become part of their lives.

## Contextual Factors in TDV

☀ *What contextual information might influence a young person to normalize or hide an unhealthy or abusive relationship?*

**During adolescence and young adulthood, youth are navigating a critical stage of development** marked by identity formation, experimentation with independence, and exploration of intimate relationships. Many have their first experiences with dating during this time and the boundaries between healthy and unhealthly behaviors can feel uncertain or confusing. Since youth are still developing emotional regulation, self-concept, and relationship skills, they may interpret beahviors such as jealousy, possessiveness, or constant communication as signs of love or commitment rather than warning signs of control or dating abuse. This developmental context makes it especially important to provide education and guidance on recognizing healthy relationship dynamics and understanding the difference between care and control.

**Migration stress and trauma histories shape how youth understand relationships.** Newcomer youth who have experienced displacement, loss, or violence may have a disrupted sense of safety, trust, and control, which can influence how they form or navigate intimate relationships. These experiences can affect self-esteem and boundaries, making it harder for youth to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy behaviors or to believe they deserve respect and safety in relationships. For some, survival experiences may normalize power imbalances or controlling behavior, while others may avoid conflict or minimize harm as a coping mechanism.

**Acculturation pressures and limited support networks increase vulnerability.** Acculturation and belief systems influence how youth define abuse. Newcomer youth may feel caught between differing expectations—for example, traditional norms that

> "Acculturation, the process of adapting to a new culture, influences attitudes towards TDV and can lead to acculturative stress and conflict between the culture of origin and the host culture." — *López-Garrido & Sánchez-Santamaría, 2024, p. 66*

emphasize supervision and family honor, and U.S. norms that emphasize independence and autonomy. Expectations around dating, gender roles, and independence may shift rapidly after arrival. For example, boys and young men may experience tensions around expectations to uphold traditional maculinity, which can heighten confusion or conflict in relationships. Even in families or communities where dating is discouraged, relationships still occur in secret, which can limit help-seeking when something feels unsafe. Examples of how these barriers show up include misunderstandings or lack of familiarity around rights and consent, reliance on partners for belonging, and limited transportation or communication autonomy.

**Substance use can increase vulnerability and reduce safety options.** Some youth may begin using alcohol or other substances to cope or fit in, which can make it harder to set boundaries or recognize risk. Substance use can also be used as leverage for control—for example, threatening to report a youth's substance use to family, schools, or immigration authorities.

**Immigration-related threats can be used as control.** Youth may fear consequences at school or with child welfare or immigration authorities, especially when a partner threatens to report them or their family. This fear can discourage youth from seeking out support and result in them staying silent about relationship concerns.

**Cultural values shape how relationships are discussed and whether youth feel safe seeking help.** Some communities expect no dating or courting to occur until individuals are ready for marriage, avoid conversations about romantic or sexual relationships, or worry that others will judge the family. These norms are often grounded in love, faith, and protection, but they can unintentionally silence youth.

A trauma-informed and cross-cultural approach builds belonging and autonomy. These conversations reduce shame, preserve cultural identity, and honor the youth's voice while increasing safety. Curiosity invites trust.

# Global & Migration-Related Risk Factors for TDV

## 💡 *What pre-arrival experiences impact TDV risk in the U.S.?*

Newcomer youths' views on relationships and safety are shaped before, during, and after migration. Awareness of what youth may have experienced in conflict or displacement settings helps explain why secrecy, shame, or fear of involvement with formal systems (such as law enforcement or child welfare) may show up in their relationships.

**Early marriage and harmful practices can shape how youth understand dating and consent.** In many regions, early marriage is used as a response to poverty, instability, or perceived protection issues. Globally, one in five young women aged 20–24 were married before age 18, with higher rates in crisis-affected settings. These early partnerships often involve large age or power differences, which can normalize control, limited choice, or unequal decision-making. For newcomer youth, these experiences may influence how they interpret dating in the U.S., including beliefs about obedience, pressure, or consent. Some youth may also have experienced child marriage, which can reinforce norms that limit bodily autonomy and make it harder to name or challenge boundary violations in dating relationships.

> **Migration and culture shape not only whether abuse happens, but how youth make sense of it, report it, and ask for help.**
>
> - In the U.S., "[o]nly 9% of teens in abusive relationships report the abuse" — *Break the Cycle*
> - Globally, fewer than 40% of girls who experience violence seek support from any formal system, which can normalize silence once in the U.S. — *UN Women*

**Technology-facilitated abuse is common before and after arrival.** For youth, phones and social media can provide connections, but they can also become tools for harassment. This constant connectivity can blur boundaries and normalize harmful behaviors such as excessive monitoring, pressure to share passwords, or public displays of control on social media. Because digital spaces are intertwined with social identity and relationships, youth may struggle to recognize these forms of abuse.

**Legal protection is often limited or inaccessible.** Many youth come from countries where laws do not fully protect women and girls from violence, enforcement is inconsistent, or survivors face retaliation for speaking up. Globally, less than 40% of survivors ever seek formal help, often turning only to family or friends. These patterns can continue after resettlement when youth may fear police, schools, or child welfare systems.

With an understanding of TDV and the cultural and migration factors that shape youth perspectives, the next tool helps ground conversations in their lived experience.

## Tool: Understanding and Naming Unhealthy Relationship Behaviors

This tool is designed to support *education and shared understanding*—not to screen for abuse or prompt disclosure. It works best after trust has been established. The visuals below describe common ways abuse can show up in relationships. Reviewing these with newcomer youth can help them identify early warning signs, build shared language, and notice when something doesn't feel right. Youth do not need to directly relate to any particular example for the tool to be useful.

This tool can be used before or after general conversations about relationships or dating norms, as a reference during ongoing check-ins, or as an educational resource for youth groups, caregivers, or staff. Invite youth to engage at their own pace and choose what, if anything, they want to discuss. You may also consider using the National Center for Domestic and Sexual Violence Teen Power and Control Wheel as a supplemental tool.

### Example Conversation Starter Scripts

*"People define healthy and unhealthy relationships in different ways, and those ideas can change across cultures and places. Before we look at any examples, I'm curious—what does a healthy relationship look like or mean to you?"*

*"Sometimes adults and youth use different words for the same behaviors. This visual helps share how we talk about and define unhealthy dynamics here in the U.S. We can look at it together, and if anything feels familiar or brings up questions, we can talk about it some more."*

**If youth are ready to move beyond naming behaviors:**

*"Remember how we said the same behaviors can get called different things depending on family or culture? Let's try connecting that to real life. When someone is always checking on you, pressuring you, or trying to control who you talk to, what is that usually called in your community? How does it feel to you?"*

*"Everyone's experience is different, so it can help to name what feels familiar to you. Are there any examples from your daily life, online, at school, or in your community that feel similar or that you've noticed before? You can share as much or as little as you want."*

**Types of abuse and how they can show up in relationships:**

| Physical | Emotional | Psychological | Financial |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Hitting, slapping, scratching<br><br>• Destruction of property<br><br>• Throwing objects<br><br>• Blocking off entrances/exits | • Gaslighting (i.e., making someone question their reality)<br><br>• Manipulation<br><br>• Insults<br><br>• Jealousy<br><br>• Accusations<br><br>• Guilting or ignoring | • Isolation from friends, family, and hobbies<br><br>• Threatening to harm themselves<br><br>• Dissmissing or invalidating experiences or emotions | • Keeping access to all money and cards<br><br>• Constantly asking for money<br><br>• Giving an "allowance" |

| Digital | Sexual | Verbal | Spiritual |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Cyberstalking<br><br>• Tracking<br><br>• Checking messages without consent<br><br>• Keeping passwords<br><br>• Posting photos without consent | • Taking explicit photos or videos without consent<br><br>• Any non-consensual touch or sexual act<br><br>• Forced pregnancy or reproductive health decisions<br><br>• Sexual acts against minors who cannot consent | • Name-calling<br><br>• Humiliating<br><br>• Giving "the silent treatment"<br><br>• Shouting<br><br>• Mocking the other person | • Using religion to justify abuse<br><br>• Unwilling to support or have differing beliefs |

## Tool: Cultural Context and Relationship Safety Quick Scan

Below is a practical tool to help providers understand how cultural and contextual factors can shape the ways newcomer youth think about safety in relationships. These questions also inform adults about when and how to introduce appropriate TDV support and resources. The example questions are rooted in trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Relationship Norms** <br> Identify expectations, privacy needs, and fears of disclosures | *"How are friendships or dating usually talked about in your family or community?"* |
| **Trusted Support** <br> Explore accessible safety network | *"Who are the people you can talk to about personal things? Who would you want involved if you were worried about someone's behavior?"* |
| **Decision-Making** <br> Support autonomy and boundary building | *"How do you decide what feels okay or not in a relationship?"* |
| **Technology Access** <br> Help identify tech-based risks or partner monitoring | *"Are there rules or worries about phones or social media in your home or family? Does your partner respect your privacy and access to technology?"* |
| **Exposure to Violence** <br> Normalize conversations without forcing personal disclosure | *"Have you seen relationships where one person didn't feel safe? What did that look like?"* |
| **Gender Expectations** <br> Connect cultural norms to safety and control dynamics. | *"Are there different expectations for boys and girls in relationships in your family or culture? How do you feel about them? Can you express how you'd like your relationship to look?"* |
| **Immigration Concerns** <br> Screen for specific coercive control risk. | *"In a relationship, do you worry about someone using your or your family's immigration status against you?"* |

Understanding a youth's cultural context not only helps you recognize hidden risks—it also highlights the strengths you can build on through supportive conversations and practical tools.

# Newcomer Protective Factors

Newcomer youth bring strong protective factors into their relationships, including resilience developed through migration and adaptation to new environments. Cultural and relational supports—such as family, community, or faith—can offer guidance and belonging as youth navigate relationships in the U.S. Even when conversations about relationships feel private or discouraged, youth often rely on existing strategies and supports that help keep them safe.



## Tool: Strengths and Protective Factors Checklist

Use this checklist with youth, caregivers, or in team meetings to identify youths' existing protective factors. Frame it to recognize their strengths rather than screen for deficits and review it collaboratively. Since protective factors change over time, revisit the checklist periodically as the youth's relationships and confidence grow. Above all, honor youth voice. Their specific protective factors may differ from traditional U.S. models, yet they are equally valid and powerful.

### Protective Factor Resources

- [Fostering Resilience for Refugee Students](#)
- [Introduction to Child Protection: Guide for Newcomer Youth Caregivers and Service Providers](#)
- [What You Need to Know about Body Safety and Consent](#), (English, Dari, Pashto)
- [Integrating Digital Citizenship into Refugee and Immigrant Youth Programs](#)
- [Online Safety Tip Sheet](#), (English, Bengali, Portuguese, Chinese Simplified and Traditional, Creole, Dari, French, Hindi, Pashto, Punjabi, and Spanish)

## Sample Strengths and Protective Factors Checklist

**Check all that apply or could be strengthened:**

**Youth Internal Strengths**

☐ Strong self-esteem or sense of identity
☐ Confidence in setting boundaries with peers and loved ones
☐ Problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills
☐ Flexible thinking and ability to adapt to change
☐ Hope for the future or clear goals
☐ Participation in faith, sports, arts, or community groups

**Family & Cultural Strengths**

☐ Close relationships with supportive family members
☐ Cultural values emphasizing mutual respect and dignity
☐ Shared community responses against violence
☐ Caregivers invested in youth well-being and education
☐ Family members who encourage independence *at developmentally appropriate levels*
☐ Cultural or faith leaders who promote safety and equality
☐ Extended family or community support network

**Relationship Protections**

☐ Youth can identify at least one safe adult to call or text
☐ Agreements at home about technology privacy or device safety
☐ Friends who encourage safety and respect
☐ Ability to say "no" without fear of punishment from peers or partner
☐ Awareness of rights related to consent and safety in the U.S.
☐ Access to information about healthy relationships from reliable sources

**System & Environment Supports**

☐ Welcoming school or program environment
☐ Access to culturally/linguistically relevant services
☐ Involvement in newcomer affinity spaces or mentorship programs
☐ Reliable transportation or safe places youth can go after school
☐ Supportive mental health or well-being resources

**After reviewing checked items:**

**What strengths stand out most?**
(3–5 words or notes)

**What might help strengthen safety even more?**
(1–3 small steps youth identifies)

1.

2.

3.

# Understanding Healthy, Unhealthy, and Abusive Relationships

With the foundation set, the next step is recognizing the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

## The Relationship Spectrum

Every relationship exists on a **spectrum**—from healthy to unhealthy to abusive. Relationships can shift along this spectrum over time. For newcomer youth, it may feel especially hard to know what is "normal" when expectations about dating vary across cultures, communities, and families. This resource helps identify what respectful, safe relationships look and feel like, and when behaviors may be a warning sign.

### Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships are built on **respect, trust, honesty, and equality**. You can be yourself, express feelings safely, and maintain friendships, school commitments, and cultural values. Both people:

- Communicate openly and listen to each other
- Have a voice in shared decisions
- Support each other's goals and independence
- Enjoy spending time together but are also happy apart

### Unhealthy Relationships

Unhealthy relationships include behaviors that are **controlling, disrespectful, or hurtful**. These behaviors can develop slowly and may be mistaken as love or protection, especially when a partner says something like, *"I only worry about you because I care."*

Someone may:

- Pressure their partner into decisions (friendships, clothing, sex, beliefs)
- Act jealous or expect constant updates
- Blame the other person for their own reactions
- Make their partner feel guilty for spending time with others

### Abusive Relationships

Abusive relationships involve **power and control:** one person makes the decisions about what is true, what is allowed, and who the other person can trust. Abusive partners may:

- Threaten or hurt their partner physically or sexually
- Track them online or control their phone use
- Use secrets, immigration concerns, or family honor to force compliance
- Isolate their partner from community, family, or friends
- Control access to money, transportation, or support
- Insult, humiliate, or gaslight their partner—making them question their feelings, thoughts, or sense of reality

## Tool: Relationship Spectrum Worksheet

After newcomer youth learn how relationship behaviors can range from healthy to harmful, the worksheet below will support them in connecting these concepts to their own cultural context, routines, and boundaries. It can be used in conversation or as a private reflective tool. Youth should check off any boxes that describe their relationship to help understand where the relationship generally feels like it is today—healthy, unhealthy, or abusive. Encourage youth to talk with a safe adult about anything that feels uncomfortable.

### Sample Relationship Spectrum Worksheet

**Healthy – We both feel respected, valued, and safe:**

- ☐ We can talk openly about school, family, and boundaries
- ☐ We check in with each other without pressure ("Hope you didn't sleep in past your alarm and that your bus ride is good!" "How are you feeling after that exam?")
- ☐ We encourage each other and have our own friends, activities, and community spaces
- ☐ We support each other's goals (like learning English, sports, college)
- ☐ We respect family, program, or school rules about time together or privacy

**How does your relationship show respect or teamwork?** (Write or draw)

_____

**Unhealthy – Someone pressures, dismisses, or makes most decisions:**

- ☐ We argue about who I talk to, and I feel like I'm losing friends or connections
- ☐ We check in constantly (sharing locations or selfies for "proof"), and I feel like I have to respond right away or they'll get upset
- ☐ We call jealousy "care," but sometimes it makes me feel watched or guilty ("I just worry because I love you." "I am looking out for your family.")
- ☐ My partner sometimes ignores my boundaries, and I feel guilty when I say "no"
- ☐ I feel nervous to disagree or share my real thoughts

**Are there moments that make you feel confused or worried?** (Write or draw)

_____

*Continued on next page*

**Sample Relationship Spectrum Worksheet (cont'd)**

**Abusive – Power and control take away from safety and choices:**

☐ Pressure or threats with things like private photos, secrets, or family reputation or immigration status

☐ Forced decisions about faith, clothing, or who you're allowed to trust

☐ Physical harm or pressuring sexual contact

☐ Threatening to harm themselves or isolating ("If you don't spend time with me, it means you don't love me.")

☐ They tell me I'm overreacting or crazy, even when something really hurtful happened

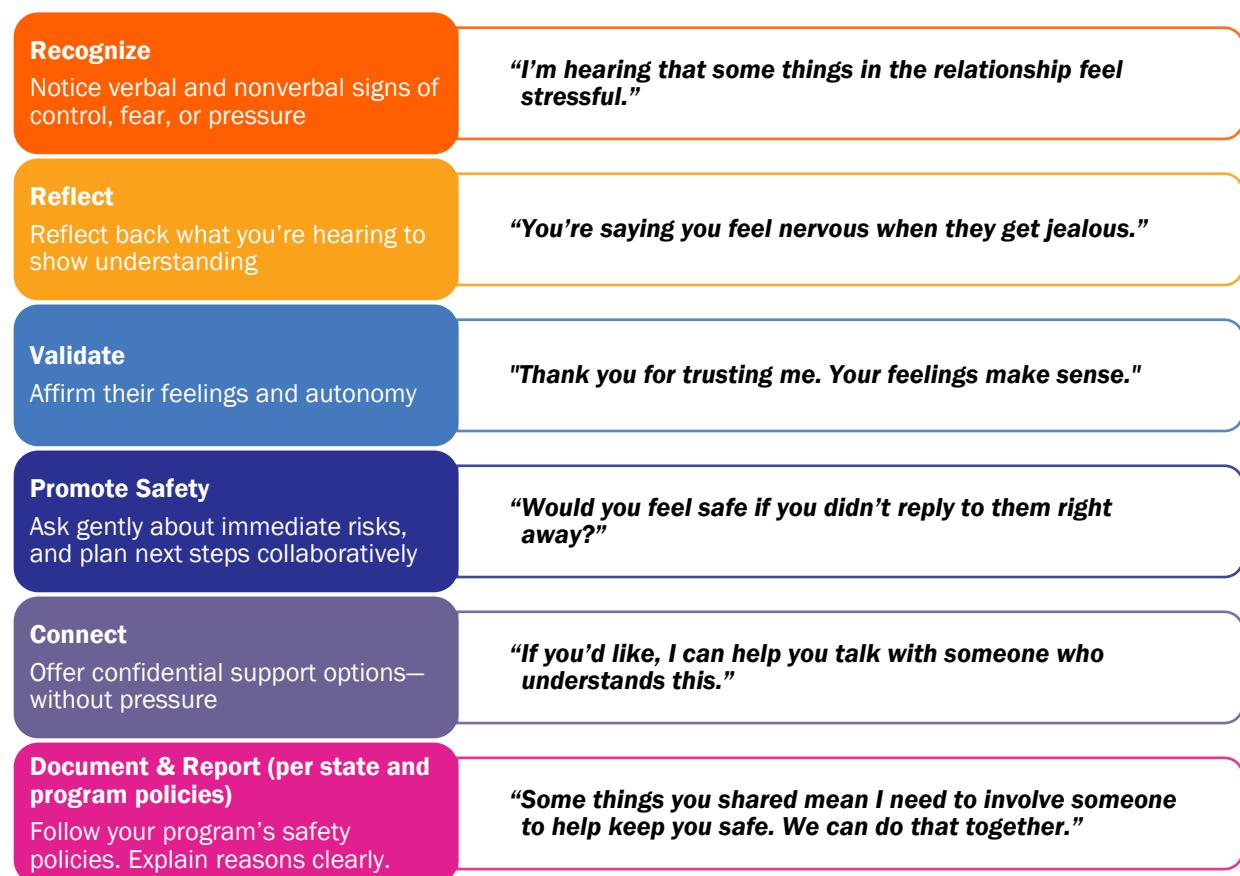**When do you feel afraid or controlled?** (Write or draw)

_____

# Responding to Abuse and Creating Safety Plans

You may encounter a situation in which you recognize some of these warning signs in a youth you care for. Youth may even share their own concerns with you. This section gives you tools and language for responding when a youth discloses something concerning and guides you through safety planning, which may be part of your response.

## Responding to Disclosures

When a young person shares relationship concerns or abuse, **how adults respond matters**. Calm, validating, and culturally aware responses build trust and increase safety. This section provides scripts and short guides to support staff and caregivers in real conversations with youth.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Recognize** <br> Notice verbal and nonverbal signs of control, fear, or pressure | *"I'm hearing that some things in the relationship feel stressful."* |
| **Reflect** <br> Reflect back what you're hearing to show understanding | *"You're saying you feel nervous when they get jealous."* |
| **Validate** <br> Affirm their feelings and autonomy | *"Thank you for trusting me. Your feelings make sense."* |
| **Promote Safety** <br> Ask gently about immediate risks, and plan next steps collaboratively | *"Would you feel safe if you didn't reply to them right away?"* |
| **Connect** <br> Offer confidential support options—without pressure | *"If you'd like, I can help you talk with someone who understands this."* |
| **Document & Report (per state and program policies)** <br> Follow your program's safety policies. Explain reasons clearly. | *"Some things you shared mean I need to involve someone to help keep you safe. We can do that together."* |

## Supportive Language and Example Scripts

Disclosures aren't always easy to hear, and even well-intentioned adults can stumble in the moment. The guidance below will help ensure your responses are grounded and supportive.

**Say this (validating and youth-centered):**

✓ *"Lots of people have mixed feelings about parts of a relationship. It's okay to talk about the good and bad parts of relationships."*

✓ *"Sometimes people we care about make us feel pressured, but that doesn't make it okay."*

✓ *"I'm glad you told me. You don't have to go through this alone."*

✓ *"You deserve people who help you feel calm and respected."*

✓ *"It's okay to take small steps—you get to set the pace."*

- ✓ *"We can come up with ideas together. You choose what feels right and when."*

- ✓ *"What would help you feel safest today?" or "What would a safe next step look like for you?"*

- ✓ *"We can find support that respects your culture, family, and community. Who or what helps you feel calm or protected?"*

- ✓ *"You don't need 'proof' of abuse to deserve help."*

**Avoid saying this:**

- ✕ *"You should leave them."*

- ✕ *"Why didn't you tell someone sooner?"*

- ✕ *"That type of person [or person from that background] shouldn't be trusted."*

- ✕ *"This should be easy to get over."*


**Do this (cross-cultural and practical):**

- ✓ Prioritize youth autonomy and decision-making

- ✓ Ask what safety means in their family, culture, and community

- ✓ Normalize and praise small steps toward safety

- ✓ Consider curfews and foster or group home rules

- ✓ Offer language access and confirm understanding of TDV language

- ✓ Provide both verbal and visual guidance when English is developing

- ✓ Ask permission before giving anything to take home if discovery could increase risk; offer to securely hold important documents if youth is worried someone may find them

- ✓ Help youth identify local trusted adults

- ✓ Check in regularly and update plans as circumstances change

**Avoid doing this:**

- ✕ Rush to problem-solving before the youth feels heard

- ✕ Leave youth alone to navigate after disclosures

- ✕ Assume family is the safest option

- ✕ Ignore cultural stigma, reputation pressures, or community surveillance

- ✕ Push reporting if youth expresses fear of consequences or retaliation

- ✕ Be an investigator (see Switchboard's Mandatory Reporting guide and webinar for more direction on your role)

## Safety Planning Considerations for Newcomer Youth

Balancing newcomer considerations as a service provider or foster parent can be difficult, and each newcomer youth may have unique challenges to navigate. Here we present some of the more common challenges, followed by safety planning resources to help you and the youth you care about overcome difficult situations together.

**Housing:** Whether youth are in a family home, foster home, group home, or independent living situation, help them identify spaces where they can safely reach a phone or exit if needed. Providers should encourage youth to avoid areas where someone could be cornered or where dangerous items are stored, like kitchens or bathrooms. Ask youth whether it's safe to take home paper resources like hotline numbers or safety plans. Digital-only options can sometimes reduce risk, especially if saved in a secure way, like in a password-protected file.

**Immigration and Legal Considerations:** Some youth may face threats from abusive partners involving immigration authorities. They may also fear consequences for seeking help, such as being misunderstood as the aggressor. Support youth by explaining their options, affirming their concerns, and connecting them with resources that understand their specific immigration context.

**Cultural and Spiritual Values:** Family reputation, community expectations, and spiritual beliefs may strongly influence a youth's decisions. Validate these pressures while helping youth explore safe ways to stay protected, such as identifying safe public spaces or connecting with a trusted adult.

**Language and Communication:** Provide safety plans and information in the youth's preferred language. When interpreters are needed, vet them to check whether they are professional and safe; friends or family may not always be appropriate. Help youth practice ways to explain their situation safely to responders, such as when calling 911 or other emergency services. For more information on best practices when working with interpreters, see Switchboard's Introduction to Working with Interpreters.

## Making a Safety Plan

When youth share worries about a relationship, a safety plan can help them think ahead about staying emotionally and physically safe—whether they choose to stay, leave, or are unsure. A **safety plan** is a personalized set of steps and strategies that helps a youth identify risks, supports, and safe actions they can take in different situations. See the safety planning resources below for tools and guidance to help youth create their plan.

### Tool: Safety Planning Cards

The safety planning cards on the next page give youth a simple, private way to plan for emotional and physical safety, even in new or healthy-feeling relationships. Creating a plan early sets expectations for respect and removes pressure to make decisions during a crisis. The cards help youth identify supportive people, safe places, and early warning signs while maintaining autonomy and privacy. Adults can introduce them as a voluntary option; youth decide what to include and how to use it. If something ever feels confusing, unhealthy, or unsafe, the cards outline realistic steps the youth can take. The cards can be printed or downloaded digitally.

### Additional Safety Planning Resources

**From Switchboard:**
- Safety Planning for Family Violence Guide
- Family Violence Safety Plan Template
- Introduction to Safety Planning Guide
- Safety Planning with Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Webinar

**From U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)**
- Safety Planning with Foreign National Children and Youth Survivors of Trafficking Toolkit

## Sample Youth Safety Planning Card (front)

**My Relationship Safety Plan**

*This plan belongs to (optional): _____*
*Today's date (optional): _____*

**People Who Help Me Feel Safe**

(Check what applies and write names if you want)

☐ Caregiver / Foster Parent: _____
☐ Teacher / School Staff: _____
☐ Coach / Mentor: _____
☐ Friend / Classmate: _____
☐ Community / Faith Leader: _____
☐ Advocate / Helpline: _____
☐ Other trusted adult: _____

*If my family is far away: Who helps me feel supported here? _____*

**Signals Something Feels Wrong...**

**In my body** (circle any):
shaky   heart racing   stomach pain   frozen   sweating   headache

**In my relationship** (circle any):
jealousy   pressure   fear   constant checking   name-calling   threats

**Online** (circle any):
tracking   nonstop messages   posting without permission

Other: _____

**If _____ happens, my plan is:**

| Situation | What I will do to stay safe |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| Backup plan if my phone is gone or dead: | _____ |

## Sample Youth Safety Planning Card (back)

**How I Get Help and Places I Can Go**

(Choose one daytime, one evening, one emergency)

Daytime: _____
Evening: _____
Emergency public space: _____

**How I can get there:**
☐ Walk with others   ☐ Bus route # _____
☐ Ask a safe adult for a ride _____

If I need language help:
**I speak: _____**

**Technology Safety Checks**

(Check what feels useful)

☐ Turn off location sharing
☐ Keep passwords private
☐ Limit who can tag/post about me
☐ Save screenshots only if safe
☐ Code word with a friend: _____

**What Helps Me Feel Calm**

(circle)
breathing   music   prayer   talking   grounding   fresh air

**Safety Affirmations**

**I deserve...**

- To feel respected in a relationship

- To set boundaries and have them respected

- To ask for help without getting in trouble

- To _____

- To _____

- To _____

## Tool: Practicing Healthy and Respectful Communication

**Scenario:** Your partner gets upset when you spend time with friends from your home country or community.

**Possible Response:** "I care about you, and my friends are important too. They help me feel connected here. Can we figure out something that works for both of us?"

**Scenario:** Your family recently arrived in the U.S., and everyone shares one cell phone. Your partner messages constantly, but you can't always reply because the phone isn't always with you. They get upset and accuse you of hiding something.

**Possible Response:** "I'm not ignoring you. My family shares one phone. It worries me when you assume I'm hiding something. I want to talk about this so we both feel respected."

**Scenario:** Your partner makes fun of your English, your accent, or how you don't know U.S. dating norms yet. They say things like "Everyone here is already kissing, so you should too," even though you're not ready.

**Possible Response:** "I'm still learning a lot here, and it hurts when you make fun of me. I'm not ready for that, and I need you to respect my pace. Being pressured doesn't feel okay."

Encourage youth to reflect on or write down their own experiences.

**Scenario:**

**Possible Response:**

Encourage youth to reflect on or write down their own experiences.

**Scenario:**

**Possible Response:**

Encourage youth to reflect on or write down their own experiences.

**Scenario:**

**Possible Response:**

# Recommended Resources

*Switchboard prioritizes materials produced by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and other federal agencies and by trusted technical assistance projects that receive U.S. government funding. The external resources contained in this list represent the views and opinions of their original creators and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of Switchboard.*

- **Switchboard**
  - Information Guide: Supporting Expecting and Parenting Newcomer Youth (2026)
  - Information Guide: Family Violence: Core Concepts for Refugee and Newcomer Serving Organizations (2025)
  - Information Guide: An Introduction to Child Protection: Guide for Newcomer Youth Caregivers and Service Providers (2023)
  - Evidence Summary: What works to prevent and respond to intimate partner violence among refugees? (2021)
  - Blog: Meeting Newcomers' Protection Needs Part II: A Collection of Resources on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2023)
  - Archived Webinar: Family Violence: Core Concepts for Refugee and Newcomer Serving Organizations (2025)
  - Archived Webinar: Child Protection Roundtable Session 2: Exploitation, Trafficking, and Violence (2025)
- **AMAZE**, Videos: Healthy Relationships (2020)
- **Break the Cycle**
  - Blog: A Parent's Guide to Identifying and Preventing Teen Dating Violence (2024)
  - Blog: Dating Violence: Understanding Signs and Seeking Help (2024)
  - Blog: Teen Dating Violence Statistics 2024 (Updated 2025)
  - Blog: How to Document Abuse and Prove Domestic Violence: Building Your Case (2024)
- **Casa de Esperanza: Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities**, Teen Dating Violence Among Latin@ Youth: Research-Based Facts (2019)
- **Day One:** Love Should Always Be Safe (2011)
- **Foster Reproductive Health**, Toolkit: Developmentally Appropriate Approaches to Discussing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights with Foster Youth (2019)
- **Human Options:** Toolkit Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month (2025)
- **Love Is Respect**
  - Toolkit: A Teen's Guide to Safety Planning (2006)
    - Safety at home *(living with an abuser, support systems, self-care)*
    - Safety at school *(campus, Title IX, support systems)*
    - Safety online *(Internet, cell phone, and social media)*
  - Toolkit: Healthy Relationship High School Educators Toolkit
  - Toolkit: Healthy Relationship Middle School Educators Toolkit
  - Infographic: The Relationship Spectrum
  - Relationships & cultural context

- Documenting abuse
- Supporting others
- **Me Too.** Global Network
- **National Center for Domestic and Sexual Violence**, Tool: Teen Power and Control Wheel (2006)
- **Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services:** Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (2024)
- **Together for Girls:** Help for Survivors and Victims
- **UN Women**
  - *Global Trends to Prevent and Respond to Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Emerging Practices* (2025)
  - *Global Database on Violence Against Women and Girls* (2025)
- **Village of the Heart:** Resource Toolkit (2025)

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# About Switchboard

Switchboard is a training and technical assistance project helping to build capacity in resettlement services across the U.S. We offer tools and training to service providers, newcomers, state agencies, and local communities to strengthen support for newcomers and promote integration. Switchboard is implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC).