

Project Respect

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Abstract:

Sadly, one in five female high school students report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, Hathoway, 2001). In efforts to curtail that statistic for New London Connecticut, The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut plans to launch Project Respect. Project Respect's goal is to decrease dating violence through offering all freshmen at New London High School education on dating violence and healthy relationships and by offering education on how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services to school staff and community members who deal with dating violence.

Key Words:

Dating violence, intimate partner violence, abuse, healthy relationships, abuser, victim, prevention, adolescents, relationship education, New London High School

Introduction:

Teen dating violence is a vast and often overlooked American social problem. According to the United States Department of Justice (2001) girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence. One in three teens have known a friend or peer who had been physically hurt by a dating partner (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005). Even though the peers were aware of the prevalence of dating violence, 81% of parents either believe that dating violence is not an issue or were not aware that it is an issue (Knowledge Network, 2000).

In a critical effort to raise awareness of dating violence and decrease its prevalence, the Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut plans to initiate Project

Respect. The goal of Project Respect is to create a stratified approach to dealing with teen dating violence in New London through primary and secondary preventive measures. Primary preventive measures serve to prevent teen dating violence from occurring by increasing awareness of dating violence and healthy relationships through educating New London High School freshmen students. Secondary preventive measures are designed to decrease teen dating violence already in occurrence by creating a school culture and community that is supportive and responsive to the needs of victims and perpetrators (Foshee, Bauman, Arriaga & Helms, 1998).

Problem Statement:

Dating violence is a vast American problem that crosses all socioeconomic boundaries. One in five female high school students report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner (Silverman et al., 2001). Dating violence is defined as a pattern of assaults and/or controlling behaviors in an intimate relationship used by one partner over another to gain power and control through physical, sexual, psychological, and/or economic abuse. The term dating violence is sometimes referred to as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). IPV is not limited to heterosexual relationships; abuse occurs in approximately 25 – 33 percent of gay and lesbian relationships (Barnes, 1998). Partner abuse is fueled by abusers' belief that they own their partners and thus, feel entitled to exert power and control over them. This belief and value system may have been established in an abuser's family of origin and is reinforced through cultural messages that condone abuse (Bancroft, 2002).

Needs Statement:

On May 12, 1999, Michelle Comeau, a Connecticut youth, was stabbed multiple times by her boyfriend, Tjamel Hamlin, in their New London apartment. She barely survived the attack and suffered wounds to her face, hand, chest, and buttocks. The attack came as a surprise. She never saw herself as a victim of domestic violence and her boyfriend was someone she loved and trusted (Bass, 2004, September 12). How could this have happened?

Though Michelle Comeau's story seems extreme, her plight is not alone. According to the United States Department of Justice (2001) girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence. Females are three to six times more likely than males to be the victim of IPV and injuries that result from such violence are more common among females for both the adult and adolescent populations (Silverman et al., 2001).

The impact of IPV on adolescent girls is devastating. Girls who have been victims of dating violence are at an increased risk of substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy, and suicidal tendencies than girls who have not experienced such abuse (Silverman et al., 2001). The scars of dating violence seep beyond the skin when emotional abuse is accounted for. Many victims report that emotional abuse is just as traumatizing, if not more traumatizing than physical abuse (Bancroft, 2002). Fully, one in four girls (26%) in a dating relationship report having endured verbal abuse by a dating partner and 80% of teens regard it as a serious issue for their age group (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005).

Many teens feel trapped and isolated in abusive relationships. Abusers often prevent them from spending time with friends and family. Abuse tends to happen slowly and before the victims know it, they may get caught in a cycle of love for their partner, hope that their partner will change, and fear for what could happen if they break-up (Bancroft, 2002). Reportedly, about one in five teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend threatened violence or self-harm when presented with a break-up (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005).

So where do they go? Who do they turn to? About 73% of teens said they would go to a friend for help with IPV, yet only 33% of teens who have been in or knew of an abusive relationship ever told anyone (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005). Amazingly, Teenage Research Unlimited also found that one in three teens knew a friend or peer who had been physically hurt by a dating partner. Even though the peers were aware of the prevalence of dating violence, 81% of parents either believe that dating violence is not an issue or were not aware that it is an issue (Knowledge Network, 2000). Many in the community are unaware of IPV and how to helpfully respond (Bancroft, 2002).

In an interview with *The Day* newspaper (Bass, 2004, September 12), Michelle Comeau reflects, "When I think of domestic violence, I think of women in a physically violent situation for a long period of time. I never classified myself as such, but someone does not necessarily have to hit you before they try to kill you. It's not always a step-by-step process. Here's what's important. I studied psychology. I had a background in psychology and I still was not aware of the signs of potential abuse and Tjamel had a lot of them. I wish I had been aware" (p.2).

However, would raising awareness on IPV cease its existence? Research proves IPV prevention strategies to middle and high school students promising. In a study evaluating the efficacy of Safe Dates (an adolescent dating violence prevention program), Foshee et al. (1998) targeted eighth and ninth graders in fourteen schools. Half the students were assigned to a control group and half to a treatment group. The students in the treatment group were offered a theatrical performance by peers on dating violence, participated in a poster contest, and ten forty-five minute classes with interactive activities to educate about changing norms associated with partner violence, decreasing gender stereotypes, and improving conflict management skills. In hopes to diminish current teen dating violence, education was provided to school staff and community agencies, as well as, a support group for victims of dating violence. At the initial follow-up, researchers found, "25% less psychological abuse perpetration, 60% less sexual violence perpetration, and 60% less violence perpetrated against the current dating partner in treatment schools than control schools" (p.49). Even after four years post intervention, treatment student reported, "significantly less psychological, moderate physical, and sexual dating violence perpetration" (Foshee et al., 2005, p.8) than the control group.

Luckily, in Connecticut, there is a dedicated coalition of eighteen agencies throughout the state whose mission is to end IPV. This mission is implemented through education, influencing public policy, and providing services to survivors and their families. This dedication of thousands of employees and volunteers could serve as an invaluable resource for implementing programs to eradicate IPV.

Hypothesis:

- 1.) If high school students were offered education on dating violence and healthy relationships, then they would have more knowledge about relationships, which would result in a decrease in dating violence.
- 2.) If school personnel were offered a 4-hour workshop on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services, then they would be able to address teen dating violence, which would result in a decrease of dating violence.
- 3.) If a support group were offered to victims of teen dating violence, then they would have support, which would result in a decrease in dating violence.
- 4.) If ten workshops on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services were offered to targeted agencies, organizations, and individuals in the community who deal with teen dating violence as part of their profession, then they would be more aware of dating violence, which would result in a decrease in teen dating violence.

Research Questions:

- 1.) Does education and knowledge on dating violence and healthy relationships result in a decrease in dating violence?
- 2.) Does educating school staff on teen dating violence result in a decrease in dating violence?

- 3.) Does offering a support group to victims of dating violence result in a decrease in teen dating violence?
- 4.) Does educating professionals in the community who deal with teen dating violence result in a decrease in dating violence?

Program Goal:

The goal of Project Respect is for the Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut to create a stratified approach to dealing with teen dating violence in New London through primary and secondary preventive measures. Primary preventive measures serve to prevent teen dating violence from occurring by increasing awareness of dating violence and healthy relationships through educating New London High School freshmen students. Secondary preventive measures are designed to decrease teen dating violence already in occurrence by creating a school culture and community that is supportive and responsive to the needs of victims and perpetrators (Foshee et al., 1998).

Program Objectives

Process Objectives:

- 1.) All freshmen students at New London High School will be offered Project Respect, consisting of ten forty-five minute classes to educate about dating violence and healthy relationships by April 30, 2008.
- 2.) All staff at New London High School will participate in a four-hour workshop facilitated by Community Educators from the Women's Center on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services by December 1, 2007.

- 3.) A weekly, open-ended, one and a half hour, support group for teen survivors of dating violence will be offered at New London High School by the Women's Center's Youth Counselor beginning November 1, 2007 and cumulating May 31, 2008.
- 4.) By May 31, 2008, The Community Educators at the Women's Center will offer ten workshops to targeted agencies, organizations, and individuals in the community who deal with teen dating violence as part of their profession on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services.

Outcome Objectives:

- 1.) By November 1, 2008, students who participated in Project Respect will have at least a 50% increase in knowledge in dating violence and healthy relationships.
- 2.) By November 1, 2008, participants in Project Respect will have at least a 25% decrease in psychological abuse and a 50% decrease in physical and sexual abuse.
- 3.) By December 1, 2007, all staff at New London High School will have participated in a four- hour workshop on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services.
- 4.) May 31, 2008, 15 students will have participated in the teen dating violence support group.
- 5.) By May 31, 2008, ten workshops on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services will be

offered to targeted agencies, organizations, and individuals in the community who deal with teen dating violence as part of their profession.

Project Respect Logic Model

Situation: Dating violence is a vast American Problem that crosses all socioeconomic boundaries.

Activities:	Outputs:	Initial Outcomes:
Educators will develop student curricula and assemble material	Educator will have quality, research-based curricula	Students will be provided with quality, research-based curricula
Educators will contact health teacher at New London High School	Ten, forty-five minute classes will be arranged for all freshmen	Students will be provided with education on dating relationships
Educators will provide ten, forty-five minute classes	Students will be provided with education on dating relationships	Students will have the opportunity to gain knowledge on dating relationships
Educators will develop, administer, and disseminate surveys to measure knowledge on dating violence and healthy relationships and prevalence of dating violence	Students' level of dating relationship knowledge and prevalence of dating violence will be measured	Efficacy of Project Respect will be determined

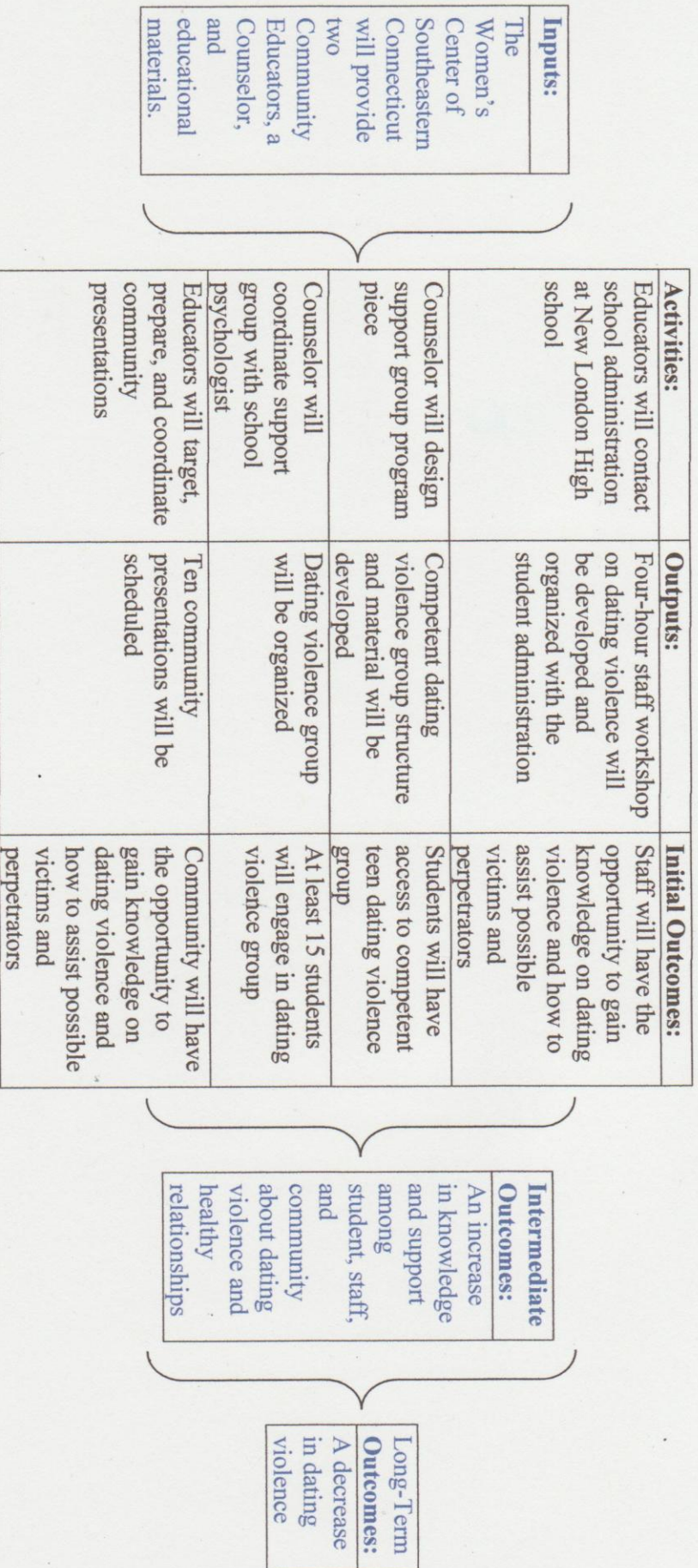
Inputs:
 The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut will provide two Community Educators, a Counselor, and educational materials.

Intermediate Outcomes:
 An increase in knowledge and support among student, staff, and community about dating violence and healthy relationships

Long-Term Outcomes:
 A decrease in dating violence

Project Respect Logic Model Continued

Situation: Dating violence is a vast American Problem that crosses all socioeconomic boundaries.



The Program:

Project Respect will serve as a pilot program with the hopes of further expansion. The program is a stratified approach to dealing with teen dating violence in New London through primary and secondary preventive measures. Primary preventive measures serve to prevent teen dating violence from occurring through increasing awareness of dating violence and healthy relationships through the education of New London High School freshmen students. Secondary preventive measures are designed to decrease teen dating violence already in occurrence by creating a school culture and community that is supportive and responsive to the needs of victims and perpetrators (Foshee et al., 1998).

All freshmen at New London High School will be offered Project Respect's educational component. New London was chosen because its home to the Women's Center's central office. There will be approximately 175 freshmen enrolled for the 2007-2008 school year who will receive the education. However, all 695 students at New London High School will have the opportunity to be impacted by Project Respect, as the dating violence support group will be open for their enrollment and all staff and targeted community members will be trained on how to handle dating violence cases (School Bug, n.d.).

The student education component will consist of ten, forty-five minute classes on dating violence and healthy relationships including, but not limited to: the definition of dating violence, warning signs of an abusive relationships, the media's impact on relationships, elements of a healthy relationship, such as setting, and respecting boundaries, communication, respect, equality, empathy. The goal of the education is to: help students identify qualities of abusive and healthy relationships, send a message to

those who may be abusive that abuse is not acceptable, and provide teens with skills on supporting friends who may be a victim or perpetrator of IPV. The Community Educators at the Women's Center will research and formulate curricula to encompass those topics by October 1, 2007. Students at New London High will have completed all classes by April 30, 2008.

The Community Educators of the Women's Center will also provide a four-hour workshop to all staff at New London High School on dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services. The Community Educators will contact the school administration by September 15, 2007 to set-up a date to meet, assess staff training needs, and set-up a date for the workshop. The Community Educators will develop a workshop based on staff needs. The workshop will be provided by December 1, 2007.

A weekly, open-ended, one and a half hour, support group for teen survivors of dating violence will be offered at New London High School by the Women's Center's Youth Counselor. The Counselor will contact the School Psychologist by September 15, 2007 and set-up a meeting to discuss: implementing the support group, safety concerns, recruiting group members, and anticipated student needs. With this information, the Counselor will develop a group program. Supervision of the Youth Counselor will be provided by the Women's Center's Assistant Director of Counseling. By November 1, 2007, the support group will be ready to commence. At least 15 students will participate in this group by May 31, 2008.

By May 31, 2008, the Community Educators at the Women's Center will offer ten community workshops on teen dating violence, healthy relationships, and how to support

and refer possible victims and perpetrators for services. The workshops will be targeted to agencies, organizations, and individuals in the community who deal with teen dating violence as part of their profession. Based on their expertise, the Community Educators will identify appropriate venues to target, including, but are not limited to: Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, New London Police Department, mental health professionals, social service providers, health-care professionals, and parents of students.

Evaluation Plan:

The Project Coordinator and Community Educator will be in charge of developing and implementing the evaluation plan. Project Respect will be evaluated on whether or not its main objectives, increasing student knowledge on dating violence and healthy relationships and decreasing dating violence, were realized. Efficacy of the program will be calculated and a formal report will be completed by December 1, 2008.

The Project Coordinator and Community Educator will begin researching measurement tools by September 1, 2007 and will have a completed instrument, collecting qualitative and quantitative data, by October 1, 2007. The instrument will be a survey designed to measure knowledge about dating violence and healthy relationships and the prevalence of teen dating violence. The survey will also elicit whether or not students were offered help from community members targeted by Project Respect, staff at New London High School educated through the program, or the Women's Center's dating violence support group –the three other components in teen dating violence prevention other than student education.

The survey will be offered to 100% of New London High School freshmen participating in Project Respect during their health classes. The survey will be

anonymous, voluntary, and administered with informed consent. This survey will be administered twice; the first implementation by November 1, 2007 before students participate in Project Respect and the second, by November 1, 2008, six months after students have participated in the program.

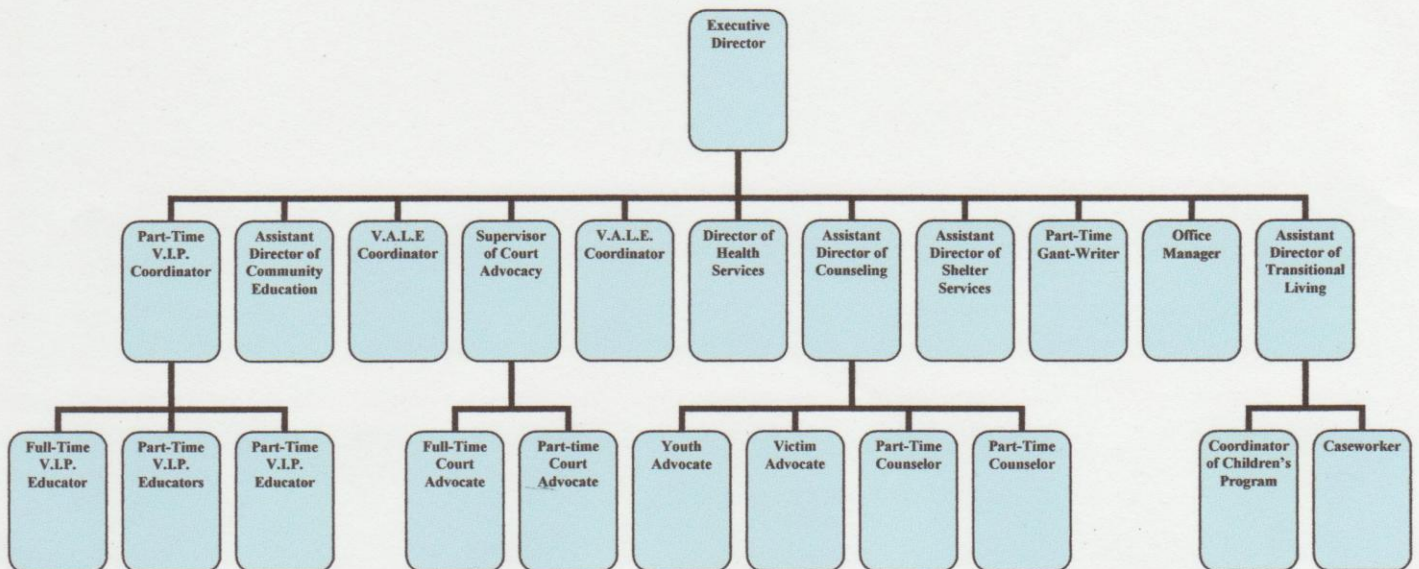
All surveys will be critically disseminated and a formal report will be prepared by December 1, 2008 reporting survey findings. The outcome goal for Project Respect is at least a 50% increase in knowledge of dating violence and healthy relationships among participating students and at least a 25% decrease in psychological abuse and a 50% decrease in physical and sexual abuse than prior to participating in Project Respect. The formal report will include strengths, as well as suggestions for improvement of the program and steps to continue the program in the future.

In addition to measuring student knowledge of dating violence and healthy relationships and prevalence of teen dating violence, the other three components of Project Respect will be monitored and evaluated. The Project Coordinator and Community Educator will be in charge of developing surveys, including qualitative and quantitative data, to garner feedback and suggestions for program improvement from participants in the community education and New London High School staff education. These surveys will be analyzed and implications drawn from them will be included in the formal report due December 1, 2008.

The Youth Counselor will be in charge of evaluating and monitoring the dating violence support group piece. The group will be evaluated through an anonymous, voluntary client survey, including quantitative and qualitative data, administered on the last day of group. The Counselor will critique the group with the Assistant Director of

Counseling at the Women's Center, and they will write a formal report of the strengths and areas for improvement of the group and submit such findings to the Project Coordinator for inclusion in Project Respect's final report.

The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut's Organizational Chart



Project Respect Budget Sheet

The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut

September 1, 2007-December 1, 2008

Proposed Amount: \$36,437

Personnel	Salaries	% of Time 15 Months	Total Cost
Project Coordinator	23616	25%	5904
Community Educator	20160	15%	3024
Youth Counselor	34944	16%	5591
Director of Finance	68000	2%	1375
<i>Total Salaries</i>	146720		15894
<i>Fringe Benefits FT 25%</i>	36680		3974
Operating Expenses			
Travel			175
Supplies			500
Total Program Cost			36437

Budget Justification

Salaries

Project Coordinator $\$16.40/\text{hr} \times 30\text{hrs/week} \times 48\text{ weeks} \times .25 =$ **5904**

The Project Coordinator will work 48 weeks out of the 15-month span of Project Respect. During each week, she will work 30 hours of which 25% of her time will be devoted to Project Respect. The Project Coordinator makes \$16.40/hour.

Community Educator $\$14/\text{hr} \times 30\text{hrs/week} \times 48\text{ weeks} \times .15 =$ **3024**

The Community Educator will also work 48 weeks of the 15-month span of Project Respect. During each week, he will work 30 hours of which 15% of his time will be devoted to Project Respect. The Community Educator makes \$14/hour.

Youth Counselor $\$15.60 \times 35\text{hrs/week} \times 64\text{ weeks} \times .16 =$ **5591**

The Youth Counselor works 35 hours a week year-round. She will work 64 weeks during Project Respect. The Youth Counselor makes \$15.60/hour.

Director of Finance $\$68,000/15\text{months} \times .02 =$ **1375**

The Director of Finance will make \$68,000 in the 15-month Project Respect time span. She will devote about 2% of her time to the program.

Benefits

Full-Time = 25% $\$15894 \times .25 =$ **3975**

Fringe benefits offered to full-time employees is 25% of their salaries. Fringe benefits include: sick time, vacation, and medical benefits.

Other Purchases

Travel **360 miles @ \$.485/mile** **175**

Mileage to school for education and support groups and community education is expected to be about 360-miles. Workers are compensated \$.485 per mile.

Supplies **500**

General offices and project supplies, such as curricula, videos, and handouts.

Total Program Cost **36437**

Organizational Capability Statement:

The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut is well suited to operate Project Respect. The agency's mission is, "to strive for a violence-free society by providing services to those affected by sexual assault and domestic violence. We implement our mission through community education, prevention programs, influencing public policy, and providing services to victims" (The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut, n.d., p.1). The Women's Center is a private, not for profit organization operating under a budget of \$1,300,699 for fiscal year 2006-2007. The agency receives funding from United Way, Department of Social Services, and other public and private entities.

Since 1976, The Women's Center has been serving the Southeastern Connecticut community; providing vital domestic violence and sexual assault services and developing creative and widely acclaimed initiatives. The Women's Center offers an emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children called Genesis House, has counseling and support group offices in Norwich and New London, and a hotline staffed 365 days a year, 24 hours per day. The agency also operates a transitional-living program, called Phoenix House, which consists of nine apartments, a child-care program, and case management services to aid in client empowerment. The center is the only domestic violence agency in Connecticut, and one of few in the country, to have an on staff nurse to provide medical assessments, connect clients with medical care, and provide education to the medical community. The agency operates one of only three Victim Advocate Law Enforcement (VALE) programs in the state at the Norwich Police Department, where a full time victim advocate provides intervention.

The center is dedicated to ending domestic violence and employs a full-time Assistant Director of Community Education who is responsible for all non-school based community education programs.

The Women's Center is home to the Violence is Preventable (V.I.P.) program; the largest school based program offered by a domestic violence agency in the state. V.I.P. is a five to sixteen lesson program that teaches non-violence skills, such as empathy, anger management, conflict resolution, communication, dating violence, sexual harassment/assault and healthy relationships to students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The V.I.P. program employs two full-time community educators and two to three part-time community educators throughout the school year. Anne Wernau, V.I.P. Coordinator, established V.I.P. as a pilot program in one school in 1992 and continues to work for the agency; her commitment and passion for the program enables its tremendous success. Since its establishment, the demand for V.I.P. has greatly increased to offer education to nineteen middle schools and ten high schools (not to mention many elementary schools) in Southeastern Connecticut.

Anne Wernau has fifteen years experience offering education to high school students on dating violence and healthy relationships and co-facilitates programs with Jason Robinson, who has been working for V.I.P. for three years. However, the high school program typically consists of five, forty-five minute classes on dating violence and healthy relationships. Project Respect hopes to grow this program with a more encompassing teen dating violence prevention program that includes greater education to students, school staff members, and the community that responds to dating violence. Anne Wernau will serve as Project Coordinator for Project Respect and Jason Robinson

will be the Community Educator. This dyad of experience, expertise, and commitment will be invaluable to the success of the program.

The Women's Center's has been providing crisis intervention with IPV for over thirty years and is well experienced and knowledgeable to operate a quality support group for students on dating violence at New London High School. Our Youth Advocate, Hilary Garrison Botsford, has been working with teen victims of dating violence for three years and has operated many support groups. In addition, if students need a more intensive intervention, it is advantageous to be served by a local agency, as help is more easily accessible.

The Director of Finance will be accountable for the fiscal part of Project Respect. Should the Community Educators or Youth Counselor need any sort of supplies, they must formally submit a check-request. The Director will ensure that funds are used proportionally and appropriately throughout the program.

Institutionalization:

Project Respect promises to have a bright future with the possibility of tremendous expansion. The nation has begun to recognize dating violence as a serious public health concern. Recognizing the value of dating violence and healthy relationships education, two states, Rhode Island and Texas, have even passed legislation making it mandatory part of student curricula. This year, The Lindsay Ann Burke Act passed in Rhode Island the very first year the bill was introduced to the legislature. This Act requires all students in grades seven through twelfth to have annual education on dating violence and healthy relationships, as well as school staff to have training and a policy to handle cases of dating violence (A. Burke, personal communication, July 31,

2007). The Women's Center, along with affiliated domestic violence organization, plans to initiate similar legislation over the next year for the state of Connecticut. If passed, the law would make many of the initiatives of Project Respect mandatory for all students. Perhaps if legislation required such a program, schools and the state may be more willing to fiscally support Project Respect.

The Women's Center will vigorously search-out continued methods for funding and operating Project Respect. Some initiative for expansion could include partnering with other agencies and empowering school systems by providing education to teachers on how to implement Project Respect within their own school system; freeing-up the time of Women's Center staff and allowing for more schools to be impacted. Safe Dates (Foshee et al., 1998), used such a tactic to implement their program in seven schools through educating 16 teachers with a 20-hour course.

Project Respect will prove invaluable to our schools and community. Our youth deserve to live without the pervasive threat of violence and its devastating consequences. Through hard work, collaboration, and a positive spirit we can end dating violence in our community and provide relationships for our youth where they can expect respect.

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