

Mentoring, leadership program key to ending bullying in at-risk teen girls

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New research from experts within the University of Minnesota School of Nursing has found teen girls at high risk for pregnancy reported being significantly less likely to participate in social bullying after participating in an 18-month preventive intervention program.

This research, in combination with University of Minnesota School of Nursing research findings from March 2013, demonstrate the preventative intervention program can reduce social bullying among all [girls](#), including those who did and did not have strong family ties. Furthermore, girls in the intervention program were significantly more likely to enroll in college or technical school, actions that reduce the risk for involvement in serious violence during [early adulthood](#).

The latest findings were recently published in the journal *Prevention Science*.

To evaluate the approach, the intervention program Prime Time was offered alongside primary care clinical services. The program provided 13 to 17-year-old girls at high risk for [teen pregnancy](#) with one-on-one mentoring and peer leadership opportunities in an effort to reduce bullying and other risky behaviors.

After 18 months of participation in the program, girls self-reported a significant decline in the amount they bullied others via [relational aggression](#) – a social form of bullying including gossip, rumors and ostracism that aims to damage the self-esteem or social status of a peer.

"These findings suggest that building supportive relationships with adults, peers and family members contributes to reductions in bullying and other [risky behaviors](#) among [adolescent girls](#) at risk for involvement in violence," said study lead author Renee Sieving, Ph.D., R.N., F.S.A.H.M., an associate professor with the University of Minnesota School of Nursing's Center for

Adolescent Nursing and adjunct associate professor in the university's Department of Pediatrics.

A 2010 statewide survey of Minnesota youth found 42 percent of ninth grade girls and 28 percent of twelfth grade girls reported teasing or making fun of another student in a hurtful way within the past 30 days. Nationally, a 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found approximately 22 percent of female high school students reported being bullied on school property within the past year.

Bullying and violence among girls are linked to a range of poor physical and mental health outcomes. In 2011, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies issued a call for better clinical screening and counseling for interpersonal violence with both adolescent and adult women.

"There is a startling lack of evidence in the scientific community about effective approaches to preventing bullying and violence among girls," said Sieving. "This preventative intervention program, which employs a dual approach of addressing risks while building protective factors that buffer girls from involvement in [bullying](#) and violence, holds great promise in preventing [violence](#) among girls."

Provided by University of Minnesota

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