



Teen Dating Violence, Technology, and AI

Growing up online: how technology and AI are reshaping abuse in teen relationships

Teen dating violence has long been a focus of prevention, and proven school-based programs exist. But teens now date, argue, and break up through their phones, and many turn to AI chatbots for relationship advice. Abuse follows them there: monitoring, threats, and intimate images shared without consent, or now fabricated with AI. This study measures how technology and AI are changing abuse in teen relationships so that prevention programs can keep pace.

PARTNER WITH US

Purple Cactus is seeking foundation, corporate, and individual partners to fund this study. Contact grants@purplecactus.org to request the full prospectus and budget.

THE PROBLEM

10.4% / 5.9%

of U.S. high school students who dated experienced physical / sexual dating violence in the past year
CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2023 (via OJJDP, 2025)

36.9%

of adolescents reported cyber dating abuse victimization (pooled estimate, meta-analysis of international studies)
Li et al., 2023, Computers in Human Behavior

43% / 19%

of U.S. high school students say they or a friend used AI for relationship advice / to have a romantic relationship (2024–25)
Center for Democracy & Technology, Hand in Hand (2025)

National surveillance tracks physical and sexual dating violence but not technology-facilitated abuse, and recent national surveys on teens and AI were not designed to measure abuse by a dating partner. Schools lag too: only 11% of high school students say their school told them who to tell about deepfake intimate images (CDT, 2025).

WHAT WE WANT TO LEARN

- How common are technology-facilitated and AI-enabled abuse behaviors — monitoring, threats, impersonation, sextortion, and AI-generated intimate images — in teen relationships, and how do they connect to in-person abuse?
- When abuse happens, where do teens turn — friends, trusted adults, hotlines, or AI chatbots — and what happens after they disclose?
- Which prevention and school-response approaches reduce technology-facilitated dating abuse, and what must existing curricula add to address AI?

APPROACH

- **School and community survey.** Survey teens ages 13–18 through three to five partner school districts and youth programs in two waves, 12 months apart, with parental permission and teen assent for minors, and IRB oversight.
- **Youth voice.** Focus groups and interviews with teens, guided by a youth advisory group that reviews study materials and findings before they are used or released.
- **Prevention co-design.** Review how existing prevention curricula and school policies address technology and AI, then co-design and pilot a technology and AI module with partner sites.

WHAT THE STUDY WILL PRODUCE

- Current estimates of technology-facilitated and AI-enabled abuse in teen relationships, measured directly rather than inferred
- A piloted technology and AI module that existing teen dating violence prevention programs can adopt
- Response guidance for schools and advocates on disclosures, AI-generated intimate images, and telling teens where to report

WHY PURPLE CACTUS

Purple Cactus exists to unite the criminal and social justice systems by directing philanthropic resources toward evidence-based programs that keep survivors safe, hold abusers accountable, and build stronger communities. Every dollar given will be traceable to a real outcome: each campaign will publish its goal and funds raised, granted, and available, and every grantee will report outcomes through our portal.

FUNDING REQUEST \$1.4M – \$2.1M · 30 months

Estimated scope: research staff and fringe, 3–5 school and youth-program partners, 600–900 teens in two survey waves, incentives, IRB and parental permission, focus groups, module pilot, dissemination, 15% indirect. Upper range adds a fifth site, a larger cohort, and a third survey wave.

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