



Evaluation of the “Healthy Relationship Groups” Program: Spring 2025

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Background

The Youth Healthy Relationship Groups (HRG) is a teen dating violence prevention program facilitated by Voices of Hope in Lincoln Public Schools. HRG is an 8-week, school-based program designed for middle school and high school students to learn more about healthy and unhealthy relationships, practice setting boundaries, and know how to seek help. Each week includes both an educational topic and an interactive activity, creating a supportive space for reflection and skill-building. By focusing on early education and skill development, the group aims to prevent dating violence, bullying, and unhealthy relationship patterns. Groups are confidential, trauma-informed, and engaging.

Group topics include:

- Dating Violence – recognizing warning signs and patterns of control
- Sexual Assault & Consent – understanding rights, safety planning, and supporting survivors
- Power & Control – identifying different forms of abuse and real-life examples
- Digital Abuse – establishing tech safety and online boundaries
- Boundaries & Communication – practicing healthy dialogue and respect
- Emotions & Coping – building emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills
- Healthy Relationships – exploring equality, respect, and personal values
- Real-Life Application – applying skills to bystander intervention and peer support

Survey, Data, and Sample

In Spring 2025, Voices of Hope adopted a pre- and post-intervention survey to assess change in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. This report summarizes the results of the survey data from students who participated in HRG and completed pre- and/or post-intervention surveys.

In total, 111 students participated in HRG in Spring 2025. Of these 111 students, 37 students (33.3% response rate) completed the pre-HRG survey, and 22 students (19.8% response rate) completed the post-HRG Survey. Among the 37 students who completed the pre-HRG survey, the highest concentration of students was in 9th grade (32.4%), then 10th grade (27.0%), 11th grade (21.6%), and 12th grade (18.9%) (see Table 1). Most were from Lincoln Southwest High School (37.8%) and Lincoln High (32.4%) compared to Lincoln Northeast High School (16.2%) or Lincoln Northwest High School (13.5%). Regarding student demographics, most were female (64.9%) and identified as White (51.4%) or multiracial (29.7%). In comparison, among the 22 students who completed the post-HRG survey, the highest concentration of students was in 9th grade (36.4%), then 11th grade (27.3%), and 12th grade (27.3%); only 9.1% were in 10th grade. Again, most were from Lincoln Southwest High School (50.0%) and Lincoln High (27.3%) compared to Lincoln Northeast High School (22.7%); no post-survey respondents attended Lincoln Northwest High School. Regarding student demographics, most post-survey respondents were male (54.5%) and identified as White (59.1%) or multiracial (31.8%). The details of the descriptive data can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Pre-HRG Survey (n = 37)	Post-HRG Survey (n = 22)	Pre-and Post- HRG Survey (n = 20)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
<i>Grade</i>			
9th	12 (32.4%)	8 (36.4%)	8 (40.0%)
10th	10 (27.0%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (10.0%)
11th	8 (21.6%)	6 (27.3%)	5 (25.0%)
12th	7 (18.9%)	6 (27.3%)	5 (25.0%)
<i>School</i>			
Lincoln High	12 (32.4%)	6 (27.3%)	6 (30.0%)
Lincoln Northeast	6 (16.2%)	5 (22.7%)	3 (15.0%)
Lincoln Northwest	5 (13.5%)	0	0
Lincoln Southwest	14 (37.8%)	11 (50.0%)	11 (55.0%)
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	24 (64.9%)	10 (45.5%)	8 (40.0%)
Male	12 (32.4%)	12 (54.5%)	12 (60.0%)
Non-binary	1 (2.7%)	0	0
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
Asian	1 (2.7%)	0	0
Middle Eastern or North African	1 (2.7%)	0	0
Black/African American	2 (5.4%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (5.0%)
Hispanic/Latino	3 (8.1%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (5.0%)
White	19 (51.4%)	13 (59.1%)	11 (55.0%)
Multi-racial	11 (29.7%)	7 (31.8%)	7 (35.0%)

Twenty (20) students submitted both a pre- and post-survey (18.0% response rate). Tables 2 presents the average (mean) scores and standard deviations for a series of questions on the pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys; mean scores are also presented visually as bar charts in Figures 1-3. **Due to the small sample size and differences in the participants responding to the pre- versus post-intervention surveys, no tests of statistical differences from pre-to-post intervention were estimated.**

Survey Findings

First, participants were asked five questions related to relationship behaviors including, “I can set boundaries in relationships,” “People can choose how they respond to anger,” “It is important to ask a date for verbal consent before doing anything sexual,” “There is not much I can do about dating violence or sexual assault at school,” and “I have at least two trusted adults to talk with about DV or sexual assault”. Students answered from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (See Table 2 and Figure 1 below). For four of these question, the group average score was $M = 3.5+$ (agree/strongly agree) both before and after the intervention. For the question, “There is not much I can do about dating violence or sexual assault at school,” pre-intervention, the group average score was $M = 2.53$ (neither agree nor disagree); however, after the intervention, the group average score was $M = 2.42$ (disagree) **representing change in the expected direction after the HRG intervention.**

The next set of questions asked respondents to rate the seriousness of dating abuse behaviors. Questions included, when someone... “physically hurts the person they are dating,” “puts down the person they are dating,” “tells the person they are dating they cannot do things,” and “pressures the person they are dating to share phone content”. Students answered from 1 = not serious at all to 5 = very serious (See Table 2 and Figure 2 below). For **three of these question, the group average score was $M = 3.0+$ (pretty serious) both before and after the intervention.** For the question, when someone “physically hurts the person they are dating,” pre-intervention, the group average score was $M = 3.5$ (very serious) compared to $M = 3.30$ (pretty serious) after the intervention. This change was not expected given the HRG intervention and shows there is room for improvement regarding teaching healthy relationship behaviors among HRG participants.

Participants were then asked whether sexual assault and dating was a problem at their school. These questions were reverse coded (I do NOT think sexual assault is a problem at our school; I do NOT think dating violence is a problem at our school; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) (See Table 2 and Figure 3 below). **The group average for sexual assault was 2.00+ (disagree) bother before and after the intervention and 2.5+ (neither agree nor disagree) for dating violence both before and after the intervention.** Results show there is room for improvement regarding raising awareness about dating violence among peers/at school among HRG participants.

Lastly, the participants were asked about engaging in bystander behaviors including “Talking to a friend who is being physically hurt by a dating partner,” “Getting help for a friend who has been abused by a dating partner,” and “Talking with friends about what to do to keep safe from dating abuse or unwanted sexual activity”. Students were asked how many times they had done each of these behaviors in the past 3 months before and after HRG. The group average for “Talk to a friend who is being physically hurt by a dating partner “ was 1-2 times before HRG

and 0 times after HRG, 0 times for “Get help for a friend who has been abused by a dating partner” both pre- and post-HRG, and 1-2 times for “Talk with friends about what to do to keep safe from dating abuse or unwanted sexual activity,” both pre- and post HRG. Results show there is room for improvement regarding bystander behavior engagement among HRG participants.

Table 2. Mean Scores from Pre- and Post-intervention Surveys (n = 20)

	<i>n</i>	Pre-HRG Average (SD)	Post-HRG Average (SD)
<i>How much do you agree that...</i>	<i>Range: (1) Strongly Disagree – (5) Strongly Agree</i>		
I can set boundaries in relationship	20	3.85 (0.75) <i>Agree</i>	3.60 (0.75) <i>Agree</i>
People can choose how they respond to anger	20	4.10 (0.64) <i>Agree</i>	3.95 (0.83) <i>Agree</i>
Important to ask a date for verbal consent	20	4.65 (0.59) <i>Strongly Agree</i>	4.75 (0.55) <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Not much I can do about dating violence or sexual assault at school	19	2.53 (0.84) <i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	2.42 (0.84) <i>Disagree</i>
Have at least two trusted adults to talk with about DV or sexual assault	20	3.70 (0.87) <i>Agree</i>	4.00 (0.80) <i>Agree</i>
<i>How Serious is it when...</i>	<i>Range: (1) Not Serious at All – (4) Very Serious</i>		
Someone physically hurts the person they are dating	20	3.50 (0.76) <i>Very Serious</i>	3.30 (1.03) <i>Pretty Serious</i>
Someone puts down or insults the person they are dating	20	3.20 (0.70) <i>Pretty Serious</i>	3.15 (0.99) <i>Pretty Serious</i>
Someone tells the person they are dating they cannot do things	19	2.63 (0.96) <i>Pretty Serious</i>	2.95 (0.97) <i>Pretty Serious</i>
Someone pressures the person they are dating to share phone content	20	3.15 (0.81) <i>Pretty Serious</i>	2.80 (0.89) <i>Pretty Serious</i>
<i>Issues among people at our school</i>	<i>Range: (1) Strongly Disagree – (5) Strongly Agree</i>		
Do NOT think sexual assault is a problem at our school	19	2.32 (1.11) <i>Disagree</i>	2.32 (1.11) <i>Disagree</i>
Do NOT think dating violence is a problem at our school	19	2.63 (0.90) <i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	2.63 (1.12) <i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>
<i>In the past 3 months, how often did you...</i>	<i>Range: (0) 0 times – (4) 10 or more times</i>		
Talk to a friend who is being physically hurt by a dating partner	14	0.79 (1.31) <i>1-2 times</i>	0.14 (0.37) <i>0 times</i>
Get help for a friend who has been abused by a dating partner	14	0.43 (0.94) <i>0 times</i>	0.14 (0.36) <i>0 times</i>
Talk with friends about what to do to keep safe from dating abuse or unwanted sexual activity	15	1.07 (1.16) <i>1-2 times</i>	0.73 (1.16) <i>1-2 times</i>
NOTE: HRG = Healthy Relationship Groups; Of the 111 students who participated in HRG in Lincoln Public Schools, 20 students submitted both a pre- and post-survey (18.0% response rate).			

Figure 1. Mean Scores for Relationship Behaviors Questions for Participants in the Healthy Relationship Groups Program Pre- and Post-Intervention ($n = 20$).

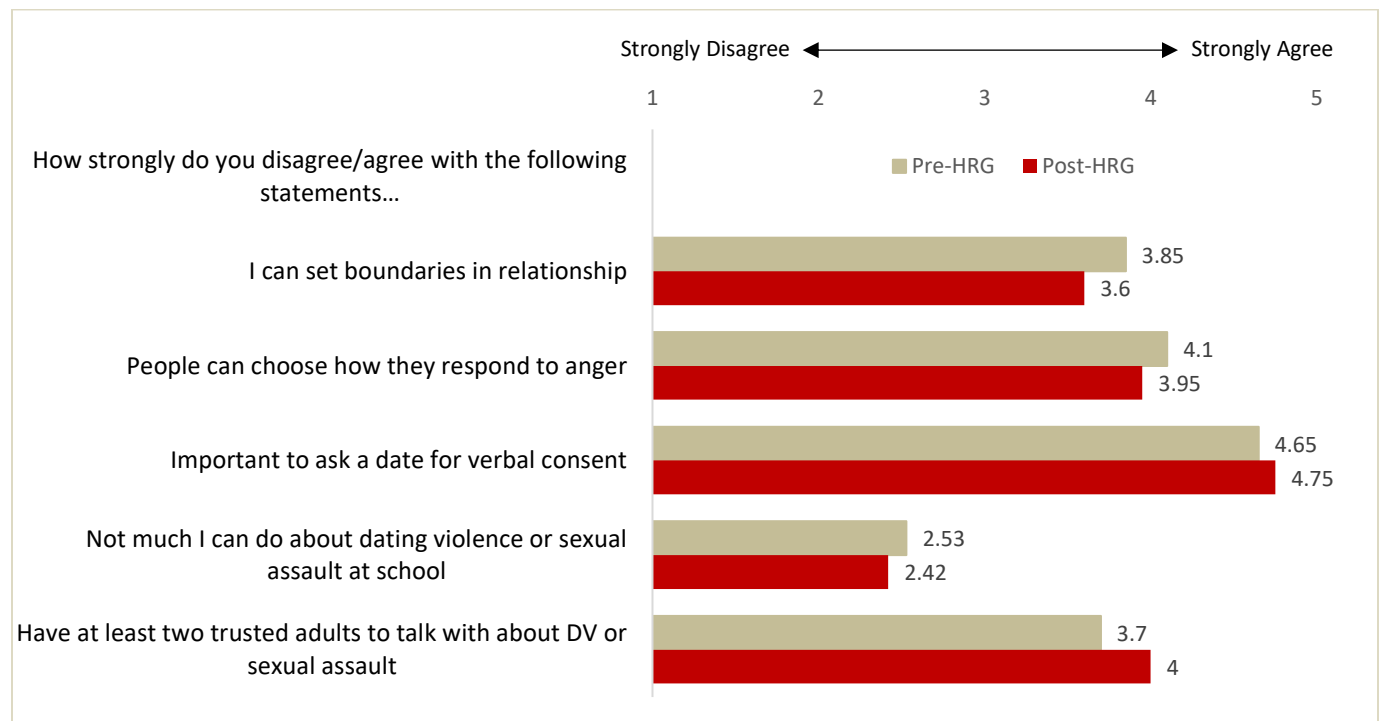


Figure 2. Mean Scores for Seriousness of Relationship Behaviors Questions for Participants in the Healthy Relationship Groups Program Pre- and Post-Intervention ($n = 20$).

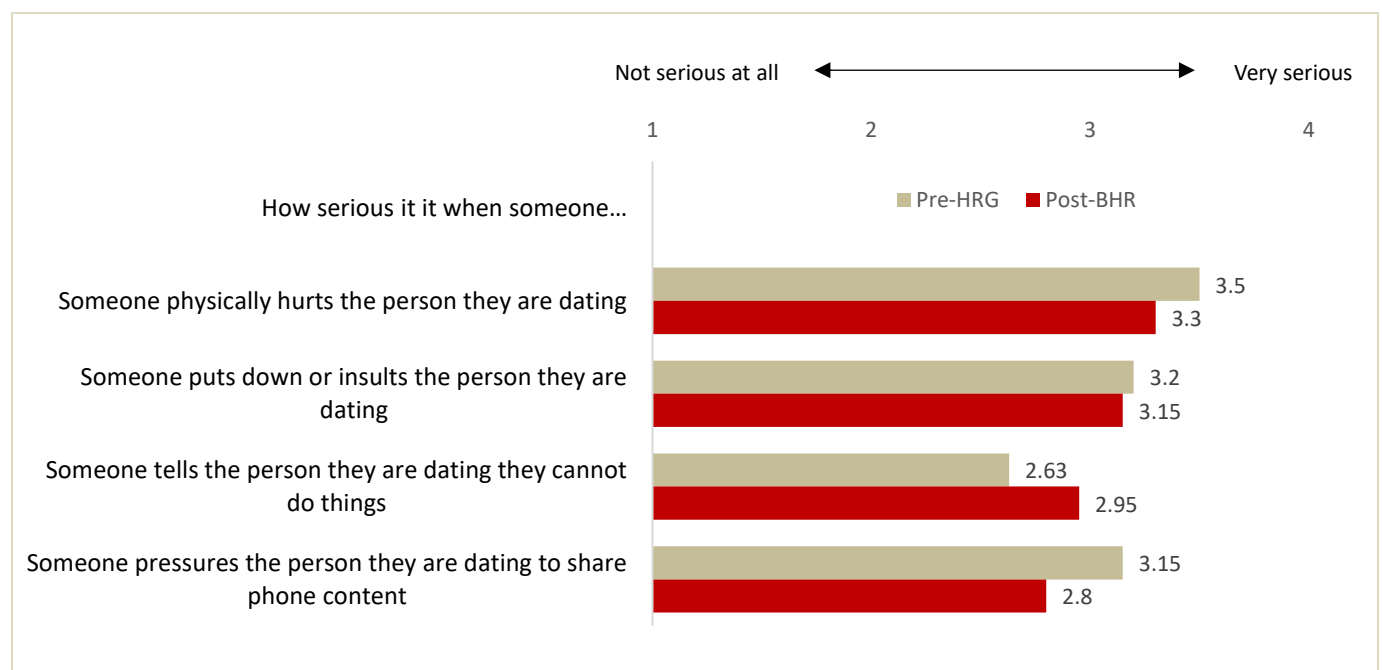
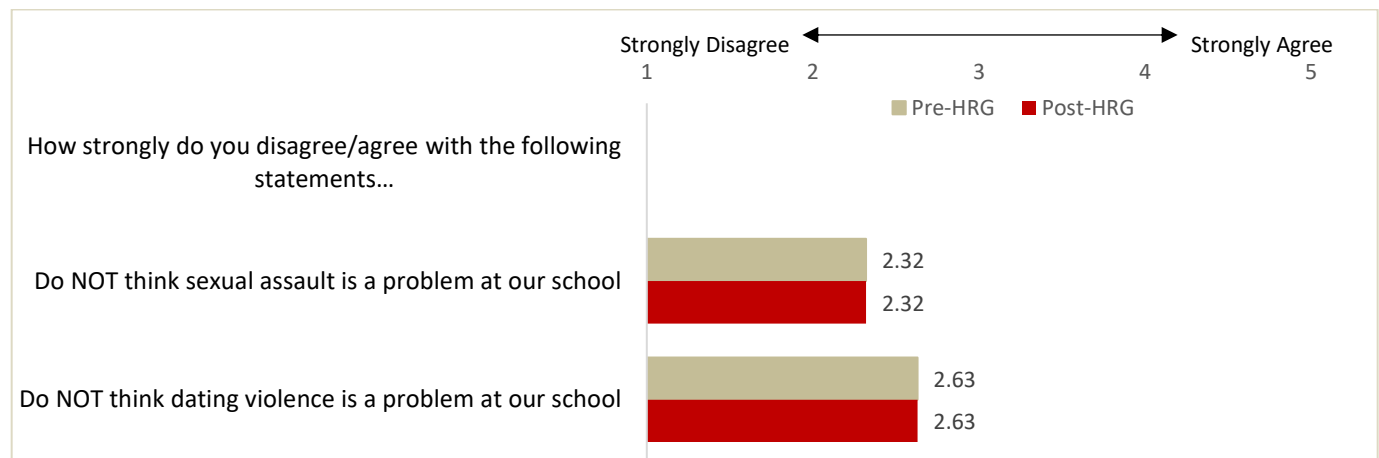


Figure 3. Mean Scores for Awareness of SA and DV Questions for Participants in the Healthy Relationship Groups Program Pre- and Post-Intervention (n = 19).



Qualitative Data and Findings

In addition to the surveys, group facilitators from VOH identified qualitative **challenges** and **successes** over the 8 week period. Regarding **challenges**, facilitators noted that some students:

- Face challenges with reading comprehension, making it harder to engage fully with written materials.
- Attend groups (and school) inconsistently (e.g., students experiencing instability at home or child welfare and/or juvenile justice system involvement, which limit continuity and completion of the material and group cohesion.
- Hold cultural beliefs and norms around relationships that conflict with discussions of consent and equality, requiring sensitive, ongoing dialogue to bridge understanding.
- Have language barriers can make it difficult for some students to express themselves or access the full depth of the material.

Additionally, several participants are currently living in homes where violence is present, which can make learning about healthy relationships both activating and complex.

Regarding **successes**, facilitators noted that some students:

- shared reflections on how they want to raise their children differently—modeling healthier communication and boundaries.
- ask insightful questions about behaviors in their current relationships, showing increased awareness and a willingness to challenge “just the way it is.”
- discuss how to use tools from group in everyday relationships with friends, teachers, teammates, and other trusted adults, expanding the impact beyond dating contexts.
- learn to recognize how “normal” behaviors—like location tracking, constant messaging, or online control—can be unhealthy.

Finally, the group has also become a meaningful source of connection. Students who have experienced violence report feeling less isolated, more understood, and supported by peers. Having a nonjudgmental, trauma-informed environment and an additional trusted adult who listens and believes them has been deeply impactful.

Next Steps

In response to the challenges and the needs identified through group facilitation, several program adjustments have been implemented. First, new reflective techniques have been incorporated to meet diverse learning styles and emotional needs, including journaling, art-based activities, and paired discussions. In addition, facilitators now offer one-on-one sessions for students who need additional time and support to process material outside of the group setting. Further, a facilitator guide for pre- and post-surveys has been developed to ensure consistency, accessibility, and support during the data collection process. The guide includes examples of potential responses and talking points to help students better understand the purpose of each question. These updates strengthen the program's trauma-informed approach and enhance engagement, reflection, and learning outcomes for all participants.

Conclusion

These ongoing adaptations continue to center youth voices, build trust, and strengthen prevention efforts across partner schools—creating safer spaces where students can learn, reflect, and practice healthy relationship skills that last well beyond the group setting.