

# Dating Violence, Psychological Distress, and Attempted Suicide among Female Adolescents in the Juvenile Justice System

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## Abstract

The prevalence of mental illness and suicide among female adolescents involved with the juvenile justice system is alarmingly high and there is a need to identify risk factors that may be amenable to intervention. This study examined the independent association between dating violence and poor mental health (psychological distress and attempted suicide) among 305 female adolescents involved with the juvenile justice system in Nevada. Overall, 28% of the sample met the criteria for clinically significant psychological distress and 18% had attempted suicide with intent to die. After controlling for well-established risk factors such as sexual orientation, childhood abuse, and substance abuse, dating violence remained independently associated with psychological distress and attempted suicide. These findings suggest that mental health programming for this population may be more effective if it includes a focus on dating violence.