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Report: Few states responding to teen dating violence

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Report focuses on ease with which teens can obtain protective orders
- New Hampshire is only state that allows minors to apply for a protection order
- Nine states let minors obtain orders without adult approval under certain criteria
- One in five teens who've been in a "serious relationship" report being hit by partner

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LOS ANGELES, California (CNN) -- Only a few states have laws that adequately equip teen victims of dating violence with tools for protection and safety, according to a new report from a watchdog group.



Twenty-three states received sub-par grades in a report focusing on state laws focusing on protective orders.

The report by Los Angeles, California-based Break the Cycle includes state-by-state report cards that measure how each state treats teen victims of dating violence in comparison with the treatment of adult domestic violence victims.

Only five states -- California, Illinois, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Oklahoma -- received As, while nine states received B's. Twenty-three states received sub-par grades, including 11 getting Fs.

"I think what the state report cards are telling us is that states have a long way to go before they are protecting minors in abusive relationships," Marjorie Gilberg, Break the Cycle's executive director, told CNN Radio.

The report focuses on how easy it is for a teen to obtain a protective order in the event of **abuse**,

including whether state law allows a minor to take out an order, if adult permission is required and whether an order can be issued against another minor.

New Hampshire, which got an A, is the only state where the law specifically allows minors to apply for a protection order, according to the report. Missouri, which got an F, makes such orders available only to adults. [See how the different states scored »](#)

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Nine states allow minors to obtain protective orders without adult approval if they meet certain criteria, such as being a minimum age, often 16, or having a specific relationship with the abuser, such as having a child together.

"What we hope to achieve with this is to call out the states that are not doing a good job protecting minors and help people in those states call on their legislators to make change," Gilberg said.

One in five teens who have been in a "serious relationship" report being hit, slapped or pushed by a partner, according to the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. One in three girls who have been in such a relationship say they've been concerned about being physically hurt by their partner.

Gilberg said that since the 2008 report cards came out, several states worked to change their laws to address the rights of minor victims in domestic violence statutes, though some were more successful than others. This year's report noted that eight states improved their grades.

Among them, Florida jumped from a D to a B for making protective orders "relatively accessible" to teen victims without an adult's approval if they are dating the abuser. The process was described as "extremely difficult" the previous year because state law did not specify whether a minor could petition for one alone.

"Even when you have an A grade," Gilberg said, "you still can do things to make the law more protective of minors who are in teen dating violence relationships." [E-mail to a friend](#) [Share](#)

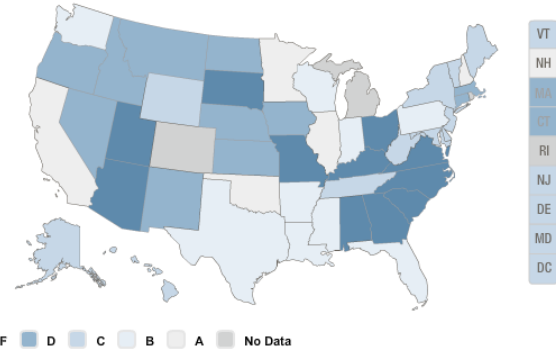
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Grading states on protecting teens

To determine grades, Break the Cycle assigned point values based on whether a state's statute language was helpful or harmful in the protection of minors. Totals were converted to percentages: 81 percent or better earned an "A"; 54 percent or lower earned an "F."



Source: Break the Cycle

The story

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