These continuums describe a range of violence (including physical, sexual, and emotional) that occurs within many intimate relationships. Not every relationship in which dating violence exists will look like the range of examples listed in the continuums, but continuums can be a very useful tool for assessing the danger in those relationships where the violence is getting more extreme. Continuums also serve as a useful tool for helping all of us to understand the realities of violence in intimate relationships.

In order to use the continuums effectively, be aware of the following:

• The violence continuums describe the range of violence that often occurs. It is also likely that violence will escalate in frequency and intensity over time.

• Physical, sexual and emotional violence work hand in hand to keep the perpetrator in control.

• The acts of violence described are conscious acts of control, and while there will probably be many similarities in experiences, there may be as many differences.

• The progression of violence will only stop when the abusive person makes a conscious choice to stop the behavior. This may happen when the person who has been abused is no longer accessible (e.g. leaves the relationship or transfers to a different school).

• The behaviors on these continuums do not always occur in the order in which they are listed on the continuum. Nor does this order rank the severity of these behaviors. There is no right or wrong order.

Note: If the abusive person has chosen not to stop the abusive behavior, the violence may escalate when the abused person takes action to stop the violence, such as leaving the relationship or getting outside assistance, (such as from a friend of professional).
Physical Abuse Continuum

- Pinch / Squeeze
- Push / Shove
- Shake / Jerk
- Slap
- Bite
- Push / Shake / Slap that bruises
- Punch / Hit
- Kick
- Choke
- Throwing objects
- Targeted physical blows to specific parts of the body
- Use of household objects as weapons
- Throwing person
- Restraining and physical blows
- Abuse that requires medical treatment
- Abuse that results in lacerations, broken bones, internal injuries, or miscarriage
- Use of conventional weapons
- Abuse that leads to disfigurement or disability
- Murder
HANDOUT...
Emotional and Psychological Abuse Continuum

• Joking about habits / making insults
• Ignoring partner’s feelings
• Withholding approval as punishment
• Yelling
• Name-calling
• Calling partner a “sell-out”
• Repeated insults / labeling
• Threatening to “out” partner
• Humiliation in private
• Ridiculing partner’s gender identity
• Humiliation in public
• Blaming partner for all faults
• Threats of violence / retaliation
• Putting down partner’s abilities to act on own behalf
• Hiding/destroying partner’s adaptive equipment
• Demanding all of partner’s attention / restricting contact with others
• Unpredictable consequences of actions
• Attacking sense of reality
• Murder
HANDOUT...
Sexual Abuse Continuum

• Sexist jokes
• Sexual objectification
• Jealousy
• Minimizing partner’s feelings and needs regarding sex
• Criticizing partner sexually
• Unwanted touch
• Withholding sex and affection
• Sexual labels like “whore” or “frigid”
• Always demanding sex
• Forcing partner to commit humiliating sexual acts
• Cheating
• Forcing partner to watch sexual acts with others
• Demanding sex with threats
• Forcing sex
• Forcing sex with others
• Forcing uncomfortable sex
• Forcing sex after beatings
• Sadism
• Murder