

# WHAT PARENTS, TEACHERS & THE COMMUNITY NEED TO KNOW

Teenagers often experience abuse and violence in dating relationships. In dating violence, one partner tries to maintain power and control over the other through abusive actions. Statistics show that 1 in 3 teenagers have experienced or will experience violence in a dating relationship. Forty percent of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 say they know someone their age that has been hit or beaten by a partner. Dating violence can happen at any age and to either gender. It can also occur in all cultures and at any socioeconomic level.

Teen dating violence is often hidden for many reasons. One reason is teens may not realize they are in an abusive situation because they are inexperienced with dating relationships. Another reason is that often times teenagers do not know how to communicate the abuse to their parents and/or teachers. If a teen discloses, it is often to a trusted friend.

*Statistics provided by Liz Claiborne, Inc TRU 2006*

## WARNING SIGNS THAT A TEEN MAY BE EXPERIENCING DATING VIOLENCE:

- Physical signs of injury such as scratches, bruises, cuts or broken bones
- Falling grades, dropping out of school activities or school
- Avoids friends/isolating behaviors
- Being anxious or depressed, acting out, being secretive or afraid
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Difficulty in making decisions and having confidence in his/her choices
- Constantly thinking about partner
- Makes excuses or apologizes for partner's behavior
- Pregnancy
- Poor self image, as reflected in choice of clothing, overall appearance, cleanliness
- Sense of worthlessness
- Feelings of loneliness
- Suicidal thoughts/attempts
- Inability to concentrate, especially in school
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Lack of trust in relationships
- Excessive daydreaming/fantasizing
- Detached from others
- Multiple personalities, psychosis
- Fear of being alone with adults
- Marked behavior changes
- Excessive sensitivity about physical contact, bathing, undressing, being seen nude, etc.
- Attention getting behavior, including inappropriate or regressive behavior.
- Passive/withdrawn extreme in behavior
- Aggressive/disruptive
- Non-participation in school and social activities
- Over compliance/under compliance
- Physical abuse including self-inflicted or inflicted by others
- Chronic runaway
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Isolation from peers including rejection by/of others, limited involvement with peers
- Difficulty making friends
- Truancy, or, conversely, arriving early and leaving school late with low, if any, absences
- Over achievement
- Encopresis (fecal soiling) and/or enuresis (urination on clothing or bedding)
- Yeast infections
- STD's
- Self-mutilation
- Unexplained abdominal pain, increase in physical complaints (headache, stomachache, etc)
- Headache
- Self-destructive behavior

## WARNING SIGNS THAT A TEEN MAY BECOME VIOLENT/ABUSIVE:

- Quick to get involved in a dating relationship
- Constantly call, text, e-mail or send instant messages (including abusing Facebook or MySpace)
- Verbally abusive, calls his/her partner names and criticizes his/her partner frequently
- Does not care about his/her partner's feelings and will not take "no" for an answer
- Controlling or bossy behavior
- Believes in rigid sex roles and gender expectations
- Demands to know where his/her partner is and who he/she is with at all times
- Extremely jealous
- Isolates his/her partner from friends and family or from the things he/she enjoys doing
- Behaves selfishly
- Has explosive anger or displays unpredictable mood swings
- Threatens violence
- Cruel to animals or bullies other kids
- Uses force during an argument
- Uses force, intimidation or threatens his/her partner to engage in sexual activity
- Blames his/her partner for their negative behavior or for what is wrong
- Makes false promises
- Uses alcohol or drugs
- Has a history of unhealthy relationships
- Makes his/her partner afraid to end the relationship
- Does not respect his/her partner's privacy or property

# ORDERS OF PROTECTION

If you suspect a teen may be involved in an abusive dating relationship, it is important to start the dialogue with the teen. Do not be upset if the teen feels more comfortable talking with a relative, trusted family friend, teacher or counselor. It is important how you respond to help him/her feel safe, be safe and start the healing process. Remain calm, avoid being judgmental, never blame the teen and listen.

Dating violence victims may face a number of obstacles when seeking assistance. Although most communities support and respond to domestic or intimate partner violence, dating violence victims are often not adequately supported by service delivery systems. For teens and young adults, the only available help may be adult-focused services that teens are unlikely to find accessible or friendly. Few domestic violence shelters accept teens (as the primary victims), and parental consent laws complicate delivery of medical, mental health, and other services. Teens may be concerned about privacy and confidentiality. If their states have mandatory reporting requirements, teens may be discouraged from seeking help.

Nineteen states and the District of Columbia allow teen victims of dating violence to petition the court for a protection order without representation by a parent, or legal or appointed guardian. Illinois is one of ten states that gives the judge discretion to decide whether a teen can file for a protection order on their own.

*National Center for Victims of Crime ©2005*

## ACCESS TO PROTECTION ORDERS

Protection orders are civil court orders that a victim can request from the court to get protection from an abuser. The protection order can order an abuser to stop harming the victim, stop having contact with the victim, or stop contacting the victim at work or school.

## TYPES OF ILLINOIS ORDERS OF PROTECTION AND NO CONTACT ORDERS

	Domestic Violence Order of Protection	Sexual Assault Civil No Contact Order	Stalking No Contact Order
<b>Who is eligible for these protections</b>	<p>Family or household members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Related by blood, or by current or former marriage</li> <li>• Share or formerly shared a common dwelling (home)</li> <li>• Have or allegedly have a child in common</li> <li>• Share or allegedly share a blood relationship through a child</li> <li>• Have or had a dating or engagement relationship</li> <li>• High risk adult with disabilities who is abused by a family member or care-giver</li> </ul>	<p>Any person who is a victim of non-consensual sexual conduct or sexual penetration can petition for this order.</p> <p>The following people also can be protected by this order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family or household member of that victim</li> <li>• Rape crisis center employees and volunteers</li> </ul>	<p>Any person who is the victim of a course of conduct which causes that victim to fear for his or her safety or the safety of another person, or to suffer emotional distress, and relief is not available to the victim under the Illinois Domestic Violence Act or from a Sexual Assault Civil No Contact Order.</p>
<b>Remedies &amp; Protections</b>	<p>The judge can grant up to eighteen remedies, from prohibiting further abuse, ordering the offender to stay away, revoking FOID card, to protecting property and pets, financial support, temporary care of children, and exclusive possession of the home.</p>	<p>The judge can grant any or all of the following remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibit contact with victim</li> <li>• Stay away from victim generally</li> <li>• Stay away from specific locations</li> <li>• Protection of property and pets</li> <li>• Order the offender to transfer to another school if the victim and offender attend the same school</li> <li>• Other injunctive relief necessary to protect the petitioner</li> </ul>	<p>The judge can grant any or all of the following remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibit further stalking or threatening to stalk</li> <li>• Prohibit contact with victim</li> <li>• Stay away from specific locations</li> <li>• Prohibit FOID card and firearms</li> <li>• Other injunctive relief necessary to protect the petitioner</li> </ul> <p>Attorneys' fees are the only financial remedy available.</p>

*Office of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan Policy Division 2012*

# TIPS FOR EDUCATORS, SERVICE PROVIDERS & PARENTS

## RESPONDING TO TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

### HOW TO START THE DIALOGUE: DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- **Keep an open environment** – Be available to listen and provide opportunities for discussion. If it's hard for you to talk about, imagine how scared he/she might be.
- **Teach assertiveness, not aggressiveness** – Conflict is inevitable, so encourage empowerment and good boundaries.
- **Understand the questions and answer them honestly** – Make sure your conversations meet the goals of the students, not just your goals as the educator/adult. Honest answers are important. You aren't doing any favors by withholding the facts.
- **Talk about the facts and myths (good and bad) of dating relationships** – Teens shouldn't feel apprehensive about dating by knowing the facts. Be honest about the topic so that their confusion is reduced and they're ready for a healthy part of adolescent development.
- **Emphasize a culture of respect and equality** – Create a school environment of mutual respect, equality for everyone, and problem solving/ conflict resolution. Make sure it is known that violence and disrespect will not be tolerated.
- **Assess your own values** – Make sure that you are in a place to be non-judgmental and open. Don't let your beliefs get in the way of helping a teen at risk.
- **Give your undivided attention** – When the opportunity presents itself, focus your energy and attention on the teen's needs.
- **Talk often** – The more dating violence is discussed, the easier it is for a teen to talk about it. Incorporate the concepts of equality, cultural violence and abuse whenever it makes sense in order to remove the stigma.
- **Talk with teens on their level** – Be willing to use examples/refer to what they know (i.e. current media, books, music) and even use yourself. Show them that you can connect and understand.
- **Training and education** – Make sure that you and the entire school staff are aware/educated on the issues, and be prepared beforehand so that you will be ready to respond safely and appropriately. Awareness-raising should be on-going.

### WHAT TO DO IF A TEEN DISCLOSES AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

- Remain calm
- Discuss CONFIDENTIALITY and its limitations
- LISTEN and BELIEVE – this may be the first time that he/she has ever told anyone
- Remember that he/she will be affected by your reactions – this can determine if he/she opens up more or shuts down
- Be aware of the school's response policy and be honest with him/her
- Focus on the needs that he/she describes
- Provide referrals to area service providers (see teen committee list and resources)
- Avoid judgment or making assumptions
- Validate that student's experiences, reassure him/her that the abuse is not his/her fault and confirm that he/she did the right thing by coming to an adult to share the painful secret
- Allow him/her to guide the conversation – remember that silence is okay
- Encourage the teen to use his/her own resources for support (family, friends, teachers, counselors, coaches)
- Explore options to address the situation (victim services – both mental and physical health, legal system, school involvement)

### ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Perhaps the best advice for parents is to start talking about what constitutes a healthy, respectful relationship early on with your child. Sharing the warning signs of teen dating abuse with your child and saying, "If you know someone who's experiencing something like this, let's talk about it – let's talk about how you can be a good friend and help them stay safe." Please assure your child that they are not to blame for an unhealthy relationship, and that you are available to help them be safe and happy. Please avail yourself of the many resources available on teen dating abuse for youth and adults.

# TIPS FOR EDUCATORS, SERVICE PROVIDERS & PARENTS

## RESPONDING TO TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

### DO'S AND DON'TS WITH TEENS: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESPONSES

#### Positive Responses

- “Nothing that you did, or didn’t do, makes it okay for someone to hurt you” (validate and believe, provide support)
- “He/she is responsible for this, not you...” (hold the abusive partner accountable)
- “I am glad that you told me. You did the right thing.”
- “What can I do to help? How can I help you feel safer?”
- “If you need some time to sit and think for a second, that’s fine.” (silence is okay – give her/him time to process)
- “I am proud of you for speaking out. You are so strong/brave.” (empower, strengthen)
- “It is okay to cry. It is okay to feel sad/angry/scared.” (encourage expression or feelings and emotional responses)
- “I am here to support you. You know what’s best for you and it’s my job to help.” (make decisions together and empower rather than assert authority)
- “What I can do is...What I can’t do is...Our school policy is...” (be open and honest about your role)

#### Negative Responses

- “This wouldn’t have happened if you hadn’t...” or “Why didn’t you...” (victim blaming, making assumptions)
- “There’s no way that he/she would...I don’t believe you.” (denial)
- “Well at least he/she didn’t...It doesn’t sound that bad.” (minimize)
- “This sounds like a private matter. I have to call your parents to help you.”
- “I promise this will never happen again. I will make sure of it.” (DO NOT make false promises, even if you mean well)
- “Just forget it ever happened. You have to figure out a way to make this work.” (disregarding the abuse)
- “This is all my fault/your parent’s fault. How could no one have seen this?” (hold abusive partner accountable)
- “What a jerk! How could he/she do that to you?” (don’t badmouth the abusive partner – this student cares very much and is dealing with the conflicted emotions)
- “You have to call the police. You have to tell your parents. You have to go to the hospital.” (threatening or coercing victim to take certain steps is disempowering)

### CYBERWORLD/TECHNOLOGY...ADVICE FOR TEENS

- **Consider changing your cell phone number.** If you are concerned that changing your number could escalate the abuse, then consider leaving phone on and active. This way, all activity will be tracked and recorded by law enforcement. You can also consider call blocking if you decide not to disconnect your phone. Discuss with friends a strategy to prevent abusive partner from getting the new number.
- **Make your profile private.** Be aware of how much you reveal about your contact information, class and work schedules, extracurricular activities, social events and daily routines.
- **Google yourself.** Periodically check to see what information pops up about you. If you come across information that contains personal information, consider contacting website host for removal of the information.
- **Preserve cell phone / texts/ and electronic evidence.** Recording threats, saving texts and printing website communication can be an essential piece of evidence in a teen dating violence case.

Although these tools can be misused by the abusive partner, they are not the problem. The power and control of the abusive partner is the **real** problem. Restricting and avoiding technology is not the answer. How to use it safely and productively is.

**Please refer to Teen Handouts for additional information.**

# DRUGS, TRENDS & EDUCATION

**Intimate partner violence among adolescents is associated with increased risk of substance use, unhealthy weight control behaviors, sexual risk behaviors, pregnancy, and suicide.**

*Molidor, Tolman & Kober, (2000); National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, (2001)*

Dating violence can have serious consequences for our teens. Teens face challenges that are often not associated with adult domestic violence. Teens are isolated from their friends and peers which make it difficult to:

- Feel independent
- Develop personal values and beliefs
- Focus on grades and school
- Develop healthy relationships with peers

All of these factors can cause long-term problems such as:

- Depression
- Eating disorder
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Self harming behaviors (cutting and burning)
- Suicide

## DRUGS: WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

According to Drugfree.org, kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs and alcohol from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use than those who do not. It is important for parents to get involved in drug abuse prevention programs in your community. A parent and child participating together can make a difference.

The following suggestions are provided by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention:

- Spend time with your child; take part in his/her activities.
- Be a positive role model.
- Know your child's friends and their families.
- Promote good study habits.
- Teach your child how to cope with peer pressure.
- Help your child develop good conflict resolution skills.
- Encourage your child to join positive afterschool activities with adult supervision.
- Work with neighbors to create a neighborhood alliance.
- Always be alert for unusual actions and activities involving your child.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and even search their room should you suspect drug activity.
- If your child stays at a friend's house overnight, verify it with the parents.

*SAO Impalant Information for Parents about Drug Trends and Law 2012*

## PRESCRIPTION AND OVER THE COUNTER DRUG ABUSE

Prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse is the leading cause of substance-related deaths in Lake County. In 2010, prescription drugs caused over 40% of the substance abuse deaths in Lake County.

Prescription drug abuse is increasing because the drugs are available in most young people's homes or in relatives' homes, and young people usually get the drugs for "free" by stealing them. Prescription and over-the-counter drugs also seem safer than illegal drugs because doctors approve their use. However, prescription drugs can be as harmful as illegal drugs when taken improperly.

The signs of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse vary according to which drugs are being abused, in what way, and in what combination.

*Important Information for Parents About Drug Trends and Laws • Lake County State's Attorney's Office 2012*

## PREVENTION TACTICS

- Keep track of ALL prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including non-narcotics. If your family rarely uses a certain drug that is running low, or you run out of a prescription early, find out who used the drugs.
- Limit access to all prescription and over-the-counter drugs at your house and family members' houses.
- If you have unused prescription drugs in your house, take them to safe disposal sites. Check with your police department or local clinics for locations.

*Important Information for Parents About Drug Trends and Laws • Lake County State's Attorney's Office 2012*

# DRUGS, TRENDS & EDUCATION

## TECHNOLOGY

Today's teens are increasingly reliant upon technology in their everyday lives. Cell phones and the internet provide teens with almost constant communication. While technology has greatly improved teens' ability to stay in touch with their friends, families, schools, and communities, these new technologies can also present a challenge to service providers who work with teens experiencing dating violence. In the hands of an abusive partner, the same tech devices and websites that connect teens can be turned into tools of abuse. The privacy often means that high-tech abuse is hidden. Providers can help protect their teen clients by understanding the challenges that technology presents and sharing strategies for teens to stay safe. (Refer to Tips for Educators, Service Providers and Parents.)

*December 2008 Teen Dating Violence Technical Assistance Center*

## SELF-HARMING BEHAVIOR

In the course of working with victims and their families, you may encounter an individual that you suspect is "cutting." Cutting is a form of self-injurious behavior. The intent is not to end life, but to manage emotions which are too painful to express verbally. Cutters often raise suspicion because of their tendency to wear long sleeves and/or long pants (to hide evidence of scars) even when it contradicts the weather/season.

If you suspect that someone you are working with is participating in self-harming behavior, you may be reluctant to mention it. There is a misconception that raising the question will somehow cause an individual to further harm him or herself. Such is not the case. It is perfectly acceptable to express concern and explain what you are observing that caused your concern. Provide support to the individual, not scolding or criticizing their actions. Encourage the person to seek help from a therapist with expertise in self-harm.

Though cutting is typically not a suicide attempt, a person with a history of cutting can present with symptoms of suicide ideation. In such instances, it is imperative that the individual seek a psychiatric evaluation at a hospital.

*Reference guide – Bodily Harm by Karen Conterio, Wendy Lede, Jennifer Bloom and Jennifer Kingsonbloom*

## EATING DISORDERS

An eating disorder is considered a psychological problem. It involves an unhealthy obsession with food, whether the obsession is limiting intake, or whether the food obsession involves overindulging regularly. The most common eating disorders are linked with body image, and most teens with eating disorders feel that they must take drastic measures to lose weight.

The three most common teen eating disorders are:

- Anorexia nervosa
- Bulimia nervosa
- Binge eating (also called compulsive eating)

All three of these eating disorders can have unhealthy consequences, creating nutrient problems, growth problems, and weight problems in teens. Weighing too little is a weight problem, as is rapid and excessive weight gain.

[www.troubleteen101.com](http://www.troubleteen101.com)

Preventing eating disorders involves compassion and understanding. Nurturing your teen's self-esteem and helping them develop healthy attitudes about nutrition can help prevent an eating disorder.

Any form of sexual or physical abuse can lead to eating disorders. They can be a common factor in teens experiencing family issues, problematic personal relationships and teens who have difficulty expressing their emotions.

# SCHOOL AWARENESS & OUTREACH

## RESPONDING TO TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Teen dating violence is an integral part of school violence. There are many ways to raise awareness on this widespread problem. The following ideas are just a few of the ways your school can address potential dangers, provide training and establish relationships with your students on teen dating violence.

### **Create a school protocol to build victim safety and offender accountability**

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities of school staff
- Provide consistent school response
- Define the issue and outline training procedures

### **Develop teen outreach programs**

- Assign teens to develop strategies and outline goals for preventing teen dating violence
- Create peer-to-peer groups
- Create victim support groups to help understand they are not alone
- Establish dating abuse awareness club

### **Create an evaluation of abuse**

- Students who use health services and/or counseling programs can be given a questionnaire/screening tool to evaluate needs/problems
- Establish support services
- Conduct confidential surveys in classroom discussions
- Ask school nurse to have dating abuse brochures/safety cards on hand for distribution (see enclosed safety cards)

### **Have resources available**

- Display teen dating violence posters in main areas
- Have safety cards in bathrooms, lounges, etc. (see enclosed safety cards)
- Have books on topic in school library
- Participate in Lake County State's Attorney's Office Annual Teen Dating Violence Awareness Poster Contest

### **Make public service announcements on teen dating violence**

- Identify the problem
- Provide statistics
- Explain where to go for help
- Refer to school resources

### **Make awareness of the topic a priority in education**

- Encourage Lake County State's Attorney's Office Teen Dating Violence Awareness Poster Contest participation in your school
- Teach about teen dating violence in health class, P.E., social studies, etc.
- Use enclosed toolkit handouts in class for distribution
- Hang posters at your school or on community bulletin boards

### **Display teen dating violence/healthy relationship information on school website**

- Provide links to resources - see website list on Teen Dating Committee/Resource handout
- Allow peer/student involvement in creation of website
- Join National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline on MySpace or Facebook
- Scan enclosed flyers on school website

### **Participate in Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in February or Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October**

- Distribute flyers/dating abuse materials
- Organize school assembly
- Have daily announcement/activity
- Suggest recommended outlets/encourage healthy relationships
- Bring in speakers
- Have fundraiser for local domestic violence organization or shelter
- Write an article about teen dating abuse for school paper

# SCHOOL AWARENESS & OUTREACH

## RESPONDING TO TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

### Use school library as a resource center

- Have bulletin boards with dating violence information and healthy relationship information
- Have suggested reading and website list on topic
- Have books on dating violence
- Have teen dating violence/healthy relationships DVDs to check out
- Have brochure display with information; Use enclosed teen handouts and safety cards
- Have school policy on file to review

### Offer parent meetings/parent awareness outreach

- Provide breakfast sessions
- Create opportunities for evening conversations with students, teachers and parents
- Provide resources at parent/teacher conferences; Use school administration enclosed materials

### Educate school personnel on teen dating violence resources available

- Require personnel to be familiar with school dating violence protocol
- Encourage/require curriculum on topic to coincide with the social emotional learning standards
- Distribute enclosed school administrative materials to all divisions
- Make personnel aware of committee list and resources available

### Develop advisory team in conjunction with teen dating violence protocol to include a group of local experts from community organizations. Use enclosed committee list for guidance and consider including:

- Local Police Department
- Domestic Violence Provider
- State's Attorney's Office
- Mental Health Service
- Substance Abuse Service
- Media
- Civic Groups
- Teachers/Coaches

### Incorporate teen dating violence and bullying prevention in student clubs

- Lead students to address the issue
- Require group involvement in programs that assist the youth
- Raise funds for teen dating violence prevention

