Teen Dating Violence- What You Need To Know

Presented by: The Hofstra Coalition Against Teen Dating Violence

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DO YOU KNOW?

- Day One, an organization dedicated to preventing domestic violence, has found that teaching young people about healthy relationships and ways to avoid physical dating violence can reduce physical dating violence and sexual dating violence by 60%.
- A comparison of Intimate Partner Violence rates between teens and adults reveals that teens are at higher risk of intimate partner abuse.
- Females ages 16-24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than any other age group – at a rate almost triple the national average.
- Approximately 1 in 5 female high school students report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.
- In a study of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents, youths involved in same-sex dating are just as likely to experience dating violence as youths involved in opposite sex dating.
- 81% of parents surveyed either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don’t know if it is an issue.
- 57% of teens know someone who has been physically, sexually, or verbally abusive in a dating relationship.
- 83% of 10th graders surveyed at the 4th Annual Teen Dating Abuse Summit reported that they would sooner turn to a friend for help with dating abuse than to a teacher, counselor, parent or other caring adult.
- Only 33% of teens who were in an abusive relationship ever told anyone about the abuse.
- The severity of violence among intimate partners has been shown to increase if the pattern has been established in adolescence.
- Violent relationships in adolescence can have serious ramifications for victims: Many will continue to be abused in their adult relationships and are at a higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and suicide.
WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW: IT CAN START IN THE HOME

Social learning is the most relied upon explanation for dating violence. Studies of family violence have found considerable evidence that the experience of frequent corporal punishment as an adolescent is related to an increased rate of assaulting a spouse later in life. Aggression is learned by watching others’ behaviors and the positive consequences they get from that behavior is the perspective of the social learning theory. A child witnessing family violence or being victimized by family violence tends to greatly increase the probability that that child will use violence in dating relationships. Harsh discipline and family violence shows children that violence is a legitimate and sometimes necessary way to resolve problems.

Children form a picture of themselves in relationships and pictures of others as partners, based on their experiences with their caregiver(s). Three different groups of people emerge: secure, avoidant, anxious/ambivalent. If a caregiver is consistent with their rearing of a child, the child will likely end up becoming a secure adult who is able to form healthy adult relationships. Consistent parenting would include actions like being involved and supporting, showing warmth and affection, being consistent with discipline, monitoring and supervising the child, and explaining rules and expectations.

Avoidant and anxious/ambivalent people tend to form dysfunctional adult relationships. The reason for this is because of problems in parenting such as inconsistent parental responsiveness (anxious/ambivalent) or consistently unresponsive caregiving (avoidant). Avoidant and anxious/ambivalent people often develop antisocial behavior including, dating partner violence, excessive drinking, erratic work records and altercations with peers. Depending on which pattern a person falls into affects how they describe adult relationships. If a person is secure she/he will use characteristics like happy, friendly and trusting, but if a person is avoidant, for example, she/he will describe relationships as involving jealously and being an emotional rollercoaster.
Dating violence is a crime.
Look at these terms.
Do they describe what you have seen, heard about, or even experienced?

Sexual Coercion-
Sexual coercion occurs whenever someone pressures a date to participate in a sexual behavior that the date would, under other circumstances, not do. It includes all sexual behaviors ranging from kissing to intercourse, and a variety of methods ranging from verbal pressure to physical force.

Rape-
The crime of engaging in sexual acts, usually forcibly, with a person who has not consented to the act.

Alcohol/Drug Use and Date Rape-
Alcohol and drug use among adolescents may lead to unwanted sexual activity. Furthermore, intoxication may blur a woman’s understanding of the situation, and hinder her ability to resist. An intoxicated male may be less aware of whether the female consents and may be more sexually aggressive than when sober. In addition, a study of acquaintance rape on college campuses found that 75% of the men who had committed sexual assault had used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault.

Stalking-
Stalking generally consists of 3 elements: 1) A pattern of unwanted intrusion upon another person; 2) An explicit or implicit threat is conveyed by the intrusion; and 3) The person who is the target of the intrusion experiences reasonable fear.

Stalking can produce a variety of long term effects on victims including anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, intense stress, and other symptoms of serious trauma. They may feel extremely vulnerable and become hyper-vigilant-constantly monitoring their environment for danger. They may change schools, jobs, social activities, and even move to try to avoid the stalker.

Stalkers may be former partners who refuse to accept a breakup and feel rejected or angry or they may be obsessed with the idea that they are “in love” with a person they may not even know. Without intervention, stalkers will continue their conduct on average for about two years. Normal adolescents usually maintain appropriate social boundaries and at some point, they let go and move on to other loves. Conversely, the feelings of adolescent stalkers are more intense and extreme. The lost love interest becomes the primary focus of their lives. They are deeply humiliated and respond with extreme anger. The focus of their entire life is stalking their victims in an attempt to resolve these feelings of rage, rejection and humiliation. At some point, they will usually find a new love interest and the cycle begins again.
Adolescents have access to a variety of forms of media and they are all readily accessible. However, because of this vast array of options, adolescents are put in dangerous positions where their attitudes and behaviors on violence are greatly influenced by what they see or hear in the media. Examples of types of media include television/movies, music, and the internet.

There are numerous theories that correlate aggressive behaviors in teens and the media’s influence. Such theories include:

**Social Learning Theory**

Adolescents learn behaviors from movies, television, and other forms of media. When these adolescents find themselves in situations similar to what they have observed through a form of media, the previously learned behavior may be triggered depending on the result they wish to seek. Also in the context of media, social learning theory posits that adolescents are more likely to observe and imitate behaviors they see when the person they are observing is attractive and similar to himself or herself.

**Cultivation Theory**

Media influences people’s perception and expectations of the real world. According to this theory, myths and ideologies regarding relationships (i.e. social and gender norms) are being continually reinforced by television. Because television has become so prevalent in society, adolescents constantly see these reinforcements and begin to accept them as reality. This theory also states that children observe and adopt social and sexual schemas/scripts from watching television.

**Agenda Setting/Framing Theory**

After incorporating into the public’s mind what the media deems important, it also influences how viewers should think about these things. The more frequent something appears in the media, the more likely it will be thought of as important in the public’s eyes.

Before you watch Teen Mom or The Jersey Shore, think about this:
Television has become a central figure in nearly 113,000,000 households. Children and adolescents between the ages of 8-18 watch on average 7 hours and 38 minutes worth of television per day (53 hours a week).

The season finale of *The Jersey Shore* on January 21, 2011 pulled in 4.8 million viewers.

MTV showed *Teen Mom* star Amber Portwood physically abusing her boyfriend in one episode.

Studies show a correlation between sexually aggressive behavior and exposure to music with misogynous content.

Pornography (printed, television, or on the internet) is often misused and becomes a tool for adolescents to learn sexual information as well as sexual norms. Studies have shown a parallel correlation between exposure to pornography and a proclivity for traditional gender norms and permissive sexual norms.
What We Can Do:  Recommended Provisions for School Dating Abuse Policies

- A statement released by the school stating that dating abuse and sexual assault will not be tolerated.

- The designation of a staff member as a “Dating Abuse Counselor”. Students, parents and teachers should be notified that this counselor handles any and all complaints and requests regarding dating abuse of any kind. The counselor must be required to receive substantial training and education on dating abuse and safety issues that surround it.

- Creation of in-school stay-away orders that require the abuser to keep a particular distance from the target of abuse at all times. It would also require the abuser to cease any contact with the victim. Additionally, schools should be sure to create reporting and enforcement procedures in the event that an in-school stay-away is violated.

- Accommodations that can be granted to a victim of abuse to assist him or her to avoid the abuser, including: change of class seat assignment; change of locker assignment; change of student’s class schedule; permission to leave class to see a counselor or social worker; excused absence for classes missed due to dating or sexual violence; make up class work, including homework, quizzes, and tests, for classes missed due to dating violence or sexual violence or threat thereof; and designated routes for the abuser and target to enter and exit the school building.

- Methods for enforcing criminal or civil orders of protection held by students.

- Training for all school staff on dating abuse and sexual assault. This should also include education on how to handle reports of dating violence, how to enforce school dating violence policies, and how to enforce criminal and civil orders of protection.

- Creation of a referral system for targets and perpetrators to community based and mental and physical health care services.

- Creation of a Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month - the student newspaper is encouraged to do a story on teen dating violence and other students are invited to submit poetry, song lyrics and drawings to accompany the article.
If You Are Being Abused

- Talk to a friend - If you have not already tried speaking to a friend about what is happening in your relationship, try it.

- Take a break - If you are not happy with the way you are being treated by your boyfriend or girlfriend, but are not sure what to do yet, consider taking time apart to think about it.

- Talk to an adult - If you feel like the situation you are in is too big or overwhelming to handle on your own, it may help to speak with an adult you trust. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with your own parents about it you can consider an older sibling, a teacher, a coach, a parent of a friend or a school counselor.

- Try not to be alone - If you feel unsafe around your boyfriend or girlfriend, try not to be alone. Instead surround yourself with friends and family you feel safe with.

If You Are Abusing Someone

- Take responsibility - Even if your boyfriend or girlfriend sometimes does or says things that make you angry or that you do not like, no one deserves to be abused. Take responsibility for your actions.

- Change for yourself first - Whether or not you want to remain in your current relationship, stopping the abuse will benefit you greatly down the line, especially in your future relationships.

- Talk to a friend - If you have not already spoken to a friend about your situation, try it. Confide in a friend you can speak honestly to about your concerns and your plan to change. You may even ask them to hold you accountable if they see you act abusively.

- Take a break - Try spending some time away from your boyfriend or girlfriend to clear your mind and gather your thoughts.

- Walk away from an argument - Decide now that you will walk away from an argument before it escalates and let your boyfriend or girlfriend know this plan.

- Look at the people around you - If you have friends or family members that are abusive in their relationships, you may want to spend less time with them. If it is not possible to spend less time with them, be sure to observe how you are feeling when you witness others being abused and take those feelings into consideration.

- Be patient - Admitting you want to change your behavior is a big step in and of itself, but you cannot expect the change to be overnight.
If Your Friend is Being Abused

• Listen to what your friend has to say.

• Speak to your friend in private and keep what he or she tells you confidential.

• Let your friend know why you are concerned and be sure to mention specific instances of abuse that you have witnessed.

• Offer your friend contact information for helpful resources including suggesting people your friend may want to speak to, such as a teacher, counselor or coach.

• Mention that you are available if your friend wants to talk more.

• Do not be judgmental.

• Do not make your friend feel ashamed or stupid.

• Do not ask a lot of questions. Instead, allow your friend time to speak freely and express him or herself.

• Do not give your friend ultimatums because your friend must decide when he or she is ready to end a relationship - you cannot make that decision for them.

If Your Friend is Abusing Someone

• Talk to your friend - Be specific about what you have seen and how it made you feel.

• Take a stand - Let your friend know that you are not going to sit back and watch what happens without saying anything.

• Give your friend a reality check that his or her abusive actions have negative consequences.

• Urge your friend to seek help.

• Offer to get your friend information regarding health resources.

• Do not make your friend feel ashamed of his or her actions.
What Parents Need to Know if Their Teen Comes to Them for Help

- Be calm.
  - Actively listen to your teen.
  - Do not blame or punish your teen.

- Do not put your teen down - do not give the message that you think your teen is senseless or stupid for being in the relationship.
  - Reassure your teen of your love and concern.
  - Take your teens feelings seriously.
  - Do not threaten violence against the abuser.
  - Respect your teen’s choices.

- Allow your teen as much control as possible.
- Call a domestic violence hotline or agency.
  - Get your teen counseling.
# Resources for Teen Victims of Domestic Violence and Dating Violence

## Manhattan and Citywide

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYC Domestic Violence Hotline</td>
<td>800-621-4673</td>
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<td>NYPD Sex Crimes Report Hotline</td>
<td>212-267-7273</td>
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<td>NYC Sexual Assault Hotline</td>
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<td>DYCD's Youthline</td>
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<td>NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence</td>
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<td>NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault</td>
<td>212-523-4344</td>
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<td>Barrier Free Living for victims of abuse with disabilities</td>
<td>212-533-4358</td>
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<td>Beth Israel Medical Center</td>
<td>212-420-4054</td>
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<td>Center Against Domestic Violence</td>
<td>718-254-9134</td>
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<td>Children’s Aid Society Family Wellness Program</td>
<td>212-503-6842</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Door</td>
<td>212-941-9090 Ext. 3272</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenwich House Children’s Safety Project</td>
<td>212-242-4140 Ext. 237</td>
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<td>Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center</td>
<td>212-423-2981</td>
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<td>STEPS to End Family Violence</td>
<td>212-410-4200 Ext. 125</td>
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<td>Youth Counseling League</td>
<td>212-481-2500</td>
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## The Bronx

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<td>Children’s Aid Society Family Wellness Program</td>
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<td>Fordham Tremont¹</td>
<td>718-960-0373</td>
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<td>Jacobi Hospital</td>
<td>718-918-3895</td>
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<td>North Central Bronx Hospital</td>
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<td>Safe Horizon</td>
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<td>Sanctuary for Families Bronx Community Office</td>
<td>718-933-5990</td>
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<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>718-5250-3205</td>
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<td>Kings County District Attorney’s Office of Counseling Services</td>
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<td>Brookdale Hospital Child Clinic</td>
<td>718-240-5998</td>
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<td>CAMBA</td>
<td>718-287-2600</td>
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<td>Park Slope Safe Homes Project</td>
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<td>Elmhurst Hospital Adolescent Center</td>
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<td>Korean American Family Service Center</td>
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<td>Long Island College Hospital</td>
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<td>Queens Child Guidance Center</td>
<td>718-899-9810 Ext. 206</td>
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<td>Safe Horizon</td>
<td>718-899-1233</td>
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<td>Women Helping Women</td>
<td>718-291-2555</td>
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<th>Staten Island</th>
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<th>Nassau County</th>
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<td>Coalition Against DV</td>
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<td>Nassau Crime Victim Assistance</td>
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<th>Suffolk County</th>
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<td>Brighter Tomorrows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coalition Against DV</td>
<td>631-666-8833</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Retreat</td>
<td>631-329-2200</td>
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Resources


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Created by

HCATDV
The Hofstra Coalition Against Teen Dating Violence
2011

Nicole Rynston, Samantha Sandler, Rei Watanabe, and Shirin Zarabi

With Special Thanks to Professor Barbara Barron of Hofstra University School of Law