



WomanView

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National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week February 4–8, 2008

Teen dating violence is perhaps one of the most complex and pervasive problems facing teenagers today. Addressing this problem, the U.S. Senate passed Resolution 388 (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>) designating February 4–8, 2008, as “National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week.” Dating violence is a pattern of controlling behavior that someone uses against a girlfriend or boyfriend; such violence crosses all socioeconomic, racial, and social lines. The patterns of abuse in teen dating violence, like domestic violence among adults, include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats that may result in isolation, humiliation, and coercion problems.

Although boys and young men experience teen dating violence, about 85 percent of all victims are young women. One in three high school students has been or will be involved in an abusive relationship, 27 percent of teenagers have been in dating relationships in which their partners called them names or put them down, and one in two teenagers in a serious relationship has compromised her personal beliefs to please a partner. While most studies have focused more on abuse in heterosexual relationships, abuse occurs nearly as frequently in same-sex relationships as in heterosexual relationships.

The widespread availability and use of technology add a ubiquitous and hidden aspect of teen dating violence through cell phones, text messaging, IMing, e-mail, and community networks. About 30 percent of teenagers who have been in a dating relationship have been text-messaged between 10 and 30 times per hour by a partner seeking to find out where they are, what they are doing, and with whom they are. Yet 67 percent of parents are unaware that their teen is being checked up on some 30 times per day on their teen’s cell phone. Parents are unable to control the abuse and may be unaware of these warning signs of teen dating violence:

- ❑ She apologizes for his behavior and makes excuses for him.
- ❑ She loses interest in activities that she used to enjoy.
- ❑ She stops seeing her friends and family members and becomes increasingly isolated.
- ❑ Her boyfriend acts extremely jealous of others, especially other males, who pay attention to her.

Throughout the week, parents, teachers, school personnel, and government officials should observe National Teen Dating Violence and Awareness Week by engaging teens in discussion and activities dealing with this problem. The ‘Love is Not Abuse’ website (<http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/index.html>) contains downloadable brochures, curriculum, and information regarding teen dating violence. Another great resource is the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, or CAEPV, teen resource page (<http://www.caepv.org/getinfo/links.php?linksec=19>). This site includes links to GirlsAllowed (http://www.girlsallowed.org/index_yes.html) and the Center for Disease Control’s site (<http://www.chooserespect.org/scripts/index.asp>), both geared toward ages 11 to 14, and the Break the Cycle site (www.thesafespace.org) for teens.

If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, help is available from the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at <http://www.loveisrespect.org/> or 866.331.9474 or 866.331.8453 (TTY), a 24-hour helpline that provides one-on-one counseling services and resources for teens experiencing dating abuse. Teenagers can also contact the National Domestic Violence hotline 800.799.7233 or 800.787.3224 (TTY). Illinois has a statewide Domestic Violence Helpline 877.863.6338 or 877.863.6339 (TTY), and the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) has 33 community-based sexual assault crisis centers, each with 24-hour crisis intervention services. Visit ICASA's website (<http://www.icasa.org/default.asp>) to find a center near you.

In Illinois, the Shriver Center is focusing attention on the effects of teen dating violence on school performance and the dropout crisis. The Ensuring Success in School Act (ESSA) Task Force was created to develop policies, procedures, and protocols to be adopted by school districts to meet the needs of students who are parents, expectant parents, or victims of domestic or sexual violence to ensure that they can stay in school, stay safe while in school, and complete their education. If you are interested in becoming involved in the ESSA Task Force, have a story that you would like to share, or would like more information on the ESSA Task Force, contact [Michaela Furman](#), Women's Law and Policy Project, Shriver Center, at 312.263.3830 ext. 243 or michaellafurman@povertylaw.org.

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