

*Teen Dating Violence
Information for Parents and Caregivers*

What is it?

Teen dating violence is abusive, controlling, and forceful behavior in a dating relationship. It demonstrates the abuser's need to dominate and control the victim. Violent behavior can include verbal, emotional, sexual, or physical abuse.

Verbal and emotional abuse includes:

- Name calling, threats, screaming, criticizing, and ridiculing

Sexual abuse includes:

- Unwanted sexual touching and kissing, intimidating the victim to participate in any form of sexual activity, and rape

Physical abuse includes:

- Pushing, punching, slapping, kicking, choking, and any other actions that cause physical harm

Why do we care?

- Teens who are victims of dating violence are likely to do poorly in school, and may even drop out of school.
- Teens who are victims of dating violence are likely to abuse drugs or alcohol.
- Teens who are victims of dating violence will often isolate themselves from their family and friends.
- Teens who are victims of dating violence may show signs of depression and in extreme cases contemplate suicide.

What can we do about it?

- **Demonstrate positive examples for your child.** Establish healthy habits when dealing with anger and conflict in your own relationships.
- **Talk to your child about what makes a relationship healthy.** Emphasize to them the importance of self-respect, respect for others, and independence. It is also a good idea to agree on a set of specific boundaries that are acceptable within a romantic relationship.
- **Teach your child how to control their anger and how to resolve conflicts calmly.** Make sure that your child is aware of techniques used to manage angry feelings, such as deep breathing or walking away from the situation.
- **Suggest that teen dating violence prevention and intervention programs be used in your child's school.**
- If your child is involved in dating violence, either as the abuser or the victim, **encourage him or her to talk with a professional** that specializes in teen dating violence.

References

Dating Violence. Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

<http://www.acadv.org/dating.html>

Facts for Teens: Teen Dating Violence. National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center.

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/dateviolfacts.asp>

Intimate Partner Violence: Fact Sheet. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC.

http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/ipv_factsheet.pdf

Intimate Partner and Family Violence. National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center.

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/facts/intimate.asp>

Helpful Links

Dating Violence Common Among Teens

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<http://www.family.samhsa.gov/teach/dating.aspx>

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

Advocates for Youth.

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/youth/health/relationships/healthy.htm>

Dating Violence Warning Signs

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/datingwarning.asp>

*Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.