

Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet

Dating Violence is a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.

Dating Relationship means a romantic or intimate social relationship between two individuals.

Break the Cycle engages, educates and empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence.

Victimization

Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experienced physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.¹

1 in 3 adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.²

1 in 10 high school students has been hit, slapped, or physically hurt purposefully by a boyfriend or girlfriend.³ One quarter of high school girls have been victims of physical or sexual abuse or date rape.⁴

Awareness

A teen's confusion about the law and the desire for confidentiality are two of the most significant barriers to young victims of violence seeking help.⁸

81% of parents surveyed either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue.⁹

57% of teens know someone who has been physically, sexually, or verbally abusive in a dating relationship.¹⁰

Only 33% of teens who were in an abusive relationship ever told anyone about the abuse.¹⁰

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Impact on Victims

50% of youth reporting both dating violence and rape also reported attempting suicide, compared to 12.5% of non-abused girls and 5.4% of non-abused boys.⁵

Violent relationships in adolescence can have serious ramifications by putting the victims at higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and adult revictimization.⁶

Being physically or sexually abused leaves teen girls up to 6 times more likely to become pregnant and more than 2 times as likely to report an STD.⁷

Dating Violence Laws

Eight states currently do not include dating relationship in their definition of domestic violence. As a result, youth victims of dating violence cannot apply for a restraining order.¹¹

New Hampshire is the only state where the law specifically allows a minor of any age to go to court by themselves to apply for a protection order; more than half of states do not explicitly specify the minimum age of a petitioner.¹¹

Currently only one juvenile domestic violence court in the country addresses the specialized needs of young victims.¹²

Why Teens?

Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, at a rate almost triple the national average.¹³

A study conducted by the American Bar Association found the onset of violent behavior often occurs between the ages of 12 and 18 and identified this age range as "a window of opportunity" for intervention.¹⁴

The severity of intimate partner violence has been shown to be greater in cases where the pattern of violence has been established in adolescence.¹⁵

Victim service providers who primarily serve adults often lack resources and expertise to address the unique needs of young people.

About 72% of eighth and ninth graders report 'dating.'¹⁶

Digital abuse and 'sexting' is becoming a new frontier for teen dating abuse.¹⁷

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