



CONTACT THE
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Spotlight

On Domestic Violence

First Step Newsletter
A Program of
The Family Guidance Center

THE MISSION OF FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER'S FIRST STEP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TO INCREASE THE COMMUNITY'S AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Observed February



There are some things that tweens and teens should never have to experience and one of them is dating violence. Yet, the reality is that teen dating violence is a big problem, affecting youth in every community across the country. It happens here in

Catawba County, more often than we know. That's because only **33% of teens** who are in a violent relationship **ever tell anyone about the violence.**

Dating violence can occur on the first date or at any time during the relationship. **Dating violence can include:**

- ▽ **Physical**—This occurs when a partner is pinched, hit, shoved, slapped, punched, or kicked.
- ▽ **Psychological/Emotional**—This means threatening a partner or harming his or her sense of self-worth. Examples include name calling, shaming, bullying, embarrassing on purpose, or keeping him/her away from friends and family.
- ▽ **Sexual**—This is forcing a partner to engage in a sex act when he or she does not or cannot consent. This can be physical or nonphysical, like threatening to spread rumors if a partner refuses to have sex.
- ▽ **Stalking**—This refers to a pattern of harassing or threatening tactics that are unwanted and cause fear in the victim.
- ▽ **Digital Abuse**—Technology is used to control, pressure, or threaten a dating partner. Includes repeated texting, hacking a partner's email account, checking their cell phone, harassing or threatening via social media, sending repeated and unwanted calls and messages.

Parents Need to Know Signs of Teen Dating Violence

Parents of dating tweens and teens will want to be alert to changes in their child's behavior. While adolescence is a period of change and emotional ups and downs, it's important to pay close attention when you see any of these warning signs:

- ▽ Bruises or physical signs of injury
- ▽ Isolates themselves and spends less time with family/friends
- ▽ Makes excuses for their dating partner's behavior
- ▽ Wears long sleeves or baggy clothing to cover bruises
- ▽ Appears anxious if unable to answer text or cell phone calls
- ▽ Becomes defiant when you try to limit contact with boyfriend/girlfriend
- ▽ Grades begin dropping
- ▽ Self-esteem lowers
- ▽ Frequent break-ups and getting back together
- ▽ Change in personality with emotional outburst
- ▽ Withdrawn, depressed, anxious

If you are in a dating violence relationship, help is available. Call First Step at 828-322-1400 Crisis line 828-228-1787

Early Warning Signs of Teen Dating Violence

- ▽ Excessive jealousy
- ▽ Constant checking in with you or making you check in with him or her
- ▽ Attempts to isolate you from friends and family
- ▽ Insulting or putting down people that you care about
- ▽ Is too serious about the relationship too quickly
- ▽ Has had a lot of bad prior relationships—and blames all of the problems on the previous partners
- ▽ Is very controlling. This may include giving you orders, telling you what to wear, and trying to make all of the decisions for you
- ▽ Blames you when he or she treats you badly by telling you all of the ways you provoked him or her
- ▽ Does not take responsibility for own actions
- ▽ Has an explosive temper (“blows up” a lot)
- ▽ Pressures you into sexual activity with which you are not comfortable
- ▽ Has a history of fighting, hurting animals, or brags about mistreating other people
- ▽ Believes strongly in stereotypical gender roles for males and females
- ▽ You worry about how your partner will react to the things you say or you are afraid of provoking your partner
- ▽ Owns or uses weapons
- ▽ Refuses to let you end the relationship



If you notice several of these signs in your relationship or partner, you may be dating an abuser. Take special note if your family or friends don't like him/her or tell you that he's/she's bad for you or that they're concerned about you. Then evaluate your behavior, are you defensive about him/her, make excuses for his/her behavior. Are you working hard to keep your partner calm or to please him/her. If you answered yes to several of these questions, you are likely dating an abuser. It might be helpful to talk to a trusted adult about your relationship.

Facts to Consider

- ▽ Nearly 1.5 million high school students, both male and female, experience physical abuse from a dating partner every year.
- ▽ 2 out of 3 teens in abusive relationships do not tell anyone about the abuse.
- ▽ 81% of parents don't believe teen dating violence is an issue or will admit they don't know if it is an issue.
- ▽ Teen dating violence can end in a teen's death.

Sexual Assault Through Coercion

Not all sexual assault involves a physical attack. Teens are especially vulnerable to what is known as **sexual coercion, which is unwanted sexual activity that happens after being pressured, tricked, or forced in a non-physical way.**

Sexual coercion can be social or emotional pressure to force you into sexual activity that you don't want or don't agree to. Some examples are:

1. **Wearing you down** by repeatedly asking for sex or by making you feel bad, guilty, or obligated. Your date may say “if you really loved me, you would do it” or “it's my birthday and you're all I want.”
2. **Telling you that not having sex will hurt your relationship.** Your date may say something like this, “everything's perfect, why do you have to ruin it?” or “if you don't have sex with me, I'll break up with you.”
3. **Pressuring you to email/text nude pictures.** This is an alarming trend which is happening to many tweens and teens today. Your dating partner may use encouragement, guilt, begging, anger, or threats to make you do this. Once you've sent the picture, there will be continued requests/demands for more nude pictures. If they tell you that no one will ever know... that's a LIE. **Once you've sent the picture, it's always there for anybody to discover.**

If your date uses such pressure tactics, then he/she is not showing any respect for you. Anytime you are feeling pressured to do something you don't want to do, speak up and leave the situation. It's better to hurt someone's feelings or end the relationship than to do something you don't want

Teen Break-ups Can Be Deadly

If your dating relationship has contained any of the forms of dating violence, it's crucial to end the relationship in a safe way. It's best to do it by phone – that sounds cruel, but it's safer than doing it in person. Be direct and clear that the relationship is over. Should he/she say that they need to see you just one more time for closure, say no and **DO NOT** meet them. You are at the greatest risk for suffering severe injury or of being killed when you attempt to end an abusive relationship. Following a break-up, be vigilant to ensure your safety. This is also important to know even if your relationship didn't reveal any of the abusive forms. Remember, the violence can happen on the first date or any time in the relationship.

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You Made a Difference

THANK YOU TO ALL THE CHRISTMAS ANGELS...

Thank you to the many different individuals, companies and organizations who helped to ensure that families in need had Christmas gifts for their children. There are too many to name, but they did so much more than give presents. They put **joy** in the lives of children who've experienced the horror of domestic violence and gave **hope** to their mothers for a better life. Thank you, for truly making Christmas special!

Special Thanks To...

CATAWBA VALLEY QUILTERS GUILD for donating dozens of beautiful quilts to our shelter for battered women. They will provide warmth to our women and children. Thank you!

A Big Thank You To...

Maritza Rafael who organized and planned a Zumba event to collect toys for our children at Christmas. She did an amazing job; the event was fun and we collected many toys. Thank you, you're a hero to us!



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