

# Teen Dating Violence

## What is Dating Violence?

Dating violence is the use of harassing, controlling and/or abusive behavior to maintain power and control over a partner in a romantic relationship. Anyone can be a victim of dating violence, regardless of age, race, or gender. About one in ten high school students nationwide reported they had been a victim of dating violence in the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

### Types of dating violence

**Physical:** a dating partner is being physically hurt, may include hit, kicked, punched, shoved, or otherwise physically injured.

**Emotional/Verbal:** a dating partner is exposed to emotional attacks including jealousy, insults, isolation, harassment, or threats of harm to themselves or loved ones.

**Sexual:** a dating partner is coerced or forced to engage in sexual activity when they do not want or cannot give consent including kissing, touching, or intercourse.

**Technological:** emotional/verbal or sexual abuse may involve technology like cell phones and the internet. It can also be called forced sexting, cyberbullying, and textual harassment.

## Some Warning Signs of Dating Violence

- Your dating partner is using threats or violence to solve a problem
- Frequent calling and texting to check where you are or who you are with or other jealous behavior
- Telling you who you can spend time with, what you can do, or what to wear
- Name calling, putting you down, embarrassing you, or making you feel bad about yourself
- Making threats towards you, your family and friends
- Making threats of suicide or self harm
- Forcing you to do anything you don't want to do

## Preventing Dating Violence

Stopping dating violence before it starts is the best way to keep teens safe from dating abuse. There are ways anyone can help prevent dating violence:

**Learn more** about healthy and unhealthy relationships by visiting the websites in the resources section.

**Talk** to your friends and family about healthy relationships – especially with tweens (11-13 years old) and teens.

**Support** healthy relationship education in schools, youth groups, and churches.

**Volunteer** with your local domestic and sexual violence program, school, or youth group to help them provide healthy relationship education.

## How To Help a Friend

Remember that...

- Nobody deserves to be in an abusive relationship.
- Victims of dating violence may remain silent because they feel responsible, ashamed, or are afraid of what their partner will do.
- Ending an abusive relationship may be difficult for a victim of dating abuse; it is important to trust their feelings and support them.

If someone tells you they are in an abusive relationship, always...

- Listen to them and believe them.
- Keep what they say confidential.
- Encourage them to talk to an adult they trust like a parent, teacher, nurse, or counselor.
- Give them the phone numbers and websites from the **Resources** section.

## Teen Dating Violence in Oklahoma

7% of Oklahoma high school students reported they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the last 12 months (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, 2009).

Students who had been physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend reported the following problems more often than students who had not been abused (YRBS, 2009):

- Depression in the last 12 months, 42% vs. 27%
- Using alcohol in the last 30 days, 73% vs. 36%
- High-risk sexual behavior, 31% vs. 16%

6% of Oklahoma high school students had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to (YRBS, 2009).

Students who had reported being forced to have sex reported the following problems more often than students who had not been forced to have sex (YRBS, 2009):

- Depression in the last 12 months, 65% vs. 25%
- Attempting suicide, 36% vs. 5%
- Using alcohol in the last 30 days, 59% vs. 38%

## Dating Violence and Public Health

Dating violence can have long-term effects on health throughout life. Some of the effects on health include: drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and body image or eating disorders. Victims of teen dating violence are more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence as adults. Teens who are violent may continue the patterns of abuse in other relationships and into adulthood.

## Resources

The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline  
*1-866-331-9474*

Oklahoma Safeline  
*1-800-522-7433 (SAFE)*

Love Is Respect  
*www.loveisrespect.org*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
*www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datingmatters*

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance—United States, 2007. MMWR 2008;57

