

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

WHAT IS TEEN DATING VIOLENCE?

Dating violence is a pattern of behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner. Types of abuse experienced in violent dating relationships may include:

Physical abuse— the intentional use of physical force to cause fear or injury, including hitting, punching, slapping, shoving, and kicking.

Emotional abuse— non-physical behaviors such as threats, insults, constant monitoring, intimidation, isolation, or stalking. Technology is also used to harass or intimidate through texting, calling, and/or bullying or monitoring through social networking sites.

Sexual abuse— any sexual behavior or contact that is unwanted or interferes with the ability to consent to or control the circumstances of sexual activity.

FACTS: According to the Centers for Disease Control, the following statistics reveal that teen dating violence is a growing public health concern:

- About 1 in 4 teens reports verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual violence each year
- About 1 in 11 teens reports being a victim of physical dating violence each year
- About 1 in 5 teens reports being a victim of emotional abuse
- About 1 in 5 high school girls has been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner

FACTS: According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) released in 2012 by the SC Department of Education, South Carolina teens are experiencing dating violence at an alarming rate:

- **12%** of students surveyed reported being physically abused by a dating partner
- **11%** of students surveyed reported being forced to have sexual intercourse

Talking with Your Teen About Healthy Relationships

The best time to talk with your teen about healthy dating relationships is *before* they start dating. Here are a few tips:

- Send a consistent message—teach your teen that s/he deserves respect.
- Teach him or her that excessive jealousy, control, and manipulation are not signs of love, but of a disrespectful, and potentially dangerous, relationship.
- Be honest. Share your own experiences.
- Let your teen talk. Do not interrupt him or her.
- Listen to what your teen is saying. Respect his or her views.
- Stay calm. If you feel yourself becoming upset, take a deep breath and try to refocus on the conversation.
- Set a good example. Think through things before you speak, listen patiently, provide encouragement, and treat everyone with respect.

WHY IS TEEN DATING VIOLENCE A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- About 70% of girls and 52% of boys who are victims of dating violence report an injury from a violent relationship.
- Approximately 8% of boys and 9% of girls have been to an emergency room for an injury received from a dating partner.
- Adolescents who are victims of dating violence are also more likely to report binge drinking, suicide attempts, physical fighting, and sexual activity.
- Dating violence is associated with unhealthy sexual behaviors that can lead to unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV infections