

February is recognized as **National Teen Dating Awareness Month**. Many parents are unaware that young people are disproportionately impacted by partner violence. 1.5 million High School students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner, yet this is something that many teens never talk about. 3 in 4 parents have never talked to their children about domestic violence.

Violence in relationships during adolescence can lead to serious and long lasting issues such as substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, anxiety and suicide. Teen dating violence is a pattern of actions or threats of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse by a teen against a current or former dating partner.

While it may not always be visible, teen dating violence includes any of these:

- Extreme jealousy/insecurity
- Constant putdowns
- Isolation from family and friends
- Possessiveness
- Digital abuse
 - Using technology to bully, stalk or intimidate a partner
- Sexting
- Forced sexual activity

What can you do to help address this critical situation confronting today's youth?

- Encourage teachers to facilitate classroom discussions about dating violence and prevention
- Encourage parents to talk to teens about healthy relationships
- Listen, be supportive and try not to judge them
 - Leaving an unhealthy relationship can be difficult and even dangerous
 - Don't give up. They need to know they can rely on you and trust you
- Provide resources where they can talk about their situation anonymously and confidentially
 - **Crime Victims Council 24-hour hotline: 610-437-6611**
 - Parents, friends and teachers can also call to get information and to learn more about how to help

Together we can prevent teen dating violence.

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