



April 2010

Dating Violence: a serious problem for today's teens



More than one in ten Indiana teenagers have been hit, slapped or physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year, and 9.4% of Hoosier students reported being physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to, especially females (13.2% versus 5.3% for males). (1)

Psychological victimization is even higher; an estimated one in three teens reports experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual abuse within a dating relationship. These statistics on intimate partner violence are reflected in Hoosier emergency domestic violence shelters; in 2008, 22.3% of adults served in shelters in Indiana were women ages 15-24. (2)

In 2009, the Indiana Coalition to Improve Adolescent Health established dating violence as one of 10 health priorities for the state.

By 9th grade, nearly three-quarters of teenagers report “dating.” (3) These teens are at a higher risk of intimate partner violence than adults. (4) This type of violence occurs between two people in a close relationship and may be physical, emotional, or sexual – ranging from obvious physical abuse such as punching to less visible aspects like bullying, threatening or controlling the other person.

- **Physical:** when a partner is pinched, hit, shoved, or kicked.
- **Emotional:** 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:** forcing a partner to engage in a sex act when he or she does not or cannot consent.

Early warning signs that a date may eventually become abusive:

- Extreme jealousy
- Controlling behavior
- Quick involvement
- Unpredictable mood swings
- Alcohol and drug use
- Explosive anger
- Isolates partner from friends and family
- Uses force during an argument
- Shows hypersensitivity
- Believes in rigid gender roles
- Blames others for his problems or feelings
- Cruel to animals or children
- Verbally abusive
- Abused former partners
- Threatens violence



Teen dating violence may lead to a variety of **negative outcomes for victims** such as engaging in **unhealthy behaviors**, including **drug and alcohol use** and **doing poorly in school**. (1) The anger and stress that victims feel also may lead to **eating disorders and depression**. (5) Furthermore, **half 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. (6)

Domestic violence in adult relationships also may affect youth. Teens who have **witnessed domestic violence and abuse** between their parents **experience abuse** at a **50% higher rate** than those who have not witnessed abuse. (7) And if violence starts in a youth's life, the victims also may carry those patterns of violence into future relationships. (8) Physically abused teens are three times more likely than their non-abused peers to experience violence during college.

Understanding dating violence may help youth and adults seek appropriate interventions for victims. **Nearly two-thirds of parents claim to be comfortable talking to their teen about the most serious aspects of dating abuse, but 81% of parents either don't know or don't believe that teen dating violence is an issue.** (9)

	Controlling behaviors	Verbal abuse	Sexual abuse	Physical abuse
% of teens in relationships who say they've been a victim	47%	19%	17%	12%
% of parents who are unaware of abuse in teen's relationship	67%	88%	90%	90%

Furthermore, **most teens don't report dating violence**. Currently, both **victims and abusers attribute responsibility for violent dating behavior to victims**, such as the victim provoking the attacker or the victim's personality making them a target. (9) Of teens who have been in an abusive dating relationship, **less than one-third (32%)** confided in a parent about their abuse. (10)

Common indicators of teen dating violence:	
• Physical signs of injury	• Use of drugs/alcohol
• Truancy, dropping out of school	• Pregnancy
• Failing grades	• Emotional outburst
• Changes in mood or personality	• Isolation

Students do, however, **turn to their friends** for help with an abusive relationship. (9) When female high school students were asked whom they would talk to if someone they date is attempting to control them, insults them, or physically harms them, **86%** said they **would confide in a friend**, while only **7%** said they **would talk to police**. (1)



The **key to preventing teen dating violence is communication and illustrating healthy relationships for children**. In addition to teaching and talking to youth about dating violence; parents, counselors, teachers and youth workers may help teens develop skills for building healthy relationships, communication, and problem solving. Physicians, peers and reproductive health professionals also may incorporate screening methods for teen dating violence into their current work with young people.

Resources for those dealing with teen dating violence include:

- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center** www.nsvrc.org
- **National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center** www.safeyouth.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** provides an online training: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/DatingViolence/>
- **Choose Respect Initiative** - An initiative to help adolescents form healthy relationships to prevent dating abuse before it starts: www.chooserespect.org
- **Love is Respect** - National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline & Teen Dating Bill of Rights <http://www.loveisrespect.org/>
- **MTV's A Thin Line** – a campaign developed to empower youth to identify, respond to, and stop the spread of digital abuse: <http://www.athinline.org/about>
- **Break the Cycle** provides a beginner's guide to dating violence. Dating Violence 101: <http://www.breakthecycle.org/dating-violence-101>
- **DoSomething.org** is a campaign partnering with Liz Claiborne Inc. to empower people to take action around teen dating abuse: <http://www.dosomething.org/actnow>
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline** 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- **National Center for Victims of Crime** – <http://www.ncvc.org> 1-800-FYI-CALL

- (1)Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance—United States, 2007. MMWR 2008;57(No.SS#4).
- (2) Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Program Statistics 2007-2008. <http://www.violenceresource.org/stats07-08.pdf>
- (3) Foshee VA, Linder GF, Bauman KE, et al. The Safe Dates project: theoretical basis, evaluation design, and selected baseline findings. American Journal of Preventive Medicine 1996;12(Suppl 2):39–47.
- (4) Jay G. Silverman et Al, "Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality." Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 286, 572, 576-577, (Nov. 5, 2001).
- (5) D. M. Ackard, Minneapolis, MN, and D. Neumark-Sztainer, Division of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, "Date Violence and Date Rape Among Adolescents: Associations with Disordered Eating Behaviors and Psychological Health," Child Abuse & Neglect, 26 455-473, (2002)
- (6) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students—United States, 2003. MMWR 2006;55:532-535.
- (7) Teen Dating Abuse Report (2009) Impact of the Economy and Parent/Teen Dialogue on Dating Relationships and Abuse. http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=45693&folderId=72612&name=DLFE-202.pdf
- (8) Smith PH, White JW, Holland LJ. A longitudinal perspective on dating violence among adolescent and college-age women. American Journal of Public Health. 2003;93(7):1104–9.
- (9) “Women’s Health,” June/July 2004, Family Violence Prevention and Advocated for Youth, <http://www.med.umich.edu/whp/newsletters/summer04/p30-dating.html>.
- (10) Francine Lavoie et al, Teen Dating Relationships and Aggression, (2002)
- (11) Tiffany J. Zwicker, Education Policy Brief, "The Imperative of Developing Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs in Secondary Schools." 12 Southern California Review of Law and Women's Studies, 131, (2002)

More resources from the Indiana Youth Institute:

Free Webinar: Wednesday April 28, 2010 — 2:00-3:30pm (EST)

"Understanding and Responding to Teen Dating Violence"

<http://www.iyi.org/webinar>

IYI Monthly Column: "Teen Dating Violence"

<http://www.iyi.org/resources/articles/IYI-Column-Teen-Dating-Violence-April-2010.doc>

WFYI Radio Interview: <http://www.iyi.org/resources/audio/IYI-WFYI-Dating-Violence-April-2010.mp3>

IYI Library Bibliography: <http://www.iyi.org/resources/doc/IYI-Bib-Developing-Social-Skills-for-Healthy-Relationships-09.pdf>

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