

# Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet

*The National Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative is a project of the  
American Bar Association  
Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children*

*ABA Partners(\*) and Co-Sponsors:  
\*Center on Children and the Law  
\*Commission on Domestic Violence  
Standing Committee on Substance Abuse  
Section of Family Law*

In 2002 the United States Congress amended the Violence Against Women Act by expanding the ‘legal assistance for victims of violence grant program’ to include legal assistance for “victims of dating violence.” However, despite those efforts to increase awareness of dating violence as a criminal act, the alarming incidence of teen dating violence has attracted little national or state attention.<sup>i</sup>

Overwhelming statistical evidence demonstrates the need for immediate, serious, national action in order to halt this dangerous trend. Beginning in the high school environment where the most physical forms of dating violence are taking place, successful efforts to eradicate this alarming trend requires the participation of both federal and state leaders and lawmakers, community organizations and leaders, school personnel, parents, and teenagers themselves - all of whom, in partnership, are critical to reducing and eliminating the causal factors associated with teen dating violence.

The American Bar Association’s National Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative (TDVPI) promises to address that need. Through this innovative federally funded, comprehensive, national school-based program, the ABA Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children, along with other ABA entities and national partners, intends to:

- ~ Positively impact the way teens view and value themselves and others;
- ~ Influence appropriate interpersonal behaviors;
- ~ Involve parents, schools and communities in efforts to ensure the health and safety of their teenagers’ lives; and
- ~ Give our nation’s youth the knowledge, skills, and other necessary supportive services to foster safe and healthy adolescent relationships - enabling them to form lasting and healthy partnerships when they become adults.

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- ◆ Dating Violence is associated with:
    - ✓ significantly higher rates of eating disorder behaviors;
    - ✓ Lower self-esteem;
    - ✓ Higher rates of suicide attempts;
    - ✓ Lower levels of emotional well-being.<sup>ii</sup>

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- ◆ A comparison of Intimate Partner Violence rates between teens and adults reveals that teens are at higher risk of intimate partner abuse.<sup>iii</sup>
- ◆ Among female victims of intimate partner violence, a current or former boyfriend or girlfriend victimized 94% of those between the ages of 16-19.<sup>iv</sup>
- ◆ 40% of teenage girls between the ages of 14 and 17 report knowing another girl their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.<sup>v</sup>
- ◆ During the 1996-1997 school year alone, there were an estimated 4,000 incidents or acts of sexual assault in public schools across the United States.<sup>vi</sup>
- ◆ 58% of rape victims report having been raped between the ages of 12-24.<sup>vii</sup>
- ◆ In 9 out of 10 rapes in which the offender was under 18, so was the victim.<sup>viii</sup>
- ◆ Between 1993 and 1999, 22% of all homicides against females ages 16-19 were committed by an intimate partner.<sup>ix</sup>
- ◆ Various studies show a direct link between teen pregnancy and increased levels of intimate relationship victimization.<sup>x</sup>
- ◆ Nearly one-half of adult sex offenders reported committing their first sexual offenses prior to the age of 18.<sup>xi</sup>
- ◆ Both victims and abusers attribute the responsibility for violent dating behavior to victims, caused by: provocation by the girl; the victim's personality type; the girl's need for affection; communication problems; and peer group influence."<sup>xii</sup>
- ◆ Male peer support for violence against women is a constant predictor of male violence within post-secondary educational institutions.<sup>xiii</sup>
- ◆ The severity of violence among intimate partners has been shown to increase if the pattern has been established in adolescence.<sup>xiv</sup>
- ◆ Patterns of dating violence behavior often start early and carry through into adult relationships.<sup>xv</sup>
- ◆ A University of Texas medical center study of new mothers, age 18 and younger, chronicled numerous reports of being slapped, hit, kicked or physically hurt by a husband or boyfriend. Most of those incidents occurred during the first three months after childbirth.<sup>xvi</sup>
- ◆ Symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression, which include poor concentration, avoidance, hyper-arousal, and lack of motivation and energy, are common reactions to intimate partner violence in adults and may also occur in adolescents, greatly impairing school and social functioning.<sup>xvii</sup>

- ◆ A 2001 Minnesota study of 81,247 high school students looked at the prevalence of date violence and rape in adolescents and examined the associations between date violence, rape, eating disorders, and psychopathology. Findings include the following:
  - ✓ 50% 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;
  - ✓ those reporting an abusive relationship were also more likely to report repeat victimizations;
  - ✓ 1 in 10 girls and 1 in 20 boys will have an abusive experience while on a date.<sup>xviii</sup>
  - ✓ 77% of female and 67% of male high school students endorsed some form of sexual coercion, including unwanted kissing, hugging, genital contact, and sexual intercourse.<sup>xix</sup>
- ◆ One in five high school girls has been physically or sexually assaulted by a dating partner, significantly increasing their risk of drug abuse, suicide and other harmful behavior.<sup>xx</sup>
- ◆ 20% of surveyed male students reported witnessing someone they go to high school with physically hit a person they were dating.<sup>xxi</sup>
- ◆ 39% of female high school students reported that students talk in school about whether someone is attempting to control the person they are dating.<sup>xxii</sup>
- ◆ When female high school students were asked whom they would talk to if someone they were dating was attempting to control them, insulted them, or physically harmed them, 86% said they would confide in a friend, while only 7% said they would talk to police.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- ◆ Absent effective intervention, serious, violent, or chronic juvenile offenders are likely to recidivate at the age of peak offending.<sup>xxiv</sup>

## ✘ Dating violence during adolescence has been linked to adult marital violence.<sup>xxv</sup>

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### *Endnotes*

<sup>i</sup> Of the twenty-nine states that include dating violence in their domestic violence statutes, only 7 allow *minors* to obtain protective orders. Because minors rarely confide incidents of dating violence to parents or other adults, this type of victimization remains relatively unnoticed in those states without statutes, and the majority of teen victims remain unprotected.

<sup>ii</sup> R. F. Hanson, Adolescent Dating Violence: Prevalence and Psychological Outcomes, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 26 (2002) 449-453. National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston. Most notable in this study is that the associations remained significant even controlling for other factors such as age and race. Therefore, the author notes, the study's findings "highlight both the prevalence of dating violence

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- among adolescents, as well as the associated risk for a variety of significant psychological and potential physical health problems.”
- iii Jay G. Silverman et. al., (2001). “Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality.” 286(5) JAMA 572, 576-577.
- iii Jay G. Silverman et. al., (2001). “Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality.” 286(5) JAMA 572, 576-577.
- iv U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2001) 7. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-99.*
- v *Children Now*, and Kaiser Permanente Poll (1995).
- vi The Children’s Program, “Fact sheet: Children and Domestic Violence.”  
<http://endabuse.org/programs/display>
- vii Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (2002) 5. *Fact Sheet on Violence: Adolescents & Young Adults.*
- viii Id., A U.S. Department of Justice analysis of data on rape and sexual assault using data obtained from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, Ann Arbor, MI. “Sex Offenses and Offenders” (1997)
- ix Bureau of Justice Statistics Press Release (10/29/01). “Violence Rates Among Intimate Partners Differ Greatly According to Age.”
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- xi Ron Snipe et al., (1998) “Recidivism in Young Adulthood, Adolescent Sexual Offenders Grown Up.” 25 *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, 109, 117.
- xii Francine Lavoie et al., (2002) Teen Dating Relationships and Aggression, *Violence Against Women*, 6.
- xiii Martin D. Schwartz & Walter S DeKerssedy (2000). “Aggregation Bias and Woman Abuse,” 15 *J. Interpersonal Violence* 555, 557.
- xiv S.L. Feld & M.A. Strauss (1989). *Criminology*, 27, 141-161.
- xv V.A. Forshee, et al. (1996). *Health Education Research*, 11(3), 275-286.
- xvi S. Harrykisson, M.P.H., V. Rickert, Psy.D., and C. Wiemann, Ph.D (2002). “Teen Mothers as Targets of Violence,” *Youth Today* Vol.11, No.5.
- xvii American Psychiatric Association (APA) (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Washington, DC.
- xviii 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 (2002) 455-473.
- xix M. Jackson, F. Cram & F.W. Seymour (2000). *Journal of Family Violence*, 15, 23-36.
- xx American Medical Association (2001). *Journal of the American Medical Association.*
- xxi Tiffany J. Zwicker (2002). 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.
- xxii Id.
- xxiii Id.
- xxiv Mark W. Lipsey, et al. (2000). Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. “Effective Intervention for Serious Juvenile Offenders,” 1.
- xxv L. Bergman (1992). “Dating Violence Among High School Students.” *Social Work*, 37, 21-27.