

ISSUE

Dating violence poses a significant risk for teenagers as well as challenges for domestic violence programs in providing effective intervention and prevention services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support Laws That Allow Teens Full Access to Services
- Support School-Based Policies, Outreach, and Interventions
- Support Additional Funding to Enable Domestic Violence Programs to Provide Specialized Services for Teens

BACKGROUND

Prevalence & Consequences

A growing body of research shows that domestic and sexual violence against youth involved in dating relationships is shockingly common.

- Nearly 1.5 million (1 in 11) high school students nationwide experienced physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.⁴⁷
- **Most at Risk:** Teen and young women, aged 16 to 24, experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, almost 3 times the average for women as a whole.⁴⁸
- **Gender Differences:** Among older teens, the percentage of violent crime involving an intimate partner was 10 times higher for females than males (9% versus 0.6%).⁴⁹
 - ◆ Young males are more likely to use physical violence as a means to control their girlfriends, whereas young females are more likely to use violence in self-defense. Females are more likely to sustain serious injuries and feel terrified as a result, while males seldom fear violence from their female dating partner.⁵⁰
- **Sexual Abuse:** 1 in 5 high school girls has been sexually abused by a dating partner.⁵¹
 - ◆ A study released in October 2008 found that nearly 1 in 5 young women (18% of women age 18-24) report having experienced forced sexual intercourse at least once in their lives.⁵²

Not surprisingly, this violence can have traumatic effects that last well into adulthood.

- **Risky/Unhealthy Behaviors:** Victims of teen dating violence are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; drive after drinking; engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors (eating disorders); commit sexually risky behaviors; and become pregnant.⁵³
 - ◆ In particular, girls who are raped are about 3 times more likely to suffer from psychiatric disorders and over 4 times more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol abuse in adulthood.⁵⁴
- **Suicide Ideation & Attempts:** Adolescents who experience dating violence are up to 60% more likely than their non-exposed counterparts to report one or more suicide attempts.⁵⁵

47 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students - United States, 2003," 55(19) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 532-35 (May 19, 2006).

48 C. Rennison, "Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S., 1993-2004" (2006) & "Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victims, 1993-1999" (2001), Dep't of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

49 K. Baum, "Juvenile Victimization and Offending, 1993-2003," U.S. Dep't of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005).

50 Nat'l Council on Crime and Delinquency, "Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence Among Teens," (Sept. 2008).

51 J.G. Silverman, A. Raj, L.A. Mueci, & J.E. Hathaway, "Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality," 286(3) *J. Amer. Medical Ass'n* 572 (2001).

52 E. Holcombe, J. Manlove, & E. Ikramullah, "Forced Sexual Intercourse Among Young Adult Women," *Child Trends*, Pub. 2008-30 (Aug. 2008).

53 J.G. Silverman, A. Raj, L.A. Mueci, & J.E. Hathaway, "Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality," 286(3) *Journal of Amer. Medical Ass'n* 572 (August 1, 2001).

54 K.S. Kendler, C.M. Bulik, J. Silberg, J.M. Hettema, J. Myers, & C.A. Prescott, "Childhood Sexual Abuse and Adult Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Disorders in Women," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 57 (Oct. 2000).

55 Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, *General statistics on dating violence* (2007), available at http://www.caepv.org/getinfo/facts_stats.php?factsec=1.

The Need for Specialized Services for Teen Victims

Compounding the impact of dating violence on youth is the dearth of appropriate resources and services geared toward helping them. Teen victims of dating violence often **face additional obstacles** to getting the help they need, such as:

- Confusion about the law and their legal rights;
- Lack of transportation, shelter, and money;
- Distrust of law enforcement and other authority figures; and
- Lack of knowledge about available domestic violence and other services.

When teen victims of dating violence do reach out for help, specialized services by service providers with the **skills to deal with these unique challenges are vital to early intervention**. Traditional domestic violence advocacy, interventions, and community education initiatives must be tailored to fit the changing needs of teen victims. **Without specialized services, youth may end up falling through the cracks, leaving them to carry these same patterns of violence into adult relationships.**

The Need for Effective School-Based Policies, Outreach, and Interventions

Schools have always been envisioned as a safe haven where youth learn and grow into productive citizens. However, violence in schools has shattered this ideal, and left many young people afraid of the very place they are sent to grow and mature.

- In 2000, **girls 6 to 18 years of age reported almost 5,000 incidents of rape, attempted rape, or other sexual battery in public schools.**⁵⁶ This number reflects only the number reported, and not the countless cases of sexual assault that go unreported.
- More than half of teens between the ages of 13 and 18 know friends or peers who have been physically, sexually, or verbally assaulted.⁵⁷
- When youth are faced with abusive relationships, **most (73%) say they would talk about it with a friend.**⁵⁸ Unfortunately, the **friends in whom they would confide are often uninformed** about the rights of youth in abusive relationships, and thus unable to help a friend in need.

Teens spend a significant portion of their lives in school. Teachers, coaches, and counselors have important roles in the lives of students, and for this reason **the school setting could be the key to eliminating dating and sexual violence in the youth population**. However, schools and school personnel commonly lack the knowledge or resources needed to address these issues effectively. In order to address the increasingly urgent need for school-based prevention and interventions, **schools need effective policies and procedures to address teen dating violence when it occurs among their students, and school staff must be taught to recognize the warning signs of abuse, and to provide resources to teach students about the issue and provide appropriate referrals.**

56 Miller, A.K., & Chandler, C. "Violence in U.S. Public Schools: 2000 School Survey on Crime and Safety, Statistical Analysis Report." U.S. Dep't of Education, Nat'l Center for Education Statistics 2004-314 (2003), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004314.pdf>. In 2004, only 36% of victims of rape and sexual assault age 12 and over indicated that they reported the crime to the police. Rape and sexual assault were the violent crimes least often reported to law enforcement. S. Catalano, Shannon.. *National Crime Victimization Survey: Criminal Victimization*, 2004, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (Sept. 2005).

57 Liz Claiborne Inc., *Omnibuzz Topline Findings: Teen Relationship Abuse Research*, Feb. 2005.

58 Liz Claiborne Inc., *Omnibuzz Topline Findings: Teen Relationship Abuse Research*, Feb. 2005.

The Need for Laws that Allow Teens Full Access to Services

All of Pennsylvania's domestic violence programs provide specialized services for the children and youth they serve. At the same time, Pennsylvania's **domestic violence programs face particular challenges when serving minor victims of teen dating violence**. For teen victims under age 18, programs must first obtain a **parent or guardian's consent** before programs may provide a full range of services to the teen victim.

Additionally, **programs must inform victims that they are mandated reporters of child abuse**, so disclosure of abuse by a minor victim will trigger a report to the state Children and Youth System and their potential investigation and intervention. When teen victims learn that receiving services from the domestic violence program may result in intervention by the Children and Youth System, many victims are deterred from pursuing the program's assistance.

While the purpose of the mandatory reporting law is to protect children subjected to abuse, when applied in the case of minors who are experiencing abuse within their own relationships-as opposed to abuse by a parent or guardian-the mandatory reporting law is having the opposite effect: it is discouraging teen victims from getting the help they need to break free of abuse.

PCADV Initiatives to Address the Needs of Teen Dating Violence Victims

The PCADV is currently working to strengthen local domestic violence programs' capacity to meet the needs of teen victims in the communities they serve. In particular, we are:

- **Surveying** the resources local domestic violence programs are currently using and programs' identified **gaps in resources**;
- Researching recent developments among our national partners to **identify best practices** in serving teen victims and **innovative outreach and education tools** specifically designed to reach teen populations;
- Developing **specialized technical assistance and training materials** to enhance programs' capacity to meet the needs of teen victims;
- Exploring **collaborations with government agencies and other service providers** to develop cross-systems responses to teen dating violence; and
- Researching **potential legislative options** to address issues involved in serving teen victims and engaging other systems in prevention efforts. Specifically, the PCADV is exploring:
 - ◆ Legislation to require schools to enact policies on teen dating violence and
 - ◆ Legislation to ensure that minor teen victims of dating violence are able to access the full range of intervention services of domestic violence programs.