

SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IN TEXAS

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“Three out of four teens have either personally experienced dating violence or know someone who has.”

Survey of Texas teens, conducted by TCFV (2003).

In September of 2003 Texas added dating violence to the list of definitions included in the Family Code, Section 71.04. Dating violence is defined as:

“... an act by an individual that is against another individual with whom that person has or has had a dating relationship that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, sexual assault, or that is a threat that reasonably places the individual in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself.”

A dating relationship is defined as:

“... a relationship between individuals who have or have had a continuing or a romantic or intimate nature. The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on consideration of:

1. the length of the relationship;
2. the nature of the relationship; and
3. the frequency and type of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.” (FC 71.0021)

When intimate partner violence rates were compared between teens and adults, teens were found to be at a higher risk of abuse. Teens are at a volatile and vulnerable developmental stage, while struggling with issues of identity and self-esteem. They are no longer children and are not yet adults. Teens are just beginning to form their first relationships and do not have the experience, confidence, or information to know what is healthy in a relationship. Teens are particularly susceptible to becoming trapped in the cycle of violence.

Recently, a survey was conducted on behalf of the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) on the prevalence of dating violence among Texas teens and young adults. Data was collected from a state-wide online survey of 918 respondents. All respondents were unmarried and between the ages of 16-24. They were randomly drawn to reflect a sample representative of the Texas population. This survey defined “dating violence” as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviors in which one partner in a relationship uses a number of abusive behaviors – emotional, physical, or sexual – to control the other

partner. While the survey did not use the statutory definition of dating violence, the results are alarming. Fifty percent of the respondents personally experienced dating violence, either as targets or as abusers. Three out of four teens have either personally experienced dating violence or know someone who has. Dating violence occurs in casual dating situations as well as serious, long-term relationships, regardless of sexual orientation. It has no boundaries, crossing all racial, economic, and social lines.



Thirty-three percent of females and 22% of males have experienced physical violence within their dating relationships. Punching, kicking, slapping, shaking, pushing or grabbing hard enough to cause discomfort all qualify as physical abuse. This abuse may even be as extreme as being attacked with a knife, gun or other weapons. Between 5.5% - 9.7% of women murdered by intimate partners in Texas since 2001 were still teens at the time of death.

It is important to remember that abusers use many tools to establish power and control over their victims. Not all of those tools are illegal, but officers should be able to recognize them as a part of the overall situation endangering victims. These efforts to control may also include verbal abuse, such as yelling, threatening (“I’ll kill myself if you leave me”), and name calling. The study found that 49% of females and 33% of males have experienced some form of verbal abuse in a dating relationship. Emotional abuse is when one person harms the other’s self esteem or causes shame. Jealousy is a common form of emotional abuse and may become so extreme it keeps a partner away from friends, family or interests. Isolation is usually one of the first goals of an abuser, so that they can avoid any outside intervention. Friends and family are intentionally excluded because of their familiarity with the victim and their ability to notice slight changes in the victim’s personality. Sexual abuse (more broadly defined than sexual assault) refers to any kind of unwanted sexual advance or contact and can range from unwelcome sexual comments to kissing to intercourse. Thirty-three percent of females and 6% of males have experienced sexual abuse according to the survey.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Tom Gaylor
Deputy Executive Director
of Intergovernmental Affairs
Texas Municipal Police Association

The winter holidays always makes me nostalgic. Five years ago this month TMPA embarked on a yet uncharted journey to create a training program for law enforcement officers in every type of agency that might be tasked with responding to an allegation of family violence or sexual assault. Since then, the SAFVIC program has trained more than 9,000 Texas peace officers! I must thank the SAFVIC staff and the instructors for their dedication and commitment to make this important program a success. In addition, I would like to thank the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office for taking a chance on this type of program and providing the necessary support that makes it possible and free to law enforcement around the state. Lastly, I'd like to thank victim advocacy groups such as the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, the Texas Council on Family Violence, and the Governor's Commission on Women for giving us this opportunity to try a new approach to training law enforcement on how to better respond to these very destructive crimes. The funds used for this training typically went to these organizations to provide training to law enforcement and they graciously agreed to share the funds with us to support their ultimate goal of preventing these crimes and facilitating victim restoration when possible.

ration, and allows officers and the communities they serve to develop resources for the prevention of or the early intervention in these crimes.

Jennifer Gonzales, Nicole Martinez and Brooke Hinojosa have been working feverishly with our core instructors to update the curriculum to reflect changes in law, new investigative techniques, new resources, and new audio-visual presentation technology. We hope to have this new curriculum available in late Spring of 2007. For those of you who've been through class before, I recommend taking it again. Much of the information has been updated and the presentation of that information is fresh and effective. As for the information that remains the same, it wouldn't hurt to get a refresher and rejuvenate your enthusiasm. TCEOSE rules allow officers to get training credit for repeating a course each cycle or 24 months. Although I do not think you need this course every two years, I do think the new material we will be adding will be very useful to you. In addition, within the next year we will be adding new components, including human trafficking and exploitation, challenges of investigating sexual assault and family violence in immigrant communities, and more.

I think the most important thing I've learned in the last five years is that if you give officers the chance to feel useful and effective they will jump at the opportunity to perform. When we sat down to create the SAFVIC training we knew that many Texas peace officers felt less than effective and perhaps incapable of dealing with the complexities involved in family violence or sexual assault. Thankfully, I've seen many officers leave the training refreshed and enthusiastic, feeling that they now have the understanding and tools necessary to be productive when dealing with these offenses. Our hope and the goal of SAFVIC training is to offer officers new insight and tools for dealing with family violence and sexual assault calls in a way that ensures offender accountability, provides protection to the victim and facilitates resto-

Lastly, we've received numerous positive comments from officers on the course evaluation regarding the value of the material, but we'd like to seek some feedback from officers that have had the opportunity to utilize the material in the field. Please take some time to tell us how you've used the course material at www.safvic.org. We want positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. It is important that we keep this material relevant to law enforcement and the issues peace officers face, so we need to hear from you in the field!



You may need to raise a red flag if you see or suspect that one person in a relationship...

- ~ Calls or text messages excessively
- ~ Shows up unannounced at the person's home, work or hangouts
- ~ Shows or hints of an explosive temper
- ~ Embarrasses them in public or private through insults or degrading comments
- ~ Tells the others what to do, what to wear or how to act
- ~ Doesn't ever want the other person to spend any free time with family and friends

Any one of these things is a RED FLAG

RED FLAGS CAMPAIGN

To combat the pervasive problem of dating violence among young Texans, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV), with a grant from the Texas Office of the Attorney General, has launched the **Red Flags** campaign. Through online and grassroots outreach, **Red Flags** will reach young men and women with two principle messages – “Control Isn't Love” and “Know When to Raise Them” – aimed at helping them to identify and deal with the early warning signs of dating violence.

The “Red Flags” name is a metaphor for these dating violence warning signs, and the campaign seeks to empower young adults to listen to their instincts and raise a red flag when they spot jealousy, control, put-downs and other behaviors that just don't feel right. **Red Flags** is ultimately about promoting positive dating relationship for young Texans marked by freedom, respect, happiness, equality and safety. For more information about **Red Flags** and tips for dealing with dating violence, visit www.knowtheredflags.com.



SAVE THE DATE...

REMEMBER THE PAST, CLAIM THE FUTURE



The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) will hold their Annual Conference March 11-15, 2007 at the Doubletree Austin North Hotel themed "Remember the Past, Claim the Future" to commemorate TAASA's 25th anniversary. For the second year, TAASA will offer a Diversity Pre-Conference free of charge on March 11, followed by four days of trainings for advocates, sexual assault nurse examiners, law enforcement and others. Further information about the conference and the training topics offered will be available in mid-December. For more information, visit www.taasa.org or call 512-474-7190.

This article was provided by Cecilia Perkins of TAASA.

FEATURED AGENCY:

Women's Advocacy Project



Increasing Victim Safety:

Next year, the Women's Advocacy Project will be celebrating its 25th year of providing legal services designed to increase access to justice for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. This statewide non-profit organization provides services through eight pioneering programs:

- 1. LEGAL HOTLINES.** The attorney-staffed tool-free Family Violence Legal Line and Family Law Hotline provide legal assistance on a variety of legal concerns related to family law and domestic violence.
- 2. FAMILY VIOLENCE CIVIL ATTORNEY PROGRAM.** Attorneys represent survivors of domestic abuse in family law cases when other service providers have turned them away and they cannot afford a private attorney.
- 3. EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ORDER PROGRAM.** Attorneys help domestic violence victims obtain emergency protective orders.
- 4. PRO SE PROTECTIVE ORDER PROGRAM.** Do-it-yourself packet that allows traditionally underserved populations, including women in rural areas and Spanish speakers, to represent themselves in obtaining a Protective Order.
- 5. ASSISTED PRO SE PROGRAM.** Assists survivors of domestic violence to represent themselves in court by working in conjunction with family crisis centers throughout Texas. It provides free individualized legal assistance by preparing the participant's court documents and providing ongoing legal advice in family law and related matters, including divorce, protective orders, and orders relating to con-

servatorship and support of children.

6. TECHNICAL ADVOCACY AND OUT-REACH PROGRAM. The Project's Advocate assists victims of domestic violence, Texas shelters, and other service providers with in-depth problem solving of complex issues that uniquely affect women's safety and security.

7. THE JUSTICE INITIATIVE. Provides coordination and oversight of statewide legal efforts that serve victims of domestic violence, including access to protective orders, enhanced use of the appellate process in cases interpreting domestic violence statutes, litigation that impacts domestic violence issues, and advocacy within institutions that intersect with victim's issues.

8. LEGAL ACCESS INITIATIVE. Consults and assists shelter and outreach legal advocates in domestic violence agencies on strategies to increase the scope and effectiveness of legal services within their communities.

In the interest of increasing the number of Magistrate's Orders for Emergency Protection issued in Texas (CCP 17.292, otherwise known as the Emergency Protective Order), the Women's Advocacy Project has been offering best practices seminars and manuals throughout the state. The Emergency Protective Order (EPO) is a short term order designed to provide immediate safety measures for a victim following a domestic violence arrest by ordering the batterer to commit no further family violence, stalking, harassment, or threats as well as abide by stay away provisions of particular locations to ensure safety of the victim.

Since October of 2005, over 5,500 copies of the Women's Advocacy Project manual "EPO in a Box" have been distributed and over 50 seminars held. In each seminar, participants also learn about services offered through the

See Women's Advocacy Project, next page.



Family Violence

Legal Hotline

800.374.HOPE

Family Law

Hotline

800.777.FAIR



Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigators Course

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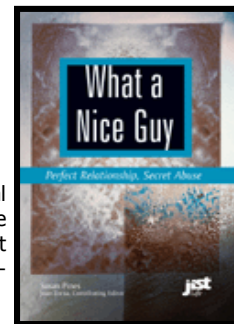
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We're on the web @
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FEATURED BOOK:

What a Nice Guy *Perfect Relationship, Secret Abuse*

By Susan Pines
Joan Zorza, Contributing Editor



Why is it that women who are being abused stay in the relationship—beyond verbal abuse, into violence, and even to the point of death? Their reasons for staying include these questions: Where will I go? What will I do? What will happen to my family? What will he do? Yet, underneath those questions is the real piece that ties her to him: Emotions. She loves him. She needs him.

What a Nice Guy describes the emotional connection that binds a woman to her abuser, the escalating violence in the relationship, the cycle of abuse, and the moment that a woman realizes she is being abused. The moving narrative is divided into sections that end with questions for thought and for journaling.

The contributing editor is Joan Zorza, editor of the Domestic Violence Report and the Sexual Assault Report, published by the Civic Research Institute in Kingston, New Jersey. Joan is a highly recognized advocate for women in the movement against domestic violence and adds great insight to the issue.

This new, two-part booklet explores the reasons why women stay in abusive relationships and provides the information they need to move from the abusive situation to safety.

This two-part booklet can be purchased at www.impactpublications.com.

Women's Advocacy Project, from page 3

local domestic violence shelters and outreach centers, the importance of safety planning, how to access 2-year protective orders and the availability of local legal providers to represent victims in family law actions.

To attract more interest, the Women's Advocacy Project has joined forces with the Dallas District Attorney's Office to provide additional TCLEOSE training regarding the best prac-

tices of responding to domestic violence calls. A 21-year veteran of the Dallas Police Department as well as a SAFVIC Instructor, Detective Jon Lumbley offers sessions on the best practices of interviewing victims and determining the predominant aggressor. For information about how to receive materials or schedule a seminar, contact Diana Philip at dphilip@women-law.org.

Article provided by Diana Philips of the Women's Advocacy Project

Teen Dating Violence, from cover

Although dating violence is widespread in the teen population, services specifically intended for adolescents are rare. The majority of resources are either child abuse services geared toward young children or domestic violence services focused on adult victims. To combat the pervasive problem of dating violence among young Texans, the Texas Council on Family Violence with a grant from the Texas Office of the Attorney General, has launched the Red Flags campaign. The Red Flags campaign is the 3rd and final installment of the highly successful "Break the Silence: Make the Call" domestic violence research and public awareness campaign. This campaign is ultimately promoting positive dating relationships for young Texans. The Red Flags is a project of the TCFV especially designed to help young adults form healthy relationships by learning to spot and deal with the warning signs of dating violence. For more information about Red Flags and tips for dealing with dating violence, visit www.knowtheredflags.com or visit www.myspace.com/knowtheredflags.com. Young people who cannot access help now for issues of domestic violence will find it difficult as adults to change a pattern of abuse that has been occurring

for years or decades.

It is important to remember that law enforcement officers are often the first to discover dating violence or a potentially serious situation involving emotional abuse. Officers stationed in schools can play an even greater role in preventing or intervening in dating violence. Teaching teens that this type of behavior is unhealthy, if not illegal, is a great way to stop the potential for violent relationships before they become adults. Keep your eyes and ears open.

Information and Statistics used in this article were taken from:

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