

SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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**We couldn't do this
without you!**

Love is Respect Tools to Address Teen Dating Violence

By: Candice Hopkins, Director of loveisrespect.org

An abusive teen dating relationship may look like an adult relationship that involves domestic violence; Boyfriend and girlfriend may live together, have children, and the victim may be isolated, controlled and abused. However, statistics reflect that teen dating abuse is a unique and important problem warranting special attention. Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of emotional, physical, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.¹ Teens ages 18 and 19 experience the highest rate of stalking.² Additionally, nearly one in three sexually active high school aged girls report experiencing physical or sexual violence from a dating partner.³ Many of these victims still live at home with at least one parent, are in school, and many haven't told the adults in their lives what is happening in their relationship.

Like domestic violence, teen dating abuse is a pattern of behavior wherein one partner attempts to control the other through various and often escalating tactics. These can include emotional and verbal abuse, isolation from friends and

threats of self harm, and sexual coercion. However, one considerable difference between abusive teen and adult relationships is the prevalence of misuse of technology as a tool for control and manipulation by abusers. Social networking sites and cell phones are two technological tools often misused.

Internet use for teens and young adults today is the norm - most don't remember a time when it wasn't available to them. Ninety-three percent of 12-17 year olds have gone online and one-third of teens go online daily. Teens use the internet for everything from doing homework and registering for classes to listening to music and watching television. They also share online. Social networking sites, like Facebook and MySpace, where users maintain profiles, post photos, and communicate with their classmates and friends, are a cornerstone of most teens online life. Seventy-three percent of online teens ages 12 to 17 use a social network. Most teens won't experience any negative effects from using a social network, however the social aspect can allow for abusive partners to exploit peer

pressure, another unique dynamic in abusive teen relationships. Teens may threaten to spread rumors about their girlfriend or boyfriend if they attempt to break up with them, using social networking sites to reach a wide audience of friends, classmates, and strangers. Here, "sexting", which has received much media attention lately, can come into play. If a teen has sent partially nude photos of herself to her boyfriend, something that many teens do and feel is normal, he may keep her in the relationship by threatening to distribute the photos to her parents, friends - even an entire school.

Seventy-five percent of American teens ages 12-17 also have a cell phone. While the ease of access to a cell phone over a landline may make it easier for an abusive teen to reach their partner, the real concern in an abusive relationship is text messaging. Most texting is benign - 54% of teens text daily, and many text more than 50 times a day- but in an abusive relationship texting is often used as a tool to track and control a partner. A teen may be texted

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Child Abuse & Neglect Training for Law Enforcement

Child deaths resulting from child abuse and neglect have been on the rise in Texas. The new Child Abuse & Neglect Training Program's goal is to improve law enforcement's response to child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, by administering a comprehensive and FREE 3-day training that combines an overview of effective response to such abuse, with instruction on the benefits of multidisciplinary teams. For more information about the program, please contact Nicole Martinez at nicole.martinez@tmpa.org or 512.454.8900.



WELCOME NEW SAFVIC INSTRUCTORS

SAFVIC Courses

SAFVIC

- TCLEOSE Course #3264 (24 hour credit)
- Recommended for law enforcement officers, but victim advocates and prosecutors are encouraged to attend

SAFVIC for Cybercrimes

- TCLEOSE Course #3266 (8 hour credit)
- For law enforcement officers ONLY

SAFVIC for TCPs

- TCLEOSE Course #3267 (8 hour credit)
- Recommended for telecommunicators and 911 dispatchers/call takers

All SAFVIC courses are FREE!

To register online for any of the SAFVIC courses, please visit www.safvic.org and click on **Calendar**.



(Back row, from left to right)

Laura Blackburn
Brazos County 9-1-1

Harry Goodan
Longview Police Department

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McKinney Police Department

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NCTCOG

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Smith County Sheriff's Office
Communications

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Victoria Police Department

We would like to congratulate and welcome our new SAFVIC for TCP Instructors! They recently completed the 24 hour SAFVIC for TCP Instructor Course in Austin, Texas on April 19th - 21st, 2010.

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hundreds of times a day, at all hours, by their boyfriend or girlfriend. Ignoring the texts is often not an option - as their boyfriend/girlfriend may become angry, make accusations, or escalate their abusive behavior if there isn't a satisfactory response. A teen that has ended an abusive relationship may continue to receive messages from their former partner, pleading with them to come back or threatening them. With both examples, "turning off" the social networking site or the cell phone isn't a reasonable option when it comes to dealing with threats; for most teens, this would mean cutting off a major form of their daily communication. Changing a cell phone number isn't always easy for a teen on their parents cell phone plan. And even if a teen were to shut down all of their online accounts, this wouldn't keep their partner from sharing information about them online.

In response to the intersection

of teen dating abuse and technology, *loveisrespect*, launched in February of 2007 during Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week. *loveisrespect*, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline is the first hotline to address the issue of dating abuse at a national level. From offices in Austin, Texas, volunteer "Peer Advocates" (trained advocates typically between the ages of 16 and 24), take calls from teens, parents, and concerned friends from around the country. With the intent of meeting teens where they are, the internet, we also provide live chat advocacy. Users can visit www.loveisrespect.org between the hours of 4pm to 2am CST and talk one-on-one with a Peer Advocate in a confidential and secure environment. All callers and chatters have the opportunity to remain anonymous. Since its launch in 2007, the Helpline has answered over 31,000 calls and 13,000 chats. Over fifty percent of these contacts have been between the ages of 13 and 17.

In some cases, our advocates are in the unique position to educate

teens about healthy relationships before abuse becomes an issue. We receive chats and calls daily from teens who have questions or concerns about someone they are considering dating. In most cases, however, the teen is already immersed in an unhealthy, abusive or controlling relationship. Peer Advocates respond to this by providing crisis intervention, helping the caller or chatter recognize what is happening in their relationship, helping them identify resources and create a safety plan. Some teens want to end their relationship; some don't. Our safety plans, always incorporating technology concerns, can provide for both of these situations. Advocates also have the ability to connect callers directly to a local program - when these callers are under 18 and need counseling or legal assistance, this can require some negotiation.

Primary prevention and access to services are two ways the Helpline hopes to reduce the amount of teen dating abuse and therefore the amount of domestic violence in adult relationships. Law enforcement

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SAVE THE DATE



22nd Annual Crimes Against Children Conference Providing Professionals the Instruction, Information and Strategies They Need to Protect Child Victims and Prosecute their Offenders

August 9-12, 2010
Sheraton Dallas Hotel
400 N. Olive Street
Dallas, Texas 75201
(214) 922-8000

The Crimes Against Children Conference is presented annually by the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center and the Dallas Police Department. The conference is conducted for the sole purpose of providing training to those people employed by governmental or nonprofit agencies in the fields of law enforcement, prosecution, child protective services, social work, children's advocacy, therapy, and medicine who work directly with child victims of crime.

The goal of the Crimes Against Children Conference is to provide practical instruction, using current information, the newest ideas and most successful intervention strategies, to those professionals responsible for combating the many and varied forms of crimes against children.

Since 1988, professionals involved in the investigation, prosecution and treatment of crimes against children have been coming in growing numbers to receive training at this premiere conference.

For more information about the 22nd Annual Crimes Against Children Conference and to register, please visit www.cacconference.org

Featured Agency

THE RAPE CRISIS CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

The Rape Crisis Center for children and adults was founded in 1975 to provide comprehensive services to sexual assault victims and their families across Bexar County and surrounding areas. The Center's goal was to ensure victims of sexual violence would have a responsive medical community, sensitive law enforcement officials, and active prosecution system.

The Rape Crisis Center (RCC) offers a 24-hour crisis intervention hotline and hospital accompaniment services, as well as an online hotline. The hotline serves as the medium where a client is educated regarding the effects of rape, informed of what to do in certain crisis situations, provided crisis intervention services for a distraught survivor re-living her/his trauma, or notified by a participating hospital regarding the need for an advocate to be available to rape victims. The Center's Hotline also serves as the main source of contact for Bexar County's Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Currently the online hotline is available to individuals Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Central time.



In 2006 the RCC implemented an expansion of its online crisis intervention services, as it became the Lead National Partner in the launching of the Rape Abuse Incest National Network's (RAINN) Online Hotline. This expansion has provided individuals not only in the San Antonio and Bexar County area, but nationwide with access to "real-time" crisis intervention services. The hotline is available both telephonically at (210) 349-7273 or online at www.rainn.org.

Hospital Accompaniment

Hospital accompaniment and advocacy is offered as assistance to victims who are about to encounter a difficult emotional and psychological journey. Without hospital accompaniment and advocacy during the reporting, medical, and evidence collection process, the victim would have to maneuver this process completely alone. The need to lessen the trauma of sexual violence is extremely important as the victim is already reeling

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FROM THE SAFVIC LIBRARY

Scared Silent: The Mildred Muhammad Story by Mildred Muhammad

Mildred Muhammad, former wife of the D.C. Sniper, recounts the domestic terror she received at the hands of her husband, and the tragic events that occurred after their divorce. By sharing her story she explains how the sniper murders committed by her husband in October of 2002 in Washington D.C. were not random acts of violence but a continuation of the intimidation and violence she experienced in marriage.

Mildred witnessed her husband's bizarre behavior after he returned home from the Gulf War, but unfortunately her concerns were dismissed. John Muhammad, her husband, was to the outside world a charming and affable man, however he returned a different person, threatening to kill her and eventually kidnapping her children and living on the run in Antigua. In a plot to gain custody of his children permanently, John Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, killed ten innocent bystanders, crimes which could have been avoided had Mildred's fears and warnings been heeded.

Available in the SAFVIC library to SAFVIC instructors only.

Featured Agency cont.

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from the effects of a very intimate crime. A trained, sensitive, and caring advocate present at the hospital during this process can begin to help in the healing process.

Counseling

Counseling services are designed to assist clients in living more comfortably in the immediate crisis. The client seeking services is usually in distress when he/she calls for an appointment and requires immediate accessible services. The RCC offers a variety of free counseling services, including, individual, group, child play therapy, and specialized groups (i.e. Adults Molested as Children, PTSD Symptom Management, support groups, and others).

Risk Reduction Education

The risk reduction education component of the project provides age appropriate curriculum for youth in grades K-12. These sessions, consisting of lecture, group discussion, group exercise, videos, and handouts about sexual violence, ensure students are educated on issues of risk-reduction and general steps they may take to make themselves and their learning environments safer.

Primary Prevention Education

The Center for Disease Control & Prevention, as part of a federal grant award, is asking the RCC to expand its focus to include primary prevention, which includes interventions implemented before sexual violence occurs to help mitigate victimization or perpetration, i.e. stopping rape/sexual assault before it occurs. An internal workgroup has

been established that will eventually include community representation, and be tasked with helping to refine and implement selected primary prevention strategies.

Outreach Services

Outreach services include general awareness presentations and participation in volunteer and health fairs throughout the community to ensure people are aware of sexual assault and the resources available to them should they become a victim of this crime. Outreach department staff can provide brochures and materials for distribution to an agency's client base in addition to conducting presentations for staff, clients, and/or the community at large.

www.rapecrisis.com



**Piecing together the tools
needed to effectively
investigate and prevent sexual
assault, family violence,
& stalking.**

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Love Is Respect)

will likely be in a different situation, becoming involved in a situation after there has been some significant incident of abuse. Still, by providing an effective legal intervention to victims and abusers, both may find an avenue to assistance.

Awareness of teen dating abuse as a serious issue is a first step. There are abusive teen relationships that end in death; but even emotional and verbal abuse can result in lowered self esteem for the victim, increasing the likelihood abusive relationships will continue into their adult years. Signs of abuse are similar to those in abusive adult relationships. Physical injury or bruises are one obvious sign; less obvious signs are withdrawal from family and friends, a constant need to be in contact with their boyfriend/girlfriend, truancy, and a change in grades for the worse. You can educate yourself further by visiting www.lovesrespect.org and looking at our Power & Control Wheel, which details the common dynamics seen in a teen dating abuse relationship. Even after this however, be aware that teens are often wary of talking to adults in general. Their problems are often minimized by the adults in their lives and by society as something they will just "grow out of". Even if this is a first relationship, even if it is abusive or controlling - it is not always easy for them to end the relationship and "just move on."

Teen victims may be discouraged from telling law enforcement about their situation because of this perception, or because, like many adult victims they want to protect their abuser out of fear or guilt. However, treating a teen with true concern and respect, just as you would an adult victim, may encourage them to trust you and let you help.

Being creative around technology when presented with a teen dating violence case is also important. Even teens and young adults that use technology all day long will probably need guidance in how to use it to protect themselves. A potential victim may discount the fact that she has hundreds of text messages on her phone, some of them threatening. Or, if she wants to attempt to obtain a protective order, she may not know how to document messages sent by her abuser via a social networking site. Printing out threatening or harassing messages may be one option. Text messages aren't always easy to print out - but we've heard of law enforcement taking photos of text messages or forwarding them to their own phone. If you aren't comfortable with technology yourself, this may mean taking steps to educate

yourself or you might investigate the existing resources your department has concerning the use of technology in cases other than domestic violence.

Finally, any law enforcement officer who suspects an abusive relationship can always refer to lovesrespect.org, National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, knowing that our advocates will provide advocacy and connections to appropriate local resources whenever possible. Providing our card (available by contacting the Helpline) to a potential victim or abuser will allow them the option to talk to a Peer Advocate later if they decide. Our Advocates also welcome calls and chats from law enforcement; we'll share our unique perspective on young adults and abusive relationships or answer any questions that we can. We truly believe that there is an opportunity to intervene early and help this population and we appreciate the interest and assistance of the law enforcement community.



love is respect org

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

1-866-331-9474 1-866-331-8453 TTY