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413-536-1628

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- **Comprehensive teen services**
- **Child advocacy & programming**
- **Community education**
- **Informational & referrals**
- **Economic literacy**

Bilingual/bicultural services available

ALL Womanshelter services are confidential & free of charge



Everyone has the right to live without fear of abuse—physical, verbal, mental, sexual or emotional

**womanshelter
compañeras**

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Our mission is to assist, support & empower those whose lives are affected by battering & abuse. We strive to reduce & prevent domestic violence through public awareness efforts.

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

JUST THE FACTS

1 in 3 teen relationships show signs of dating violence, and females age 16-24 are at the highest risk since their group makes up the largest percent of dating abuse victims.

That's a large number, but you might be wondering what exactly makes an abusive relationship. Most people think of physical violence such as hitting, slapping, kicking, punching, etc. However, physical abuse is just one of many types of abuse, and some abusive relationships don't have physical violence.

Teen dating violence is defined as a pattern of behavior that includes physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse used by one person in an intimate relationship to exert power and control over another. Dating violence or domestic violence can occur at any age, but teen dating violence typically refers to situations where the individuals involved are between the ages of 13 and 19 years old.

Emotional: It could be constant criticism that lowers one's self esteem, makes one feel depressed or not good enough. It could also be intimidation, manipulation, humiliation, or a refusal to be pleased.

Verbal: This form of abuse includes insults, put downs, criticism, threats, or demeaning comments.

Sexual: Causing another person to engage in an unwanted sexual act by force or threat. This also includes pressure and coercion.



Teen DV Month (sometimes called TDVAM) is a national effort to raise awareness about abuse in teen and 20-something relationships and promote programs that prevent it.

Help us spread awareness and stop dating abuse before it starts!

Donate!

Send your tax deductible gift to:
P.O. Box 1099, Holyoke, MA 01041
or click on the QR code above and go straight to our website

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POWER & CONTROL

The key part of that definition is power and control. People who abuse often have a lot of excuses they use for why they behave in an abusive manner. They might say things like “*You just make me so angry,*” “*If you loved me, you’d do this,*” “*I just love you so much I can’t control myself,*” or “*It was just because I was drinking and I lost control.*” You might notice a common theme in these excuses. None of them are taking responsibility. Abusers often try to manipulate their victims into thinking the abuse was their fault or they deserved it. It’s never the victim’s fault. It is always about power and control.



WARNING SIGNS

To look out for the warning signs of teen dating violence, the most important thing to notice is controlling behaviors. An abuser might tell his/her victim what to wear, what to eat, what to do, or who he/she can talk to or be friends with. An abuser will often try to isolate the victim from friends or family because these are influences that can take away some of their power. An abuser will also try to make a victim feel inferior. If someone feels like they are nothing and they are not good enough, they are a lot easier to control and keep under control.

HOW ADULTS CAN HELP

What teens want their parents to know...

- Teens and young adults think adults generally disrespect or distrust their dating relationships
- Youth feel adults are “likely unaware or uninformed” about topics like technology and social media as they play a role in relationships, as well as the frequency and triviality of sex among teens.
- Teens feel that sex is “far less tied to emotions, moral values or commitment” than adults may think.
- A young person’s peer network is the main influencer on dating behaviors and attitudes, far beyond other frames of reference like television and social media.
- The high school environment is particularly impactful on teen dating, creating “a sense of intensity and drama” and limiting teens’ perspective of the importance of dating.
- Teens face challenges in their ability to recognize unhealthy or abusive characteristics while in a relationship, which can contribute to the incidence of abuse.

Dating abuse can be subtle — teens and parents alike should be aware that it can start as innocently as being overly involved in a partner’s life, sometimes under the guise of being “concerned” or “protective.” It can look like someone influencing their partner’s decisions —everything from how they dress to whom they hang out with. It can escalate from there to more overt coercion, threats, manipulation, verbal abuse, financial control, or forced sexual activity before their partner is ready.

Listen and Learn - The more open a parent’s dialogue with their kids is, the more likely adults are to pick up the subtle cues that speak to where and when teens are experiencing that grey area of dating violence—the one that isn’t overtly unhealthy but still raises red flags.

Helping to break the cycle....parents need to know just how easily photos can be shared with new technologies, and they need to be able to talk with young people about the pressures to post or send semi-nude or nude photos of themselves to their boyfriends or girlfriends, and how they can resist those pressures. It’s about showing kids that you want to connect and understand their reality.

FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES

BE A PARTNER & hold a Community Fundraiser to benefit W/C!

We are always looking for individuals/groups to get involved in our cause.

Contact our main office to share your ideas on how YOU can support W/C and its work in the community. Past events have included spaghetti dinners, Poker Runs, etc. We are open to any ideas.....

Employee Spotlight

Lauren

W/C Youth Advocate/Outreach Worker

Lauren has been working with W/C for less than a year, and she has her BA in Criminology/Philosophy/Sociology from Stonehill College.

Lauren conducts community outreach to school departments, school personnel, school committees, as well as community groups. She assists in establishing school protocols and works with high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. She not only implements youth activities such as support groups for teen survivors, but also develops curriculum materials, and does individual interventions.

