

February is
Teen Dating
Violence
Awareness
Month

*Find warning
signs
and tips
on page
2 and 3*



CONTACT THE
FAMILY GUIDANCE
CENTER AT
828-322-1400



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FGCSERVICES.COM



February | 2012

Spotlight On Domestic Violence

First Step Newsletter
A Program of
The Family Guidance Center

THE MISSION OF FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER'S FIRST STEP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TO INCREASE COMMUNITY'S AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

You May Think Teen Dating Violence Has Nothing To Do With You...

That's exactly what a teacher, a parent, and a teenager thought, until they found out 1 out of every 3 teens will experience some form of abuse in their dating relationship. What they choose to do with that knowledge could help bring this epidemic to an end.



I was David's teacher. He was always a good and shy student, but his behaviors began to change. His grades began to drop, and he seemed anxious. One day, I had him stay after class. I asked if everything was ok at home. He insisted he had to leave and that he was ok. I watched him go into the hall and meet his girlfriend. I noticed she was upset, and I saw her get into his face, putting him down and grabbing his arm. I walked out and told her no one deserves to be talked to in that manner. I sent them to the guidance counselor's office. Through much patience and trust, David approached me and thanked me for supporting him. At that moment, I realized that David needed someone to help him find his voice. Since I have learned the warning signs, I am more aware of dating violence and I see it more often. Today, I help my students have a voice by supporting them and being observant. It's not my job to be their counselor, but it is part of my duty to direct perpetrators and victims to help. Now, I emphasize to students that **no one deserves to be abused!**

When my daughter was 16, she had a boyfriend who



YOU ARE
NOT HIS
PROPERTY.

was a very nice young man. As time went on, I began to feel like something was wrong when she had to always answer a text from him. When I told her to put up the phone, she would get very upset with me. I shared with her that he was becoming possessive and clingy.

She would always defend him. At that time, I did not know how afraid she was of him. I took her cell phone away, and read the rude and hurtful texts he was sending my daughter. The texts demanded her to not talk with me or any of her friends. He was jealous and isolating her through verbal threats. I immediately talked to her about how dangerous he could be. We both went to see a counselor. Thankfully, my daughter decided to break up with him. He continued to call her and eventually followed her to the movies and proceeded to cut her hair with scissors. We went to First Step and they helped us get a Protective Order. I notified the principal. Everyone was supportive. My daughter is healing and figuring out what she wants in a relationship and what she doesn't. Today, I know the warning signs and I talk with other parents to try to prevent teen dating violence.

**On Page 2:
What A Teen
Has to Say
About Dating
Violence**

**Did You See Any Warning Signs in These
2 Stories? See page 2 for answers!**

Hear What Kristen, A High School Senior, Has to Say About This Epidemic



I think that it is a tragic thing that anyone, especially teens, should have to go through any kind of dating violence or sexual assault. No one should have to deal with the pain and shame that comes from being a victim of abuse. I think that 1 out of 3 teens experiencing any form of

abuse is way too high of a statistic.

Kristen, why did you choose to do your senior project on a topic that is difficult to discuss?

I chose to do my senior project on dating violence and sexual assault because when I found out what a problem it was, I knew that I needed to make people aware-especially my peers, so that they could protect themselves before they ended up as a statistic. It's not a topic that most teenagers know very much about or want to talk about, so I decided that my senior project would be a great medium to talk about it.

What are your future goals to keep our community aware of this epidemic?

My future goal is to keep my community and my state aware of dating and sexual violence. I plan to do this by attending Campbell University next fall

and double majoring in criminal justice and social work, so that one day I can go to law school. I would like to be a court advocate for victims of abuse and sexual violence and to give them a voice in the chaos of the courtroom. I also plan to keep volunteering whenever I can and be active in the field of awareness.

Do you know another teen that is being abused or has been? If so, what did you do?

I have heard stories of other teens being abused, but I have never known if the stories were true or not. I, myself, was a victim of emotional abuse from a guy I was dating. I helped myself by getting out of the relationship as quickly as I could. I learned my lesson the hard way. I will never put myself in that situation again. Today, I look for respectful, healthy relationships.

Do you think adult/parents know about teen dating violence?

I think that most adults/parents know what teen dating violence is---they are just in denial or assume that it would never happen to their child. Adults/parents could use more education and tools on how to spot the signs of teen dating violence. In addition, they need to know how to help prevent teens from being victims of dating and sexual abuse.

Early Warning Signs of Teen Dating Violence

David's Story Signs are:

- Physically unexplained bruises/marks
- Withdrawn from school activities and hobbies, dropping grades

The Daughter's Story Signs are:

- Texts, calls, emails, all the time
- Isolated from seeing or talking to



family and friends

- Controlling, possessive, and/or jealous
- Victim fears dating partner (may make excuses for abuser's behaviors or defends her/him)

Victims May Experience Their Abusers:

- Checking their cell phone or email without permission
- Making false accusations
- Being Insecure
- Having Mood Swings
- Using drugs or alcohol (victims may also take drugs or alcohol in response to pressure from their abusers or stress from abuse)

How Adults Can Help Teen Victims and Teen Abusers

Things to Keep in Mind When Talking To an Abused Teen

- Make sure the timing is right. Talk about the abuse when you are sharing time together.
- Use "I" statements when describing your feelings. Let your teen know how concerned you are.
- Be sure to have specific examples to share with your daughter or son that concern you.
- Listen and believe your teen. Speak with sensitivity, support and care.
- Remember, if your teen does open up to you, it is possible that you will hear uncomfortable details. It is imperative that you are non-judgmental by focusing on resolving the problem (the behavior) rather than criticizing your teen.
- Let your teen have some control in making decisions. Self-esteem and confidence may have been lowered by the abusive partner.

81% of parents surveyed believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue.

- Be a role model for supportive, healthy relationships with your own partner.
- Help your teen create a safety plan for when she/he is at school and out with friends.

- Contact First Step for information about procedures for obtaining restraining or stay-away orders.

Things Not to Say or Do

- Do not be critical of your teen or her/his partner.
- Don't ask blaming questions such as: "Why don't you break up with him/her?" or "What did you say to provoke your partner?"
- Don't pressure your teen into making decisions.
- Don't talk to both teens together. The victim may feel inhibited about what she/he can say.
- Don't assume that the victim wants to leave the abusive relationship. Assist her/him in assessing the situation.



For more information and materials please visit our webpage at www.fgcservices.com or call First Step at 828-322-1400

How Can I Tell if my Teen is an Abuser?



- Is your son or daughter jealous or possessive?
- Does your teen have an explosive temper?
- Does he/she consistently ridicule, criticize or insult his/her partner?
- Does your teen blame others when he/she gets angry?
- Does your teen exhibit any abusive behaviors toward you, family or friends?

Tips For Parents of Abusive Teens

- Recognize and confront the abusive behavior. Be sure to have specific examples.
- Let him/her know what is not acceptable.
- While being supportive of your teen as a person and his/her efforts to overcome the abusive behavior, you may have to make the difficult decision to report your teen's violence to law enforcement.
- Be a role model for supportive, healthy relationships with your own partner.

For more information please visit our webpage at www.fgcservices.com or call First Step at 828-322-1400

Appreciation and Announcements

A BIG Thank You



Thank you TJX Foundation for your donation to First Step! This financial gift will help us work together to end domestic violence.

It's Prom Season at The Purple Ribbon Store



The Purple Ribbon Thrift Store has opened a beautiful prom room. Full of prom dresses, cocktail dresses, and a variety of new shoes! All great priced.

Visit Facebook for more pictures and directions!

Call for more info 828-322-3423
360 Hwy 70 SW, Hickory, NC 28602



Teenagers Being Open About Dating Violence

I always get enthusiastic when I speak to teens about dating violence and healthy relationships! I'm honored to visit every class and group to experience authenticity with young people. I am amazed by the teens in our community and their willingness to talk about their relationships with me. I believe we can prevent abusive relationships simply by talking to them about teen dating violence and healthy relationships. I can see the results.

If you would like me to visit your youth group or class, please contact me today at ljordan@fgcservices.com or 828-322-1400



Hickory High School students posing for me during a healthy relationship/dating violence trivia game! Only 2 would get in the picture! It was a silly time to conclude that relationships should be fun not hurtful!

Love Shouldn't Hurt

Dating Violence and Choose Respect Presentation

Free for all teens, young adults, and parents

at Lenoir-Rhyne University Belk Centrum Auditorium

February 13th, 4pm-5pm

For info contact Liz at ljordan@fgcservices.com or Family Guidance Center Facebook Page



FIRST STEP at the
Family Guidance Center 828-322-1400
24 Hour Crisis line 828-228-1787
www.fgcservices.com

