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CONTACT THE
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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 THE COMMUNITY'S AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROBLEM.



February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Every year in the U.S., approximately 1.5 million high school students in the U.S. experience physical abuse from a dating partner. In 2010, Congress officially designated February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month to call attention to the growing problem.

Dating violence is defined as a pattern of controlling or abusive behaviors perpetrated by a current or former dating partner. Abusers can be male or female, and, unfortunately, these patterns of behavior are being seen in younger and younger children i.e. pre-teens and elementary students. Statistics show that 72% of students in 8th and 9th grades are in dating relationships.

In this issue of our newsletter, we are sounding the alarm, Dating Violence is a serious problem for teens and college students. Here are the startling statistics:

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Meet our Program Director



Britnee Vargeson is the new, and first, Program Director of our agency's Sexual Assault Program. She is originally from central Pennsylvania where she spent most of her life. She attended Lock Haven University, which is a state school in Pennsylvania to obtain a bachelors degree in Health Science and Athletic Training. Britnee decided to pursue a master's degree in Public Health and chose Lenoir-Rhyne University for her graduate program. She graduated in 2017. and is looking forward to establishing her career here in Hickory. "We're pleased to have Britnee with us to lead our new sexual assault services," said Ann Peele, Executive Director of FGC.

Britnee can be reached at 828-322-1400

If you are a victim of domestic violence

**Call 828-322-1400
Crisis Line 828-228-1787**

- ~ Among female victims of intimate partner violence, 94% of those age 16-19 and 70% of those 20-24 were victimized by a current or former boyfriend or girlfriend.
- ~ Violent behavior typically begins between the ages of 12 and 18.
- ~ The severity of intimate partner violence is often greater in cases where the pattern of abuse was established in adolescence.
- ~ Nearly half (43%) of dating college women report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors.
- ~ One in six (16%) college women has been sexually abused in a dating relationship.
- ~ Half of youth who have been victims of both dating violence and rape attempt suicide, compared to 12.5% of non-abused girls and 5.4% of non-abused boys.
- ~ One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds rates of other types of youth violence.
- ~ One in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- ~ Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence – almost triple the national average.

Apps for Keeping Teens Safe



- ~ **The Love Is Not Abuse iPhone** app is an education resource for parents that demonstrates the dangers of digital abuse and information on the growing problem of teen dating violence and abuse.

- ~ **Circle of 6 app** is an iPhone app for college-aged students and their friends to stay close, stay safe, and prevent violence before it happens. Its design is great – it takes two touches to get help and they use icons to represent actions, so that no one can tell what you're up to if your abuser sees your phone. Every college student could benefit from this app.
- ~ **One Love Foundation** app helps the user determine if a relationship is unsafe and helps to create the best action plan by weighing an individual's unique characteristics and values. The app is free and can be used anonymously on smart phones and other electronic devices.

Share this information with parents, teens, and anyone involved with the youth.
WHAT DOES TEEN DATING VI-



OLENCE LOOK LIKE

- ~ A pattern of put-downs, name-calling, yelling, or threats against a dating partner. Abusers use words to gain power and control over their victim, often damaging their partner's self-esteem and emotional health.
- ~ Demanding that a partner neglect relationship with friends and family. Typically shows jealousy of other relationships and monopolizes victim's time so that they can't engage in healthy relationships with others. They usually keep track of all of the victim's actions and conversations.

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LOVE IS NOT ABUSE

- ~ Physical harm to a victim's person or property, including hitting, slapping, kicking, hair pulling, biting, throwing things, choking, and any use of a weapon against a victim.
- ~ Any sexual contact that isn't 100% consensual, any type of pressure or coercion that leads to sexual activity, touching or kissing that is unwanted.
- ~ The use of technology to control, pressure, or threaten a dating partner. This may include hacking a partner's email account or going through their phone to keep track of who they're talking to, harassing or threatening via social media, sending repeated and unwanted calls or text messages.
- ~ Manipulation of victim through fear. This can be aggressive behavior, such as punching a wall, or maintaining a threatening proximity to the victim. Physical abuse can be an implied threat, but hasn't occurred yet. The abuser may even threaten to harm himself or others.

Unchecked abusive behaviors typically escalate as an abuser gets older, making it essential for teens to get help at the first sign of abuse.

Tips for Survivors to Cope with Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day can trigger many emotions for survivors who've ended an abusive relationship. You may feel anger, resentment, love for your abuser, or loneliness. That's okay, these feelings are normal. After all, it feels like there's nothing but happy couples everywhere. It's a triggering holiday.

Here are some things you can do to cope...

- ~ Pamper yourself, have a make-over, go to the spa.
- ~ Call your friends and have a "movie night" and watch funny movies.
- ~ Write a "love letter" to yourself, describing how powerful and strong you are, include words of inspiration.
- ~ Get all dressed up, put on red lipstick, and go out to dinner with your children.



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