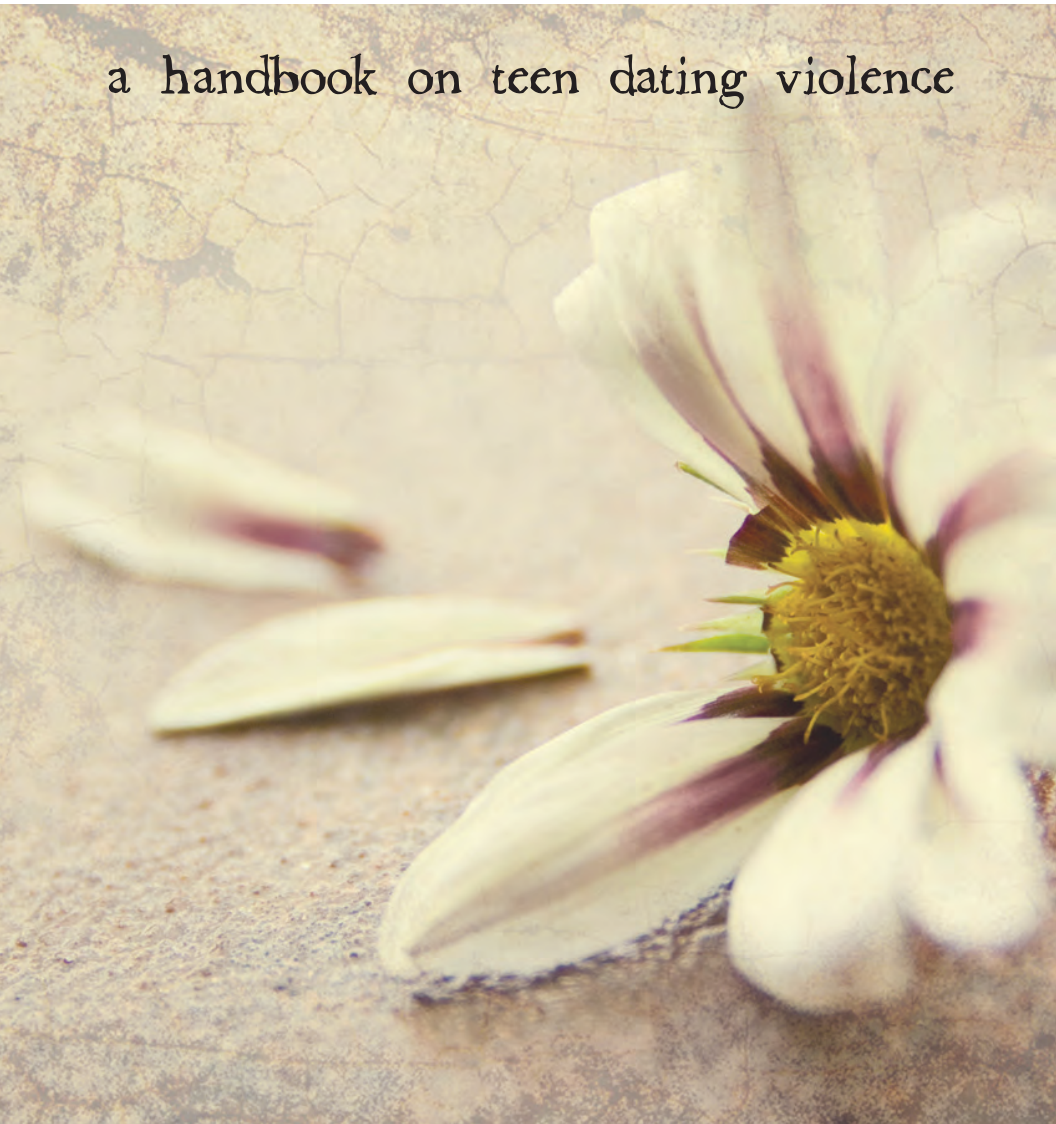


TEXAS YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Loves Me Loves Me Not

a handbook on teen dating violence



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HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WHILE IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP?

HAS YOUR PARTNER EVER:

- Said things to insult you or put you down
- Made you describe where you were every minute of the day
- Constantly called or sent you text messages to see where you were and who you were with
- Told you not to talk to someone out of jealousy
- Prevented you from doing things with your friends or family
- Tried to control what you wear, what you do, and how you act
- Threatened to hurt you or start to hit you but stopped
- Accused you of flirting or having sex with someone else
- Told you that they want you all to themselves and will not let you do anything on your own
- Hit, kicked, shoved, or thrown things at you
- Made you feel afraid to break-up because they can't live without you
- Asked or forced you to stop doing activities you love
- Made you afraid to disagree or treated you as if you don't have any power in your relationship
- Pressured you to have sex or made you afraid to say "no" to sex

All of the above are warning signs that your partner is being abusive. If you or anyone you know experiences any of these warning signs, you may be in an abusive relationship.

WHAT IS DATING VIOLENCE?

Dating violence is the intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person in a dating relationship. Dating violence is a pattern of coercive behavior that one partner exerts over the other for the purpose of establishing and maintaining power and control over his or her partner.

Dating violence can also include harassment. Harassment is conduct that threatens to cause harm or bodily injury to another person, is sexually intimidating, causes physical damage to the property of another person, subjects another person to physical confinement or restraint, or maliciously and substantially harms another person's physical or emotional health or safety.

Dating violence can sometimes result in death.

Dating violence **IS NOT** an occasional argument, or a reaction from your partner who is in a bad mood after a bad day. Keep in mind that intense love and devotion actually can be signs of jealousy, possessiveness, and control, which are early red flags that you should recognize as relationship abuse.

TYPES OF ABUSE THAT ARE DATING VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse includes any physical act intended to control, harm, injure, or inflict physical pain on another person. Physical abuse may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. Behaviors can range from spitting on or shoving someone to committing murder. Some other examples of physical abuse include: pinching, pushing, restraining, grabbing, twisting fingers or arms, slapping, pulling hair, punching, kicking, burning or scalding, biting, scratching, beating with an object, poking or cutting with a sharp instrument, choking, or attacking someone with a weapon.

EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE

Emotional and verbal abuse is any kind of abuse that affects the mind rather than the body. It is the kind of abuse that wears away at the victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, and trust in one's own preconceptions and self-concept. It can include anything from verbal insults and constant criticism, to more subtle tactics such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased. The abuse can be carried out overtly through berating, belittling, and intimidation, or under the guise of "guidance," "teaching," or "advice." Regardless of the specific form that this abuse takes, the negative effects on the victim's sense of self are undeniable. Examples include: embarrassing the person in public or in front of family or friends; criticizing them; telling them they are not good enough; calling a person degrading names (stupid, loser, slut, cow, pig); constantly correcting the person; refusing to be intimate with them as a punishment; talking a person down because of things they can't change (race, skin color, family, history); criminally harassing or stalking someone; harming personal possessions or pets; and/or terrorizing a person.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse and exploitation include all forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse incorporates elements of physical abuse and emotional abuse. Sexual abuse includes forced sex or other sexual acts even though you say no. Examples include: all forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation (these are criminal offenses in Texas); forcing a person to participate in any unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity; using ridicule or other tactics to try to defame, control, or limit a person's sexuality or reproductive choices; threatening to tell others negative things about a person when they won't engage in requested sexual activity; committing rape or sodomy; and/or forcing a person to engage in lewd exhibition.

THREATS, ISOLATION AND HARASSMENT

Threats include threatening harm on you or others, threatening retaliation, or threatening to leave the relationship. Isolation can include not allowing you to be with friends, family, peers, or engage in normal teenage activities. Harassment includes repeated phone calls, text messages, posts on social networking sites, or excessive calling to your cell phone, job, or your home. Threats and harassment are against the law and one may face criminal charges for engaging in these behaviors.

WARNING SIGNS THAT WILL HELP YOU IDENTIFY IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING ABUSED

- Falling or failing grades
- Increased instances of indecision and refusing to give your own opinion
- Changes in mood or personality
- Use of drugs/alcohol, not just experimentation
- Emotional outbursts, not just mood swings
- Depression
- Isolation, insisting on more privacy
- Signs of physical injury such as cuts and bruises
- Making excuses for an abuser's behavior

THE FACTS

- Nearly 1 in 11 female and approximately 1 in 15 male high school students report having experienced physical dating violence in the last year.
- About 1 in 9 female and 1 in 36 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.
- 26% of women and 15% of men who were victims of contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before age 18.
- The burden of teen dating violence is not shared equally across all groups—sexual minority groups are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence, and some racial/ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected by many types of violence.

(Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Do your part by pledging to NEVER commit, condone, or remain silent about teen dating violence!

HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

As hard as it can be, never turn your back on a friend
who may need your help.

THINGS THAT CAN BE FRUSTRATING

- A friend who is in a bad relationship may not realize they need help.
- A friend may think that the relationship is the way it is because the partner loves them.
- A friend might tell you the controlling behavior is how the partner shows they care.
- A friend might not think they can leave the relationship and feels like it is not as bad as it is.
- A friend hangs out with you less and spends more time with their significant other.

THINGS YOU SHOULD DO FOR A FRIEND

- Listen to what your friend has to say.
- Make sure your friend knows that you are there to talk and that you are worried about them.
- Talk in private and keep your friend's confidences, unless there is an immediate danger.
- Tell your friend specific things you have seen and how it made you feel worried about their safety .
- Offer to get information or help for your friend.
- Don't be judgmental.
- Don't make your friend feel ashamed or give an ultimatum that you won't be a friend if they stay in the relationship.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT ABUSIVE

Evaluate your behavior and ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have a problem controlling my anger?
- Have I ever hit, shoved, or hurt my partner?
- Have I ever lost friends because of the way I treat my partner?
- Do I try to control my partner's whereabouts, who they talk to, who their friends are, or what they wear?
- Do I insult my partner or make them feel bad about themselves?
- Do I blame my abusive behavior on my partner, family problems, or alcohol/drugs?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be exhibiting abusive behavior. Although this can be difficult to accept, you should contact someone you trust to help you change your abusive ways before it gets worse.

YOU CAN HELP STOP TEEN DATING VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS

- Always treat your significant other with respect.
- Always have open, truthful communication with your partner by respecting their opinion, listening, making compromises, and sometimes even admitting being wrong.
- Understand that being violent, dominating, and controlling is not the way to get someone to love you.
- Never hurt your significant other physically, verbally, or emotionally.
- Always accept responsibility for your actions.
- Respect your partner's decisions concerning sex or affection. No means no.
- Speak up when you see your friends acting abusively.

MALES CAN BE VICTIMS TOO

Although it may be hard for some to accept or admit, males can be victims of dating violence. A male can be abused by his partner regardless of the partner's sex. Review the warning signs section of this handbook to identify whether you are in a teen dating violence situation and need help before things get worse.

TEENS LIVING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Living in a house where domestic violence exists can cause many problems for a teenager who is not emotionally equipped to handle it. You are not alone and you shouldn't keep the harsh reality of what you are experiencing a secret.

If you are witnessing abuse at home, you may be:

- Experiencing feelings of fear, anger, depression, grief, shame, despair, distrust, and a sense of powerlessness
- Feeling lonely and isolated from your peers
- Having academic and behavioral problems at school
- Exhibiting stress-related medical and mental health problems
- Engaging in destructive behavior
- Turning to alcohol and/or drugs to escape from your reality

GET HELP: DON'T GO THROUGH THIS ALONE

- Talk about the violence to an adult you trust.
- Create a safety plan to protect yourself and/or your siblings.
- Know that others have had similar experiences.
- Know and understand that the violence is not your fault.
- Don't be afraid to get the police involved.

SAFETY TIPS AND PLANNING: TEEN DATING SAFETY PLAN FOR TEENS IN AN ABUSIVE DATING RELATIONSHIP

GENERAL SAFETY

1. Stay in touch with your friends and family and make it a point to spend time with people other than your partner.
2. Stay involved in activities you enjoy. Don't stop doing things that make you feel good about yourself.
3. Make new friends. Increase your support network.
4. Look into resources at your school or in the community.
5. Consider joining a support group or calling a crisis line.
6. Stay in public places, familiar neighborhoods and surroundings.

SAFETY AT SCHOOL

1. Try not to be alone. Let your friends know what is happening and have them walk you to classes and spend time with you during lunch.
2. Tell teachers, counselors, coaches, or security guards about what is happening to help keep you safe.
3. Change your routine. Don't always take the same route to school or arrive at the same time. Always ride to school with someone. If you take the bus, try to have someone with you.
4. Consider rearranging your class schedule if your school counselor or other school official allows it.
5. Keep a list of emergency contacts written down in addition to saving them in your cell phone.
6. Keep your cell phone nearby.
7. Install an application that helps avoid dating violence, such as uSafeUS, that allows allies to keep track of you.
8. Consider applying for a protective order from a court.

SAFETY AT HOME

1. Try not to be alone. If you are alone at home, make sure the doors are locked and the windows are secure.
2. Consider telling your parents or other family members about your situation. They can help protect you by screening your telephone calls or visitors.
3. Make a list of important phone numbers. This list should include 911 and phone numbers of supportive friends who you can call when you are upset. Put the numbers of crisis lines on the list.

SAFETY WITH YOUR PARTNER

1. Try not to be alone with your partner, or to be alone in an isolated or deserted location. Go out to public places.
2. Try to double date or to go out with a group of people.
3. Let other people know what your plans are and where you will be.
4. Try not to be dependent on your partner for a ride.
5. Always keep emergency money with you in case you need to take a bus or cab home.
6. If you have a smartphone, make sure you have a rideshare app and an account set up, and that the app is linked to a debit or other card with funds.
7. Install an application that helps avoid dating violence, such as uSafeUS, that allows allies to keep track of you and allows you an array of distress tools.
8. Trust your instincts! If you feel you are uncomfortable or you feel you are in danger, call the police. Get help immediately. Do not minimize your fears.

SAFETY WHEN BREAKING UP WITH YOUR PARTNER

1. Break up with your partner in a public place.
2. Tell other people that you plan to break up with your partner. Let them know where you will be.
3. Arrange to call a friend or a counselor after you talk with your partner so that you can discuss what happened.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IS A CRIME

Dating violence is against the law. It is a crime just like rape, robbery, and murder. Some possible criminal charges that could be filed for acts of dating violence are assault, harassment, terroristic threat, or murder. The age of the person committing the crime does not matter. In Texas, a teenager can be tried as an adult in many situations.

LEGAL PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS OF TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

In addition to pressing criminal charges against an abuser if you are a victim of dating violence, you also can apply for a legal order of protection from a court. A protective order protects victims of dating violence by ordering your abuser not to commit further acts of violence against you; not to harass, threaten, annoy, alarm, abuse, torment, or embarrass you; not to communicate with you in a threatening or harassing manner; and to stay away from your residence, work, or school.

An application for a protective order is free. If you are 18 years old or older, you can seek a protective order for yourself. If you are under 18, you can have any adult apply for one on your behalf. To apply for a protective order for dating violence, your abuser must be someone you are dating, or someone you used to date; and he or she must have physically harmed you, or attempted or threatened to physically harm you. The application for a protective order must be filed in the county in which you or your abuser lives. The court will grant a protective order once you prove that dating violence has occurred and that it is likely to occur again.

If you need a protective order, contact your local county or district attorney's office, a private attorney, or a legal aid service program. You may also visit: texaslawhelp.org/protection-from-violence-or-abuse/protective-orders.

WHEN YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

We all have the responsibility to protect children from abuse. If you suspect the abuse of a minor, it is your duty to report it immediately. Anyone who believes that a minor's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse **MUST** report the case immediately to a state or local law enforcement agency or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). DFPS has a toll-free, 24-hour Family Violence Hotline: 800-252-5400.

YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATION

Current law requires that professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, social workers, clergymen, and psychologists make a verbal report within 48 hours. Failure to report suspected abuse of a minor is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$2,000 (Texas Family Code, Chapter 261).

Reporting suspected abuse to your principal, school counselor, or superintendent will **NOT** satisfy your obligation under this law. Local school district policy cannot conflict with or supersede the state law requiring you to report abuse to a law enforcement agency or DFPS.

YOUR LEGAL PROTECTION

Your report of abuse or neglect is confidential and immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in "good faith" and "without malice." In "good faith" means that the person making the report took reasonable steps to learn facts that were readily available and at hand. "Without malice" means that the person did not intend to injure or violate the rights of another person. Provided these two conditions are met, you will also be immune from liability if you are asked to participate in any judicial proceedings that might result from your report.

IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

DON'T try to investigate.

DON'T confront the abuser.

DO report your reasonable suspicions.

It is not up to you to determine whether your suspicions are true. A trained investigator will evaluate the situation. Even if your report does not bring decisive action, it may help establish a pattern that will eventually be clear enough to help the person.

PARENTS AND TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Parents, you play a vital role in your teenager's life. This is the time when your teen is most likely exerting or attempting to exert his or her independence. Your teen may not be communicating and sharing with you as often as they once did. But it is important that you attempt to provide guidance and insight, especially in the area of dating. While you may not be able to pick the person your teen dates, you can provide some guidance on behavior that your teen should not exhibit when in a dating relationship and should find unacceptable if your teen is ever exposed to it. It is important that your teen knows that any form of violence or abuse in a relationship is unacceptable.

Whether or not your teen communicates what is going on in their dating life, here are a few things to look out for:

- Bruises, scratches, or other injuries
- Change in appearance or dress
- Falling grades
- Dropping out of activities
- Avoiding friends
- Sudden change in mood or personality
- Inability to make decisions
- Giving up things they care about

While teens may gain new friends, change their style, or have changes in their mood, these also may be signs of deeper issues that you need to look into or discuss with them.

Because your teen may be embarrassed by a violent or abusive situation, they may not immediately come to you. You, as their parent, need to be aware and on the lookout for changes in your teen's behavior that may be indicators that something is going on.

IF YOUR TEEN IS AN ABUSER

Parents, if you believe your teen is an abuser, it is imperative that you recognize, acknowledge, and confront your teen with their controlling and abusive behavior in a way that will break the cycle of violence. It is your responsibility to teach your child what is and is not acceptable in their dating relationship. Some warning signs that your child may be abusing their partner are as follows:

- Your teen is jealous, possessive, or controlling.
- Your teen has an explosive temper.
- They consistently ridicule, criticize, or insult their partner.
- Your teen blames others when they get angry.
- Your teen exhibits abusive behaviors toward you, family, or friends.
- They want to get serious with their partner quickly.
- Your teen makes their partner's decisions and checks up on and/or follows them.
- Your teen blames their partner for their violent behavior.
- Your teen apologizes for violent behavior.

If your teen is abusing a partner, some things you may consider doing to remedy the situation and to prevent it from happening in the future are: talking to the parents of your teen's partner, obtaining help for your teen from community programs and mental health professionals, and supporting your teen's efforts to stop the pattern of abuse. It is important to know however, that if the situation is justified, you may have to make the difficult decision to report your teen's violence to the proper authorities.

BE A PROACTIVE PARENT

As the parent of a teen, there are many ways to be actively involved in your teen's life and to hopefully prevent dating violence. One is to always maintain open lines of communication with your teen. Another such way is to establish clear dating boundaries for your teen. These rules will need to be appropriate for your child's age and maturity level, and they may change depending on a particular dating situation. The following are just a few suggested rules or guidelines that may help your teen learn to make good choices and build healthy relationships:

- Insist that your teen's date come into the house so that you can meet them.
- Know the details about each date, including who will be present, where they will go, what they will do, and when they will be home.
- Make sure your teen knows that alcohol or drug use is not allowed by anyone on any date.
- Tell your teen if he or she ever wants to leave a date, you are always willing and available to pick him or her up at any time and/or location.
- Always make yourself available if your teen wants to talk after a date.

WHO TO TURN TO FOR HELP

- Talk with your friends or family members about what you are going through so that they can support you.
- If you are able to, talk to your parents or another adult you trust.
- If you believe you are being harassed, bullied, or otherwise victimized by another student, report the incident to the campus principal, counselor, teacher, or other campus professional. Your report may be kept confidential.
- Call your local or national domestic violence agencies for help.

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224(TTY)

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
24-hour Family Violence Hotline 800-252-5400
Online reporting option - **txabusehotline.org**

Love is Respect Helpline
866-331-9474 or 866-331-8453
text “loveis” to 22522, live chat is available at **loveisrespect.org**

Texas Advocacy Project
Family Violence Legal Line
800-374-HOPE (4673)
texasadvocacyproject.org

tyla.org/category/family-law/

notavictim.tyla.org

joinonelove.org

breakthecycle.org

centers.rainn.org

*Some of the information and facts provided in this brochure were obtained from the following sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teendatingviolence/fastfact.html
2. Liz Claiborne, Conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited, Feb. 2005.
3. Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, July 2008.
4. Teen Dating Violence Memorandum, Sally Borden & Karen Shue.
5. Tough Talk: What boys need to know about relationship abuse, Liz Claiborne.
6. Dr. David Freidenberg and Dr. Deanna Chew-Freidenberg at drdaveanddee.com.
7. The Government of the Northwest Territories at hlthss.gov.nt.ca.
8. Eastside Domestic Violence Program at edvp.org.
9. National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence at edvp.org

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