



Fort Bend County Women's Center

A United Way Agency

PRESS RELEASE
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Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week Begins Monday, Feb. 6 **Fort Bend County Women's Center Works with Teens to Build Healthy Relationships**

Sugar Land, Texas – With Valentine's Day, prom and other activities just around the corner, new relationships are developing daily. With so many events taking place this time of year, it is important for teens to realize that they do not need to accept certain behavior from their friends.

Abusive dating relationships and dating violence have increased at alarming rates in the last five years. It is estimated that one in three girls will have an abusive dating experience by the time she graduates from high school.

Recognizing that teen dating violence is a serious and far-reaching problem, members of Congress proclaimed the week of February 6 through February 10 as **Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week**. At this time young people, parents and teachers should heighten their awareness of abusive behavior.

"Many young people do not realize what constitutes abusive behavior," says Vita Rogers, executive director of the Fort Bend County Women's Center. "Teens need to recognize the signs of abusive behavior early so that they can maintain healthy relationships throughout their lives.

"Dating abuse can happen to anyone at any given time. That is why it is important for us to observe **Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week**. Education and awareness are our greatest defense."

No one is immune from abusive relationships. Consider the following:

- One in three teenagers report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, choked or physically hurt by their partner
- Approximately one in five adolescent girls report being physically or sexually hurt by a dating partner;
- Boys have reported that 27 percent of girls started the violence in their relationships;
- 26 percent of girls in grades 9 to 12 have been the victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse or date rape;
- If trapped in an abusive relationship, 73 percent of teens said they would turn to a friend for help; but only 33 percent who have been in or known about an abusive relationship said they have told anyone about it.

If you are involved in an abusive relationship remember that you are not alone. No one does anything to deserve such treatment so there is no reason to feel ashamed. Get help today. It is

important to remember that abusive behavior is not restricted to physical abuse. Name calling, ridicule and verbal abuse are just as destructive.

If you know someone who is in an abusive relationship, reach out to them or call someone who may be able to help.

Warning signs that your friend may be involved in an abusive relationship include:

- Isolation from family and friends
- Not enjoying activities that he or she used to enjoy
- Spending excessive amounts of time in contact with he or her partner
- Showing fearful signs of displeasing their partner
- Changing the way they act or dress
- Showing signs of physical injury by their partner
- Becoming more aggravated and/or less independent
- Getting nervous when they are running late
- Canceling plans or seeming nervous to participate in certain activities
- Being called names, embarrassed, ridiculed, or insulted by their partner in front of your or other people
- Apologizing for making excuses for the actions or behaviors of his or her partner

Teachers who are interested in having a speaker come to your class to discuss the issues of teen dating violence and healthy relationships are urged to call the Fort Bend County Women's Center at 281.494.4545.

In 25 years of serving the community, the Fort Bend County Women's Center has helped more than 20,000 women and children achieve violence-free lifestyles. Community support through fundraisers and donations enables the Center to provide emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling, support services and educational outreach to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. For more information about the Center or the services it offers, call Executive Director Vita Rogers at 281.494.4545. If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault, please call the Center's 24-hour Hotline at 281.342.4357 (HELP).