



P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857
www.doj.state.wi.us

J.B. VAN HOLLEN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

GUEST COLUMN

For Immediate Release
February 14, 2010

For More Information Contact:
Bill Cosh 608/266-1221

FEBRUARY IS TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND AWARENESS MONTH

February 2010 marks the first time that the U.S. Congress has designated an entire month to highlighting the importance of preventing and responding to teen dating violence.

Teen dating violence, like its adult version, is the use of power and control that one teenager exerts over another in a dating relationship. The violence may be physical, sexual, or emotional and the effects can be devastating. According to research compiled by sources including the Family Violence Prevention Fund and the Centers for Disease Control, victims are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, perform poorly at school, attempt to commit suicide, and carry patterns of abuse into future relationships

The Family Violence Prevention Fund has also published statistics demonstrating the prevalence of teen dating violence. For example, reports reveal that one in three adolescent girls in the United States has been abused in a relationship. Of “tweens” aged 11-14 who have been in a dating relationship, almost two-thirds (62%) say they know peers who have been verbally abused by a partner. One in four teens (25%) reports having been harassed, insulted, or threatened through the use of technology, such as texting, e-mailing or postings on social networking sites

Protecting children remains perhaps my highest priority as Attorney General. This priority of ensuring our children’s safety is one that I share with parents, educators, and concerned community members around the state. Let us raise our awareness of the dangers of teen dating violence which will allow us to respond, and respond better, when we become more aware of how adolescents are being abused. If you know of a teen who is being hurt, you can:

- Report the abuse to child protection services or to law enforcement if you believe a crime has been committed

- Listen non-judgmentally to the teen
- Be knowledgeable about available resources
- Recommend and assist with prudent courses of action
- Assist the teen in seeking out support at their schools, youth organizations, domestic violence organizations, or other community and medical resources

It is incumbent on all of us to be mindful of and pro-active in preventing teen violence as well. We should remain knowledgeable about and support safe school policies that integrate both victim safety and offender accountability. As the parent of two youngsters, one now a teen, I also know that we must be vigilant about technological threats aimed at our children and we must monitor our kids' cyber-social activity. Furthermore, we must model healthy and respectful relationships and let our teens know that they deserve no less.

For more information about teen dating violence and the many resources that are available to teens, parents, mentors, and educators, go to: <http://teendvmonth.org/about-teen-dating-violence.html>

To learn more about the laws that apply to teen dating violence in Wisconsin, go to: <http://www.breakthecycle.org/content/teen-dating-violence-state-law-report-cards>

For help finding resources in your hometown, call the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Office of Crime Victim Services at 1-800-446-6564 or see our on-line directory of victim services agencies: http://www.doj.state.wi.us/cvs/OCVS_pages/victim_services.asp.

###