

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Watching your teen experience abuse can be both frustrating and frightening. But parents are critical in helping their teens develop healthy relationships, and can provide life-saving support if their teen is experiencing abuse. Remember, dating violence occurs in both same-sex and opposite-sex couples, and that girls can abuse boys, just as boys can abuse girls.

### What Do I Need to Know?

Parents can look for some early warning signs of abuse that can help you identify if your teen is in an abusive relationship before it's too late. Some of these signs include:

- Your teen's partner behaves in a way that is extremely jealous or possessive, such as checking in on your daughter or son often
- You hear verbal abuse, such as name-calling and demeaning comments
- Your teen gives up things that are important, such as time with friends and family, activities, or other interests
- Your teen has unexplained injuries
- Your teen's partner abuses other people or animals

### What Can I Do?

- **Tell your teen that you are concerned for his or her safety.** Point out that what is happening is not "normal." Everyone deserves a safe and healthy relationship. Offer to connect your teen with a professional, like a counselor or attorney, who they can talk to confidentially.
- **Be supportive and understanding.** Stress you are on their side. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Let them know that the abuse is not their fault, and that no one "deserves" to be abused. Make it clear that you don't blame your teen and that you respect his or her choices.
- **Help develop a safety plan.** One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship can be when the victim decides to leave. Be especially supportive during this time and try to connect your teen to support groups or professionals that can help keep them safe.
- **Remember that ultimately your teen must be the one to make the choice to leave the relationship.** There are many complex reasons why victims stay with their abuser. Your support can make a critical difference in helping your teen find his or her own way to escape the abuse and become safe.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...  
free from violence and free from fear.