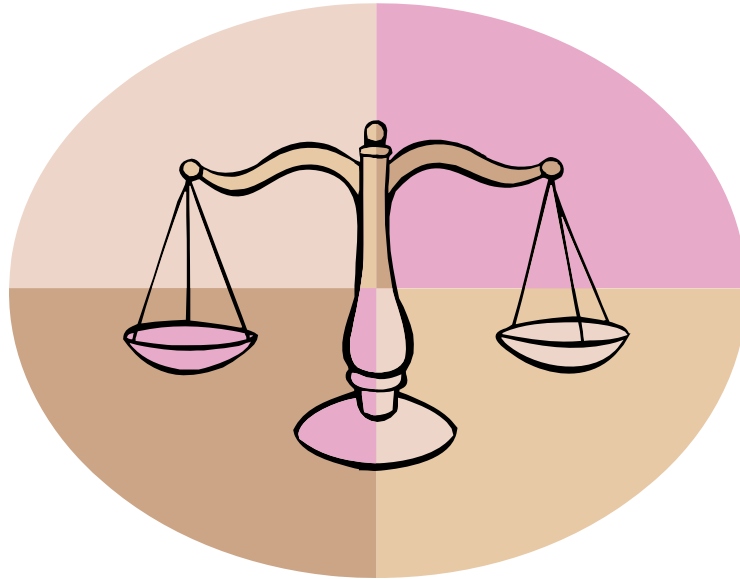


*Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.*

*Decatur Alumnae Chapter*

*Presents...*



*The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Advocacy Forum*

*January 10, 2009*

*Miller Grove High School*

*Sponsored by: Social Action Committee*

*Dr. Renee N. Shackelford, Chapter President*

*5<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Advocacy Forum*

*Saturday, January 10, 2009*

*AGENDA*

Breakfast/Registration	8:30 am – 9:15 am
What Is Advocacy?	9:15 am – 9:30 am
Breakout Sessions (Students)	9:30 am -10:15 am 10:20 am – 11:05 am
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• International Stereotypes and Interactions <i>Carolyn Livingston &amp; Alesia Burrell</i> <i>Co-Chairs International Awareness and Involvement Committee</i></li><li>• Abstinence – Why Wait? <i>Christina Pollard, Quest for Change, Inc.</i></li><li>• Gang Violence <i>Department of Juvenile Justice representative</i></li><li>• Drug Awareness/Prevention <i>Fred Mays, Georgia Bureau of Investigation</i></li><li>• Teen Relationships/Domestic Violence <i>Kristy Christopher, New Vision Counseling Center</i></li></ul>	
Breakout Sessions (Adults)	
Budgeting \$ense and Credit \$avvy <i>Tiffany Dover, Owner of Selah Financial Management</i> <i>Dierdra Cox, Senior Loan Consultant, Regions Bank</i>	9:30 am – 10:40 am
Community Advocacy <i>Belinda Pedroso, League of Women Voters</i>	10:55 am – 12:05 pm
“Know Your Rights” Presentation <i>Emory University Law Students</i>	11:10 am – 12:10 pm
Wrap-Up <i>Belinda Pedroso</i>	12:10 pm – 12:25 pm
Closing Remarks <i>Renee Shackelford</i>	12:25 pm – 12:30 pm

# What is Advocacy?

## Advocacy is problem solving used:

1. To protect rights or change unfair discriminatory or abusive treatment to fair, equal, and humane treatment
2. To improve services, gain eligibility for services or change the amount or quality of services to better meet the needs of an individual
3. To remove barriers which prevent full access to full participation in community life

# Why Choose Advocacy?

Progress - change for the better - will not happen without advocacy. Advocacy is the tool citizens use in our democracy to bring about improvements. People of different cultures, political parties, and interest groups have all seen major changes in laws and public attitudes over the years because of advocacy. Change begins with awareness.

## Types of Advocacy

There is no "best approach" to solving an advocacy problem. An effective advocate uses those techniques which are most effective in each situation.

Each advocacy situation is unique and relationships of the parties are unique. The experienced advocate will gather facts, confer with others, analyze the situation and determine the most effective method of intervention. Depending on how the situation develops, the strategy and techniques of the advocate may change.

There are a variety of activities which fall within general **self-advocacy** techniques, which allow individuals to bring about resolution of their own concerns. Self-advocates gather advice and information and take action to resolve a particular issue. Self-advocacy skill training, publications, and information and referral lines commonly support self-advocacy.

When self-advocates feel their efforts aren't enough to resolve an issue, **mediation** techniques may bring both parties to a settlement which works. Ideally, both parties emerge from mediation with an agreement and a working relationship.

In some cases, an individual can obtain a satisfactory resolution by using an agency **complaint and grievance process**. Particularly where a public service is involved, there is usually a grievance process which can be used.

Advocates can also seek help from **regulatory agencies**. Regulatory agencies, broadly defined, include agencies which are required by law to oversee a service or facility, but also those who contract with others to provide a service. If an advocate is seeking to have a problem corrected, the agency or individual responsible for enforcing regulations or a contract can be helpful.

Where serious concerns aren't addressed, an advocate may seek **legal assistance** to take the concern through the administrative hearing or civil court process. This can be costly. However, sometimes free legal services or volunteer lawyers can be found.

Where the law isn't addressing a problem, or public resources aren't adequate, **legislative action** may be necessary.

For advocates who know how to work effectively with the press, **print and electronic media** bring issues to the attention of the public. This may help individuals who suffer injustice, and also address larger public issues. However, the media are independent, and won't necessarily read a situation as you do. Care must be taken to avoid unfavorable publicity.

Sometimes, **protest and civil disobedience** calls attention to issues, and places pressure on officials to make needed changes. Peaceful and orderly public protest is protected by the constitution. Civil disobedience, on the other hand, is the violation of the law to make a point or generate sympathy for a cause. It can be effective, as it was in the civil rights era, but those involved must be willing to risk fines and even jail to make their point.

**Community advocacy** - also known as "systems advocacy" - is another important function of the advocate. Systems advocacy influences social and political systems to bring about changes for the benefit of groups of people.

## What makes an advocate?

### 1) Objectivity

An advocate listens and evaluates information objectively. As an advocate, you must know and recognize your own prejudices and tendencies. How effective you are as an advocate will in large part be determined by the degree of objectivity you can bring to a situation.

The degree of confidence or suspicion you have in the system, and your belief in the potential of positive change, will affect your approach to advocacy and how you interpret situations and issues you encounter. Think about what your attitudes are toward the system - individuals, providers, agencies, service consumers - and constantly reexamine your attitudes in the light of what you see.

### 2) Independence

To effectively and credibly advocate for others you must exercise independent judgment.

### 3) Sensitivity & Understanding

An advocate conveys interest and empathy. You will get more information and a more accurate reading of what others want if you can communicate that you are listening. Good communication skills are essential.

#### **4) Persistence & Patience**

An advocate is determined and secure enough in your position to weather storms, deal with setbacks, and maintain energy over time.

#### **5) Knowledge & Judgment**

You must understand what to ask for, whom to ask, and be able to exercise judgment about what is reasonable, and what isn't. Knowledge and judgment develop over time, with experience.

#### **6) Assertiveness**

An advocate is polite, but firm. You need to have a good working relationship with others, but they must not control you.

#### **7) Ethics & Respect for Others**

An advocate respects the privacy and confidentiality of others, and respects the basic rules of ethical conduct, to be effective and to maintain credibility.

Advocates must:

- Be culturally sensitive.
- Provide language accommodations.
- Provide disability accommodations.
- Adhere to a code of confidentiality.
- Refrain from abusive conduct.
- Be trustworthy and honest.
- Resolve personal conflicts of interest.

## **Advocacy Pitfalls**

Advocacy is not:

- substituting your beliefs as an advocate for the beliefs of others
- creating conflict for its own sake
- a chance to get even for past wrongs done to you
- an opportunity to make yourself feel powerful at the expense of others.

## *Real Examples of Advocacy...*

Washington Informer - S.T.E.P. Up Speaks Out to Empower Youth to Graduate Page

### **S.T.E.P. Up Speaks Out to Empower Youth to Graduate**

By Mary Wells - WI Staff Writer

Thursday, 30 October 2008

Youth speaker Byron Coleman, a senior at Spingarn STAY school, stresses the importance of education at the launching of S.T.E.P. Up D.C. on Wed., Oct. 22. S.T.E.P. Up D.C., a new, youth-led initiative to increase high school graduation rates in the District, was launched at the Thurgood Marshall Center on Wed., Oct. 22. Concerned about research showing that only 50 percent of District students graduate from high school, youth from District schools and organizations came together to create strategies to increase high school graduation rates.

Ashley McNeill, 13, of Trinidad Campus Public School, said she just heard a classmate this week say, "I'm going to drop out of school when I get 16." When she asked him why, he said, "Because I'm tired of going to school." McNeill said she then encouraged him to say he would not plan to drop out of school. It is students like McNeill, who is a member of the steering committee of S.T.E.P. UP, who encourages other young students to stay in school and work out their problems and graduate.

Michael Wotorson, national director of the Campaign for High School Equity, NAACP, told of the experience of a group of students in East Los Angeles who were "sick and tired" of teachers who told them they couldn't speak Spanish at school or in the lunchroom and didn't encourage them to be good students. They walked out and formed a committee and came up with some changes they wanted to happen at their school to empower and educate students to want to stay in school and graduate. "They decided they were going to change things for the better at their school and they were successful," Wotorson said.

"If teachers say you are a troublemaker, in spite of that, you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself what you want to be and don't ever let anyone kill your dream. Don't ever let it die," Wotorson encouraged the students. "Invite the mayor, city council and other city personnel to your meetings. If they don't come, you go to them. Write them letters and e-mail them and if they don't respond, don't stop. Don't get discouraged, you go to them. You are the master of your fate," he said.

Eshauna Smith, director at D.C. Alliance of Youth Advocates, said that youth from organizations and schools across the city come together and meet here at the center after school to tackle the drop-out rate. They are preparing a survey to pass out to students to get their input on an action agenda to attack the drop-out problem.

Scott Perry, director of the Latin American Youth Center, where 16 to 24-year-olds can get their GED, said, "We have students from every background who want to get their GED. This is our third anniversary and we are proud of our success rate."

Names of public officials from the community who were invited and didn't show up were called. "We could have played it off, but we're going to e-mail them to let them know that S.T.E.P. Up D.C. is officially kicked off and we need their help," said Erica de Bardeleben and Taeylor Johnson of Kid Power.

The youth survey is still being prepared but will be passed out to students in D.C. Questions on the survey include: Do you know anyone who has dropped out of school? If yes, who? What do you think causes students to drop out of school? If you could change one thing at your school to improve your education, what would it be? What is the one thing that would keep you in high school until graduation? Smith said that after the surveys are distributed and collected, youth committee members will return to Critical Exposure at this center to meet and plan other strategies to meet the students' needs. They will continue to contact city officials, city and government organizations and churches to get involved to help solve this huge drop-out problem.

*For more information, visit <http://www.stepupdc.net>.*

Source: [http://www.washingtoninformer.com/wi/index2.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id...11/3/2008](http://www.washingtoninformer.com/wi/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id...11/3/2008)

## Quiet Time is Definitely Over

By Danielle, Member, [Young Women of Color Leadership Council](#), Advocates for Youth

I was born and raised in the beautiful city of Macon, Georgia. I am 21 years old and currently attend the Savannah College of Art and Design. I work at the college, conducting campus tours as a student representative. My major is film and television; my minor is sound design.



I started working with sexual and reproductive health issues, HIV and AIDS prevention, and peer education in the seventh grade. My neighbor asked me to help her out one day at a meeting she was holding for young teens at a local high school. They were a part of a program called Teens Against Pregnancy (TAPS). That day made all the difference and from that moment on I stayed involved with TAPS until I graduated high school.

I know friends and family who have been infected with STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and even HIV. I feel that it is only right that I educate others to help prevent more infections. After all, no one wants to be a statistic.

Participating in Teens Against Pregnancy made a tremendous impact in my life, and I feel tremendously blessed that I was educated at an early age about the dangers of irresponsible sexual behavior. For me the question has been, “How can I be safe if I choose to engage in certain activities?” That’s all most kids want to know. How can someone deny them that kind of information? It’s just a disaster waiting to happen. It’s hard enough talking about the subject with your friends and people who just don’t want to hear me; but if I won’t do it, than who will?

Most parents wait too late to start conversations about sex because they think high school is probably the right time to talk. But, a girl in my seventh grade class gave birth to a baby, so what does that say? If kids have questions, then they need answers and not to be sent home to ask their parents. After all, some aren’t fortunate enough to have either parents or a guardian that they can ask questions of and get honest answers from. It’s hard for a lot of adults to have honest, open sexuality conversations with their kids.

Being a part of the Young Women of Color Leadership Council allows us to go out and be heard. Having an organization like Advocates for Youth to support our efforts also gives us credibility when we go out and facilitate workshops and community forums. I really look forward to holding youth summits in the Georgia area. As a young woman of color, I want to show others that we can do more to educate our own young men and women and to keep our future safer, even when our schools won’t. The way things are going now; it looks like it may be up to us. Quiet time is definitely over!

### *International Stereotypes and Interactions*

A "stereotype" is a generalization about a person or group of persons. We develop stereotypes when we are unable or unwilling to obtain all of the information we would need to make fair judgments about people or situations. In the absence of the "total picture," stereotypes in many cases allow us to "fill in the blanks." Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution when the stereotype is unfavorable.

For example, if we are walking through a park late at night and encounter three senior citizens wearing fur coats and walking with canes, we may not feel as threatened as if we were met by three high school-aged boys wearing leather jackets. Why is this so? We have made a generalization in each case. These generalizations have their roots in experiences we have had ourselves, read about in books and magazines, seen in movies or television, or have had related to us by friends and family. In many cases, these stereotypical generalizations are reasonably accurate. Yet, in virtually every case, we are resorting to prejudice by ascribing characteristics about a person based on a stereotype, without knowledge of the total facts. By stereotyping, we assume that a person or group has certain characteristics. Quite often, we have stereotypes about persons who are members of groups with which we have not had firsthand contact.

Television, books, comic strips, and movies are all abundant sources of stereotyped characters. For much of its history, the movie industry portrayed African-Americans as being unintelligent, lazy, or violence-prone. As a result of viewing these stereotyped pictures of African-Americans, for example, prejudice against African-Americans has been encouraged. In the same way, physically attractive women have been and continue to be portrayed as unintelligent and sexually promiscuous.

Stereotypes also evolve out of fear of persons from minority groups. For example, many people have the view of a person with mental illness as someone who is violence-prone. This conflicts with statistical data, which indicate that persons with mental illness tend to be no more prone to violence than the general population. Perhaps the few, but well-publicized, isolated cases of mentally ill persons going on rampages have planted the seed of this myth about these persons. This may be how some stereotypes developed in the first place; a series of isolated behaviors by a member of a group which was unfairly generalized to be viewed as a character of all members of that group.

#### *Discrimination*

When we judge people and groups based on our prejudices and stereotypes and treat them differently, we are engaging in discrimination. This discrimination can take many forms. We may create subtle or overt pressures which will discourage persons of certain minority groups from living in a neighborhood. Women and minorities have been victimized by discrimination in employment, education, and social services. We may shy away from people with a history of mental illness because we are afraid they may harm us. Women and minorities are often excluded from high echelon positions in the business world. Many clubs have restrictive membership policies which do not permit Jews, African-Americans, women, and others to join.

In some cases, the civil and criminal justice system has not been applied equally to all as a result of discrimination. Some studies indicate that African-Americans convicted of first degree murder have a significantly higher probability of receiving a death penalty than whites convicted of first degree murder, for example. When political boundaries have been drawn, a process known as "gerrymandering" has often been used to provide that minorities and other groups are not represented in proportion to their population in city councils, state legislatures, and the U.S. Congress.

Source: <http://remember.org/guide/History.root.stereotypes.html>



## Abstinence:

### **What Is It?**

Abstinence is not having sex. A person who decides to practice abstinence has decided not to have sex.

### **How Does It Work?**

If two people don't have sex, then sperm can't fertilize an egg and there's no possibility of a pregnancy. Some forms of birth control depend on barriers that prevent the sperm from reaching the egg (such as condoms or diaphragms). Others interfere with the menstrual cycle (as birth control pills do). With abstinence, no barriers or pills are necessary because the person is not having sex. You don't have to be a virgin to practice abstinence. Sometimes people who have been having sex decide not to continue having sex. Even if a person has been having sex, he or she can still choose abstinence to prevent pregnancy and [sexually transmitted diseases \(STDs\)](#).

### **How Well Does It Work?**

Abstinence is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy. Although many birth control methods can have high rates of success if used properly, they can fail occasionally. Practicing abstinence ensures that a girl will not become pregnant because there is no opportunity for sperm to fertilize an egg.

### **Protection Against STDs**

Abstinence protects people against STDs. Some STDs spread through oral-genital sex, anal sex, or even intimate skin-to-skin contact without actual penetration (genital warts and herpes can be spread this way). So only avoiding all types of intimate genital contact can prevent STDs. Avoiding all types of intimate genital contact — including anal and oral sex — is **complete** abstinence. Only complete and consistent abstinence can totally prevent pregnancy and protect against STDs. Because a person does not have any type of intimate sexual contact when he or she practices complete abstinence, there is no risk of passing on a sexually transmitted infection.

**Consistent** abstinence means that someone practices abstinence *all the time*. Having sex even once means that the person risks getting an infection. Abstinence does not prevent AIDS and hepatitis B infections that come from nonsexual activities like using contaminated needles for doing drugs, tattooing, or taking steroids.

### **How Do You Do It?**

Not having sex may seem easy because it's not *doing* anything. But peer pressure and things you see on TV and in the movies can make the decision to practice abstinence more difficult. If it seems like everybody else is having sex, some people may feel they have to do it, too, just to be accepted. Don't let kidding or pressure from friends, a girlfriend, a boyfriend, or even the media push you into something that's not right for you. The truth is that most teens are not having sex.

A couple can still have a relationship without having sex. If you've made a decision not to have sex, it's an important personal choice and the people who care about you should respect that. You may have questions about making this choice or about other methods of birth control. Your doctor or nurse — or an adult you trust, such as a parent, teacher, or counselor — can help provide some answers.

## Gang Violence

Although once thought to be an inner-city problem, gang violence has spread to communities throughout the United States. At last count, there were more than 24,500 different youth gangs around the country, and more than 772,500 teens and young adults were members of gangs. Teens join gangs for a variety of reasons. Some are seeking excitement; others are looking for prestige, protection, a chance to make money, or a sense of belonging. Few teens are forced to join gangs; in most cases, teens can refuse to join without fear of retaliation.

### **Membership on the Rise**

There has been a dramatic increase in gang activity in the United States since the 1970's. In the 1970's, gangs were active in less than half the states, but now every state reports youth gang activity. And, while many people think of gangs as just an inner-city problem, that is clearly no longer the case. In the past few decades we have seen a dramatic increase in the growth of gang problems in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas. Since 1996, the overall number of gangs and gang members in the United States has decreased. However, in cities with a population over 25,000, gang involvement still remains near peak levels.

### **Age of Members**

Most youth gang members are between the ages of 12 and 24, and the average age is about 17 to 18 years. Around half of youth gang members are 18 or older, and they are much more likely to be involved in serious and violent crimes than younger gang members. Only about 1-in-4 youth gang members are ages 15 to 17. For most teens, gang membership is a brief phase. Three studies that tracked teens over time found that one-half to two-thirds of youth gang members leave the gang by the one-year mark.

### **Girls in Gangs**

Male youth are much more likely to join gangs than female youth. It is hard to get a good estimate of the number of female gangs and gang members, however, because many police jurisdictions do not count girls as gang members. While the national estimates based on police reports indicate that only about 8% of gang members are female, one 11-city survey of eighth-graders found that 38% of gang members are female. Female gangs are somewhat more likely to be found in small cities and rural areas than in large cities, and female gang members tend to be younger, on average, than male gang members. Female gang members are involved in less delinquent or criminal activity than male gang members, and they commit fewer violent crimes. However, female gang members are still an important concern. In one survey, 78% of female gang members reported being involved in gang fights, 65% reported carrying a weapon for protection, and 39% reported attacking someone with a weapon.

### **Not Just an Inner-City Problem**

Although many people think of gangs as a problem confined to the inner-city neighborhoods, that is clearly no longer the case. In the past few decades there has been a dramatic increase in the growth of gang problems in smaller cities, towns, and villages. When surveyed in 1999, 66 percent of large cities, 47 percent of suburban counties, 27 percent of small cities, and 18 percent of rural counties reported active youth gangs. Gangs in suburban, small town, and rural areas are different than gangs in large cities. They include more females, white, and younger youth, and are more likely to have ethnically and racially mixed memberships.

### **Gangs at School**

Youth gangs are linked with serious crime problems in elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Students report much higher drug availability when gangs are active at their school. Schools with gangs have nearly double the likelihood of violent victimization at school than those without a gang presence. Teens that are gang members are much more likely than other teens to commit serious and violent crimes. For example, a survey in Denver found that while only 14% of teens were gang members, they were responsible for committing 89% of the serious violent crimes.

Source: <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/youthgang.asp>

## Drug Awareness & Prevention

### Risk Factors and Protective Factors

What are risk factors and protective factors?

Research over the past two decades has tried to determine how drug abuse begins and how it progresses. Many factors can add to a person's risk for drug abuse. Risk factors can increase a person's chances for drug abuse, while protective factors can reduce the risk. Please note, however, that most individuals at risk for drug abuse do not start using drugs or become addicted. Also, a risk factor for one person may not be for another.

Risk and protective factors can affect children at different stages of their lives. At each stage, risks occur that can be changed through prevention intervention. Early childhood risks, such as aggressive behavior, can be changed or prevented with family, school, and community interventions that focus on helping children develop appropriate, positive behaviors. If not addressed, negative behaviors can lead to more risks, such as academic failure and social difficulties, which put children at further risk for later drug abuse.

*Research-based prevention programs focus on intervening early in a child's development to strengthen protective factors before problem behaviors develop.*

The table below describes how risk and protective factors affect people in five domains, or settings, where interventions can take place.

<b>Risk Factors</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
Early Aggressive Behavior	Individual	Self-Control
Lack of Parental Supervision	Family	Parental Monitoring
Substance Abuse	Peer	Academic Competence
Drug Availability	School	Anti-drug Use Policies
Poverty	Community	Strong Neighborhood Attachment

Risk factors can influence drug abuse in several ways. The more risks a child is exposed to, the more likely the child will abuse drugs. Some risk factors may be more powerful than others at certain stages in development, such as peer pressure during the teenage years; just as some protective factors, such as a strong parent-child bond, can have a greater impact on reducing risks during the early years. An important goal of prevention is to change the balance between risk and protective factors so that protective factors outweigh risk factors.

### Teen Relationships/Domestic Violence

Nearly three in four teens (72%) say boyfriend/girlfriend relationships usually begin at age 14 or younger.

62% of tweens (age 11-14) who have been in a relationship say they know friends who have been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.

Only half of all tweens (age 11-14) claim to know the warning signs of a bad/hurtful relationship.

More than three times as many teens (20%) as parents (6%) admit that parents know little or nothing about the teens' dating relationships.

1 in 3 teenagers report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, choked or physically hurt by their partner.

Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend had threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a break-up.

13% of teenage girls who said they have been in a relationship report being physically hurt or hit.

1 in 4 teenage girls who have been in relationships reveal they have been pressured to perform oral sex or engage in intercourse.

More than 1 in 4 teenage girls in a relationship (26%) report enduring repeated verbal abuse.

80% of teens regard verbal abuse as a "serious issue" for their age group.

If trapped in an abusive relationship, 73% of teens said they would turn to a friend for help; but only 33% who have been in or known about an abusive relationship said they have told anyone about it.

Twenty-four percent of 14 to 17-year-olds know at least one student who has been the victim of dating violence, yet 81% of parents either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it is an issue.

Less than 25% of teens say they have discussed dating violence with their parents.

89% of teens between the ages of 13 and 18 say they have been in dating relationships; forty percent of teenage girls age 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.

Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser.

Of the women between the ages 15-19 murdered each year, 30% are killed by their husband or boyfriend.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline (NTDAH). The first of its kind, the NTDAH operates via telephone and Web *24 hours a day* and is be staffed by both teen and adult advocates. Teens (and parents) anywhere in the country can call toll free, 866-331-9474 or log on to the interactive Web site, [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org), and receive immediate, confidential assistance. Teenage peer advocates will staff the helpline and Web site during a block of time each day.

Source: <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/statistics.htm>

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