

PRESS RELEASE

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Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month: How Parents and the Community Can Respond to Dating Abuse

Nevada—The Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence (NNADV) recognizes February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. This month aims to bring attention to pervasive teen dating violence and what communities and parents can do to recognize and end it.

Organizations and communities across the country are rising to the occasion by offering a variety of resources and tools to help teens recognize abusive patterns that may emerge in dating relationships and take the proper steps to prevent or stop the abuse. Parents can also take steps to raise their awareness of teen dating abuse.

There are a [number of warning signs](#) that parents may encounter when their teen is in an abusive relationship, according to Dr. Jill Murray. For example, your child may have fewer friends than she did before meeting her dating partner, as he may be isolating her from friends, outside activities, and even her family. Parents may also notice emotional changes in their child, including crying and wanting to be alone. Another red flag is a partner who constantly calls or texts your teen, demanding to know who they are with and where they are. And although your teen may be making excuses for this behavior, don't ignore your suspicions.

[Experts believe](#) that the best approach if you suspect violence is to avoid a power struggle with your child, keep the lines of communication open, and provide resources. Additionally, the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#) urges parents to avoid taking a teen's cell phone or other technology away and focus instead on the appropriate use of these items in the context of a respectful relationship.

The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline is a 24-hour hotline, specifically designed for teens and young adults. It offers real-time one-on-one support from trained peer advocates. All communication is confidential and anonymous. It is accessible by phone at **1.866.331.9474** or via the internet at loveisrespect.org. The website provides additional resources for teens, parents, friends and family, peer advocates, government officials, law enforcement officials, and the general public.

Unfortunately, the statistics for teens and dating violence are sobering. Violence can take many forms, and encompasses emotional and physical abuse, as well as trauma experienced through social media channels. For example, according to [The National Youth Risk Behavior survey](#) by the Centers for Disease Control conducted in 2009, 9.8 percent of teens were hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their dating partner during the 12 months before the survey. In Nevada, that figure jumped to 11.4 percent. The survey notes that teens reported higher rates of dating violence in larger cities across the nation.

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“These statistics clearly indicate that teen dating violence is an issue that Nevada and communities across the country, as well as parents, must address from a number of different perspectives,” says Sue Meuschke, Executive Director of the NNADV.

Considering the prevalence of violence among the teenage population, awareness activities are particularly important. This month in Nevada, domestic violence programs across the state are offering a number of resources to address the growing problem of teen dating violence.

Examples of activities this month:

- **Tahoe Women’s Services (TWS)** will facilitate an awareness event with local high school students, releasing balloons to signify those who have been or are currently in unhealthy relationships. Banners will also be hung featuring statistics and the [National Dating Awareness hotline](#) and [website](#). A member of the Teen Speaker’s Bureau also will write an article to local papers about teen dating violence and its long-term effects. Additionally, a local Healthy Relationships Coalition, which TWS Prevention staff is a part of, is drafting a policy for schools to implement that would address dating violence. It includes an outline of the various ways in which dating violence can occur, a plan of action for reporting and dealing with incidents, and an ongoing plan for training staff and students.
- **The Winnemucca Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc., (WDVS)** has created a dating violence bulletin and will discuss the issue at Great Basin College for the month of February. They will also host a dating violence awareness/outreach booth at the annual *Youth Reaching Higher Health & Safety Fair* Feb. 26, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. WDVS will also provide a Teen Dating Violence Power Point Presentation in both Spanish and English for parents and teens and display *Love is Respect* posters at local schools.
- **Safe Embrace** in Reno, Nev. began a monthly Teen Dating Violence Support Group in February at Reno’s McGee Center. The teens have named it L.E.G.I.T.—Ladies Encouraging Great Intelligent Things.

For more information, please contact NNADV (775.828.1115) or your local domestic violence agency. For additional resources about teen dating violence, please visit [Teen Dating Violence Prevention Project](#), [Family Violence Prevention Fund](#), or www.breakthecycle.org.

About NNADV:

The Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence was founded in 1980 to work toward the elimination of domestic and sexual violence against all persons. As Nevada’s statewide coalition, NNADV is an inclusive network which both supports its member programs, and educates the public at large.

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