



Center  
Against  
Domestic  
Violence

25 Chapel Street, Suite 904  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone 718-254-9134  
Hotline 718-439-1000  
[www.centeragainstdv.org](http://www.centeragainstdv.org)

**Contacts:** Geto & de Milly, Inc. 212.686.455

- Susan Nierenberg  
[snierenberg@getodemilly.com](mailto:snierenberg@getodemilly.com)
- Joyce Baumgarten  
[jbaumgarten@getodemilly.com](mailto:jbaumgarten@getodemilly.com)

## Domestic Violence and Teenagers

*“The more adolescents – both young men and young women – we can reach with preventative education before they get involved in abusive relationships, the fewer families we’ll need to shelter later on.” – **Judith Kahan, Executive Director, Center Against Domestic Violence***

In 1999, the **Center Against Domestic Violence** helped to create the **Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)**, with funding provided by the New York City Human Resource Administration. Today, students in 20 high schools across New York City learn the warning signs of relationship abuse and how to have respectful relationships through RAPP’s unique combination of counseling, workshops and the creative arts. In 2002, the Center began pilot-testing a groundbreaking program to reach middle school students: **Speak Your Peace**, which has just begun its third successful year at one Brooklyn middle school, helps these children to understand the basics of respectful relationships – with friends or potential dating partners.

### **Teen Relationship Abuse in New York City**

- One in five teenage girls is physically or sexually assaulted by a dating partner – which means approximately 30,000 teenage girls in New York City are victims of dating violence. When verbal and emotional abuse are included, the ratio rises to one in three.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly one-third of 15 – 19 year-old women murdered in New York City each year die at the hands of an abusive boyfriend or husband.<sup>2</sup>
- A study of over 600 New York City high school students revealed that nearly one-third of respondents interpreted violent acts as acts of love.<sup>3</sup>
- In a study of 500 teens in New York City, between 17 and 23% of those interviewed had been intimidated, threatened, hit or slapped by their partner and 25% reported being verbally abused through insults, humiliation and embarrassment. Yet only 14% of these teens described themselves as being in abusive relationships.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Silverman, Jay G., Ph.D. et al., *Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality*, 286 Journal of the American Medical Association 572, (August 2001).

<sup>2</sup> City of New York, Teen Relationship Abuse Fact Sheet, March 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Worell, Kris, “When Teenage Relationships Become Abusive,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, April 14, 1993, as cited by Toby Simon and Bethany Golden, *Dating: Peer Education for Reducing Sexual Harassment and Violence Among Secondary Students* (Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> “Domestic Violence Survey at Covenant House New York,” Covenant House Public Policy and Legislative Advocacy Notes, Spring 1999

- 10% of *identified* domestic violence victims in New York City are under age 20.<sup>5</sup>
- 7% of the *abusers* of domestic violence victims treated at New York City public hospitals are under age 20.<sup>6</sup>
- In New York City, nearly 80% of teenage girls who experience relationship abuse will continue to date their abuser, gambling that the abuse will stop.<sup>7</sup>
- Each year the number of teens calling the City Domestic Violence Hotline increases, from 6,863 in 2001 to 10,574 in 2002 – to 13,410 in 2003.<sup>8</sup> Teenage calls to this hotline have increased over 70% since 1998.<sup>9</sup>
- Teenagers comprise approximately 8% of the total number of females killed in an intimate partner homicide in New York City.<sup>10</sup>

## National Statistics

“...strategies to reach adolescents and young adults are essential to preventing domestic violence, helping children become healthy and productive adults, and strengthening our communities.” – from the Family Violence Prevention Fund’s July 2003 report on intimate partner violence among teenagers nationwide.<sup>11</sup>

- Teens in all ethnic and socioeconomic groups and geographic regions experience relationship abuse. Relationship abuse can happen in same-sex relationships. Both male and female teens may be victims.
- Young women aged 16 to 24 are the most at-risk of domestic violence of any age group.<sup>12</sup>
- Boys more often cause serious physical injuries. Girls are more likely to receive injuries requiring medical attention.
- It is likely that teenagers involved in abusive relationships will repeat that pattern of violence in relationships throughout their lives. Such teens often rely on abusive partners to help define themselves.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Bergman, Libby, “Dating Violence Among High School Students,” *Social Work* 37, (1992) 23.

<sup>8</sup> New York City Domestic Violence Fact Sheet, February 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Gotbaum, Betsy, “Before It’s Too Late: Adolescent Relationship Abuse In New York City,” A Report Issued by the Office of the Public Advocate of the City of New York, February 2004.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ann Rosewater, “Promoting Prevention, Targeting Teens: An Emerging Agenda to Reduce Domestic Violence,” prepared for the Family Violence Prevention Fund, July 2003, p. vi.

<sup>12</sup> Rosewater, *op. cit.*, p. 6, citing Callie Rennison, Ph.D., et al., *Intimate Partner Violence*, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, NCJ 178247, Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, May 2000; Patricia Tjaden, and Nancy Thoennes, *National Violence Against Women Survey*, National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 1998.

- One survey of high school students found that approximately one in five female students had been physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.<sup>14</sup>
- Women between ages 16 and 24 are nearly three times more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than women in other age groups.<sup>15</sup>
- According to one study, 30% of battered women in one study married men who had abused them while dating.<sup>16</sup>
- More than one-quarter of new mothers aged 13 through 17 experienced domestic violence within three months of their child's birth.<sup>17</sup>

### **Effects of Domestic Violence on Teenagers**

- Patterns of blaming others for his (her) behavior, especially parents
- High levels of anger and anxiety
- Inappropriate belief that violence can be a response to conflict
- Protective behavior toward the mother
- Violence against the mother
- Responsibility of caring for younger siblings
- Running away
- Patterns of truancy
- Substance abuse problems
- Promiscuous behavior

---

<sup>13</sup> Silverman, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Silverman, Jay G; Raj, Anita; Mucci, Lorelei A.; Hathaway, Jeanne E., 'Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality.' *Journal of the American Medical Association* 286, no. 5, (2001): 572-579.

<sup>15</sup> *Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-1999*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, United States Department of Justice, (October 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Roscoe, et al., "Courtship Violence Experienced by Abused Wives: Similarities in Patterns of Abuse," *Family Relations*, July 1985.

<sup>17</sup> Rosewater, op. cit, p. 6, citing AGI, "Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System State Specific Survey of New Mothers," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31(2): 106+, 1999, as quoted in *Interpersonal Violence and Adolescent Pregnancy: Prevalence and Implications for Practice and Policy*, Center for Assessment and Policy Development and National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention, Inc., Washington DC: October 2001 as cited in internal memo, center for Law and Social Policy, undated.