

residents. **Hope Alliance**, Williamson County's domestic violence and sexual assault response and prevention program, offers many different services, including a 24-hour crisis hotline, a shelter, legal assistance, and community education programs. They offer several counseling and support groups for all ages of people who have been the victims of sexual assault, or who are caring for a sexual assault victim. **Hays-Galdwell Women's Center** has services such as counseling, support groups and assistance with medical and legal proceedings to survivors of abuse and sexual assault. Both their HELpline crisis hotline and their HEARTeam crisis response team are available 24 hours a day. In addition, their family violence program includes prevention and education programs.

Austin is also home to two national organizations that address domestic violence, including teen dating violence. **The National Domestic Violence Hotline** is the country's only 24-hour, multi-lingual (including TTY) and nationwide hotline available 365 days a year. The hotline offers resources, safety planning and advocacy to victims and survivors of domestic violence. Calls to the hotline are anonymous and confidential. Currently, the hotline receives approximately 23,500 calls every month. Also based in Austin, the **National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence** has many resources on its website, www.ncdsv.org about preventing and recognizing teen dating violence

To learn more

- Changing Lives Youth Theatre Ensemble: <http://changinglivesyouth.blogspot.com/>
- Love Is Not Abuse: <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/>
- Texas PEACE Project: <http://www.taasa.org/tpp/>
- WomensLaw.org: <http://www.womenslaw.org/>



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April 2011



Roughly **10%** of all Texas high school students have experienced dating violence.

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CONVERSATION ON

Teen Dating Violence:
A Deadly Problem

Thursday, April 27, from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.
First Floor Community Room | 98 San Jacinto Blvd. Austin, Texas
\$10 includes lunch. RSVP at www.ilivehereigivehere.org

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Teen Dating Violence: A Deadly Problem

After 15-year-old Ortralla Mosley was murdered at Reagan High School by her 16-year-old boyfriend in 2003, Texas schools and legislators worked to create policies and trainings to prevent another such tragedy from occurring. However, teen dating violence remains a problem in our community – one that teens, parents and educators don't always know how to effectively address.

According to **SafePlace**, a nonprofit dedicated to ending domestic and sexual violence:

- Roughly 10% of all Texas high school students have experienced dating violence.
- Out of 572 students referred to SafePlace for school-based counseling:
 - 38% experienced domestic violence.
 - 26% experienced violence from their parents or caregivers.
 - 17% were in an abusive relationship.

We are fortunate to have several nonprofits working together, within Austin schools and beyond to prevent and respond to teen dating violence.

Reducing the Risk

Prevention is an important part of addressing teen dating violence. Programs reach out to youth directly, helping them recognize the signs of abuse in relationships. These education programs incorporate important information about how technology – such as cell phones and social networking websites – adds a new layer to the problem of teen dating violence. Nationally, one in four teens in relationships admit they've been "called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cell phones and texting."

SafePlace operates school-based counseling and support programs, as well as youth leadership and education programs. Last year, their **Expect Respect** program provided counseling and support groups for 763 students in 37 schools. The program also offered educational programs to over 11,000 central Texas students and over 2,600 parents, school personnel and adults working with youth. The **Start Strong Austin** project, a collaboration between **SafePlace** and several other organizations, including **Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area**, **The Cipher–Austin Hip-Hop Project**, **Theatre Action Project** and more – strives to prevent teen dating violence and promote healthy teen relationships. SafePlace also assisted Austin Independent School District (AISD) develop an official policy on bullying, harassment and dating violence.

Schools, alone, cannot provide the solution to teen dating violence. Parental involvement is essential. That's why **Planned Parenthood** offers programs for both schools and parents. Their "Talk F!rst" workshops give parents resources to help

them talk to their children more effectively about sexuality and principles. In addition, the organization has several free community outreach and teen education programs on healthy relationships. Many Austin-area schools request their programs on topics like healthy relationships, abstinence, STDs, setting goals, sex in the media and general health.

LifeWorks is also heavily involved with teen violence education. The organization collaborates with Planned Parenthood to provide education for middle and high school students about healthy relationships and pregnancy prevention. They also work with SafePlace to provide abuse prevention outreach to youth living on the streets and in the LifeWorks shelter.

Providing back-end support to these organizations are groups like the **Texas Council on Family Violence**, which focuses on supporting service providers, advocating for policy change and preventing domestic violence. Their free Teen Dating Violence and Prevention Toolkit is available for download on their website.

Intervention & Response

If a teenager is affected by an abusive relationship, help is available. The **Texas Advocacy Project** provides free legal services to young adults who are the victims of dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. In addition to representing their clients in court, the organization's attorneys can give legal advice to central Texas students.

Students who have received in-school suspension, detention or placement at alternative learning sites can be referred to the **Council on At-Risk Youth**. This organization strives to combat school violence, delinquency and drug abuse. They operate the Youth Violence Prevention Program within AISD schools.

Teens can also turn to Austin and central Texas' domestic violence shelters and response organizations for assistance. **SafePlace** provides a 24-hour hotline, emergency shelters for men and women, hospital advocacy, and legal advocacy to Austin and Travis County

