

CNSNews.com

June 10, 2005

Teens Report Surge in Dating Abuse

(CNSNews.com) – A new survey on teen dating indicates that a quarter of all girls who are in a relationship have been pressured to perform oral sex or engage in intercourse. Thirteen percent of the teenaged girls surveyed said they had also been physically hurt or hit by their dates.

The survey, commissioned by Liz Claiborne, Inc. and conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), questioned 337 boys and 346 girls aged 13 to 18. Verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, the poll results showed, is not limited by race or geographic location.

This rise in teen dating violence can be attributed to a generational cycle, according to Juley Fulcher, director of Break the Cycle, a group that provides people between 12 and 22 years old free legal services, preventive education, and support.

“Growing up in an abusive home does greatly increase the ability to repeat that pattern,” Fulcher told Cybercast News Service. “This behavior is setting in early,” she said, “and our goal is to break that cycle ... We want to show teens what a healthy relationship looks like.”

Fulcher also said media violence has contributed to the increase in teenagers abusing each other.

Nicci Avey, now 16, said she experienced date violence when she was 14 years old. In her five-month relationship, she said her boyfriend verbally and physically abused her. She was hit so hard across the face, she said, that her right tear duct is now impaired. “He programmed me how he wanted me to be,” Avey said at a National Press Club news conference in Washington, D.C. Thursday.

Ivette Diaz, 17, was verbally, physically, and sexually abused at the age of 15 by her boyfriend. A daughter resulted from the relationship. “To this day, I’m still terrified of him,” Diaz said, adding that she finally left her boyfriend when her daughter was two months old. She will attend Iona College in New Rochelle, N.Y., this fall.

In addition to male-female relationship abuse, Fulcher told Cybercast News Service that about 20 percent of the teenage victims her organization assists are homosexual. “Not to say that gays and lesbians are more often victims,” she added.

This surge in teenage domestic violence has motivated fashion label, Liz Claiborne, Inc, to develop Love Is Not Abuse, an educational curriculum designed to reverse the trend.

Claiborne has enlisted the help of several programs and organizations, including Break the Cycle and the Empower Program.

Rosalind Wiseman, co-founder of the Empower Program, said such a curriculum would have helped her when she was in high school. “I would have known what to do to leave my abusive relationship. I would have known I did not deserve to be mistreated and that I had options,” Wiseman said.

Love Is Not Abuse will be piloted this fall in ten public high schools around the country and will be taught in 9th grade Health or English classes. Fulcher told Cybercast News Service that the program is private and that no government aid will be used to fund it.

Last month, high school students from Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy in Washington, D.C., addressed U.S. senators at a Capitol Hill briefing about teen domestic violence.

Ashley Short, who will be a junior at the high school in the fall, told Cybercast News Service that she and the other students “realized that [many people] weren’t educated about [teen dating violence].”

Short and classmate Adriana Gonzalez said they each grew up around domestic violence and personally knew victims of teen dating abuse. That experience, they said, helped them address the senators at the May 15 briefing.

On Wednesday, Senators Joe Biden (D-Del.) Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa), proposed the Violence Against Women Act of 2005. The legislation would re-authorize VAWA legislation of 1994 and 2000, both of which were signed by then-president Bill Clinton.

Among other changes, VAWA 2005’s Title III plans to “promote collaboration between domestic violence experts and child welfare agencies and enhance to \$15 million a year grants to reduce violence against women on college campuses.”

Copyright © 2005 Cybercast News Service.