

# POINTERS FOR PARENTS

## Prom: A Time To Protect Teens From Abusive Relationships

(NAPSA)—Experts say that prom season, a time when issues or abuse can become exacerbated and intensified, provides the perfect opportunity for parents to educate their teens about the signs of dating abuse.

A new survey on teen dating uncovered that an alarming number of 17- and 18-year-olds in relationships are enduring abusive behavior—and many are not aware that it's abuse. The survey found:

- Nearly 7 out of 10 teens experienced abusive/controlling behavior from a partner and 2 in 5 teens experienced verbal abuse.

- Over half of teens experienced emotional abuse and 11 percent of teens experienced physical abuse.

- Almost 1 in 4 teens agree that sex is expected if you're in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship.

- Among all 17- and 18-year-olds in relationships, 2 in 5 admit their parents know little to nothing about their dating relationships.

The survey, commissioned by Liz Claiborne Inc.—which has worked to end domestic abuse since 1991—and [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org), National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, highlights the importance of talking to teens about the signs of dating abuse, particularly around prom time.

Sheryl Cates, chief executive officer of [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org), believes it's vital for parents to discuss all the signs of abuse with their teens during prom season, particularly those that aren't so apparent. For instance:

- Controlling behavior—dating someone who is jealous or possessive of your teen, tries to control where she or he goes, what she or



**Talking to teens about abusive relationships could help keep them safe.**

he wears, what she or he does; someone who texts or IMs your teen excessively; someone who tries to stop your teen from seeing or talking to friends and family.

- Verbal abuse—dating someone who calls your teen names, criticizes or puts your teen down, even in a joking manner.

- Physical abuse—dating someone who has hit, slapped, pushed or kicked your teen.

- Sexual abuse—dating someone who tries to force your teen to have sex before she or he is ready.

### Finding Help

During prom season, there are a number of resources that parents can turn to for tips on how to talk to their teens about dating relationships and the signs of abuse. "A Parent's Guide To Teen Dating Violence: 10 Questions To Start The Conversation," developed by Liz Claiborne Inc. in conjunction with several teen dating abuse experts, highlights 10 important questions to begin the dialogue.

They include:

- How are things going? Starting to talk about abuse can feel awkward at first. Make your first question a general one, rather than one relating specifically to

dating violence.

- What are your friends' dating relationships like? This is just a launching point to get answers to how your teen views relationships. For example, if your teen thinks that after a week, two people are committed for the rest of high school, then you may have some explaining to do about timing and how long it normally takes for people to become intimate emotionally.

- Have you ever seen any kind of abusive behavior between two people who are going together? You may have to give some examples to get your teen to open up. The examples are your chance to define "abusive behaviors" or "violence" and compare your definition to your teenager's. You may be surprised how your views differ. This question can lead to a longer discussion.

### Getting Support

Parents can find support and information by calling the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at (866) 331-9474, (866) 331-8453 TTY or going online to [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).

For a list of tips for parents and a handbook on starting the discussion, visit [www.loveisnotabuse.com](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com).