

DATING & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS

College students experience dating violence at staggering rates and face unique obstacles in accessing services to escape an abusive relationship.

The Facts

- Women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence.ⁱ
- Nearly one-third of college students report physically assaulting a dating partner in the previous 12 months.ⁱⁱ
- As many as one quarter of female students experience sexual assault over the course of their college career.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Approximately 90% of victims of sexual assault on college campuses know their attacker.^{iv}

Obstacles Facing College Students

Students often have difficulty recognizing verbal and emotional abuse, or do not have enough experience in relationships to know that the abusive behavior is not normal or healthy. College students may feel trapped by the social networks and closed environment of many campuses. Away from home for the first time, students can become isolated from their personal support network and resources for help. Students that seek legal protection may also find themselves with few options if their state does not allow victims who are dating their abuser to obtain civil protection orders (also known as restraining orders).

Sexual Assault on Campus

Young women on college campuses are especially at risk of sexual assault and abuse. Victims of sexual assault face not only the threat of physical injury, unwanted pregnancy and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, but also experience emotional and psychological trauma. Feelings of shame, embarrassment and guilt, as well as confusion of what constitutes "sexual assault," discourage many female students from reporting the assault and seeking follow-up care.

Take Action

Addressing dating violence on college campuses requires proactive measures by administrators, policy makers, service-providing agencies and the larger community. Clearly defined reporting policies, a fair judicial process, and comprehensive, accessible services for victims are critical. However, students also need preventive education to better understand how to recognize an abusive relationship and the legal protections available to victims.

For more information visit www.breakthecycle.org or contact us at:

Break the Cycle

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ⁱ Bureau of Justice Statistics. "Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends and Girlfriends." Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Justice; 1998. Publication No. NCJ 167237

ⁱⁱ Straus, Murray A. "Prevalence of Violence Against Dating Partners by Male and Female University Students Worldwide." *Violence Against Women* 2004 10: 790-811.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bonnie S. Fisher, et al., "Sexual Victimization of College Women." Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Justice; 2000. Publication No. NCJ 182369

^{iv} Ibid.