



**At 20-Year Mark, NCJW/Essex TDA Program Reaches More than 50,000 Teens
With a Program that Raises Awareness of Abuse in Dating Relationships**

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

– One in Three Teens Is a Victim of Verbal or Physical Abuse by a Dating Partner –

It's the first school year of New Jersey's "Safe Dating" Education law, but the message is the same one that NCJW/Essex, has been hammering home for 20 years: *Love Shouldn't Hurt.*

As the original local group to respond to the growing body of evidence that teen dating abuse is prevalent and pervasive, National Council of Jewish Women, Essex County Section, developed its Teen Dating Abuse (TDA) prevention and awareness program for teenagers in 1992 and since then has been delivering the program throughout Essex County, as well as in Union and Morris. TDA volunteers, who go through a comprehensive instructional and field training, go into high school health classes to lead discussions with teens about what makes a relationship healthy, how to recognize signs of abuse – at the outset or as a relationship evolves --and how to end abusive relationships. The program is run through the Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW Center for Women, a project of NCJW/Essex.

During the month of February--National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month—NCJW/Essex is bringing the message beyond the classroom to alert parents and the greater community of this widespread problem.

"It's a perfect time for parents to take the opportunity to speak with their children about healthy and unhealthy dating relationships," said Doris Spector, co-chair of the program. "The February awareness month is a good launching point to start a conversation."

Teen Dating Abuse is Prevalent and Pervasive

The numbers paint a disturbing picture. Studies have found that:

- 1 in 3 adolescents who has been in a dating relationship has experienced verbal or physical abuse from a dating partner.
- Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused continue to date their abusive partner.
- 19% of teens in a 2010 survey confessed to committing violence against a dating partner.
- 15% of teens who have been in a relationship report having been hit, slapped, or pushed by their dating partner.
- 21% of teens who have been in a relationship say their partner tried to prevent them from seeing family or friends.

- 43% of those in a “serious” relationship say that it’s “good” or “okay” for a dating partner to behave in a jealous or controlling manner.

“Teen dating abuse – whether physical or emotional – is a problem that is present in every type of community, among all types of teenagers from families across the economic and social spectrum,” said Jill Sorkin Johnson, President, NCJW/Essex. “NCJW is thrilled to know that all students throughout New Jersey will be exposed to this important information to help them recognize and avoid abusive relationships.”

In the early years, the TDA program was designated for high school juniors. Now the program is primarily presented to freshmen because teens are maturing earlier and the problem is happening at younger ages.

In recent years the curriculum has been updated to include information about the use of texting, social networking sites, and other digital technologies in dating abuse.

TDA is receiving an increasing number of calls for presentations as teachers and administrators become more aware of the problem—and because the state of New Jersey enacted a law requiring schools to educate students about dating abuse. The TDA program, offered by the Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW Center for Women, is available to fulfill the requirements.

In addition to working directly with teens in schools, TDA runs a program for parent and community groups -- such as PTAs, churches, and synagogues – called Teen Dating: the Untold Story.

For information about how to have a free-of-charge TDA presentation, in your school or for your parent group, or if you are interested in becoming a TDA volunteer, please call the NCJW Center for Women at 973.994.4994.

Please visit http://www.centerforwomennj.org/teen_dating_abuse for additional information.

About the Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW Center for Women

Located in Livingston, N.J., the Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW Center for Women (CFW) provides free and low-cost services for women and children -- such as a teen dating abuse prevention program, support groups, a workshop/speaker series, computer classes, legal and financial counseling, and back-to-work mentoring. CFW is a project of the National Council of Jewish Women, Essex County Section, a nonsectarian volunteer organization with more than 3,000 members.

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Know the Early Warning Signs and the Top Ten Signs

Teen dating abuse can include emotional abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse. Experts have noted the following signs:

Early Warning Signs that a Teen May Abuse a Girl/Boyfriend

1. Says, "I love you" very early in the relationship.
2. Is extremely possessive or jealous.
3. Loses his/her temper quickly.
4. Always blames other people.

Top Ten Signs of Teen Dating Abuse

1. Calls you names or puts you down.
2. Prevents you from spending time with your family or friends.
3. Tells you what to do and when to do it.
4. Checks up on where you are.
5. Blames you.
6. Threatens you with harm.
7. Spreads rumors about you.
8. Threatens to kill him/herself if you break up.
9. Hits, pushes, kicks, or harms your body in any way.
10. Forces you to perform sexual acts or send sexual photos.