

الموقع العربي

Bridging the
gender gap
every dayFREE
SUBSCRIPTION

LINKS

PERMISSIONS

Women's
WeNEWS®Make a
DONATION

July 8, 2005

RSS Feed

Safety

Feds May Fund Programs for Teen Dating Violence

Run Date: 07/08/05

By Tiare Rath

WeNews correspondent

A recent study found 57 percent of teen respondents had a friend in an abusive relationship, validating the growing concern about teen dating violence. Now, Congress considers spending \$15 million annually on a problem that goes beyond immaturity.

(WOMENSENEWS)-- Eighteen and charming, Brad seduced Marcella quickly with his seemingly mature and gentlemanly behavior. No boy had ever introduced himself to her with a handshake and Marcella, who was just 13, saw it as a sign of great gallantry.



Courtesy of:
Columbus Coalition
Against Family
Violence

"He must be special," she thought to herself.

Two months later, Brad, by then her boyfriend, brought her to his house.

After they had sex, she sat alone in Brad's bedroom. His friend then entered the room and asked her, "What kind of condom do you want to use?"

Brad had arranged it, he told her.

Marcella--who asked for safety reasons that names be changed for this story--wrapped the sheets around her body so tightly that he couldn't get to her. "I'm not going to have sex with you," she told him.

He left the room and then Brad returned. Angry that she had defied his pimp-like "arrangement," he tried to suffocate Marcella by smothering her face in the mattress and shoved her in a linen closet, continually slamming the door on her back and side.

From there, things got worse. In addition to verbally and physically abusing her, he frequently sexually assaulted her.

Ashamed to tell her friends and afraid to tell her parents, who

prohibited her from dating, Marcella kept quiet. Finally, after many attempts to get away from him, he finally, one day, simply disappeared from her life.

That was all seven years ago.

But today, as a 20-year-old mother of two who speaks to girls and teens about abusive relationships, she still feels shaken by the experience.

"I used to be such a confident person; I used to dance and be outgoing," she said. "Even now, I'm still shy."

Legislation to End Teen Dating Abuse

Congress is considering legislation that could help reduce what the Family Violence Prevention Fund in San Francisco calls a national epidemic of teen dating abuse.

The original Violence Against Women Act of 1994 did not fund services for teens, nor did the renewed 2000 legislation, which nearly doubled the funds for domestic violence services to \$3.3 billion over five years.

The 2005 version of the act, introduced with strong bipartisan support in the Senate and the House last month, would allot \$3.9 billion over five years to fund civil and law enforcement services related to gender-based violence, including \$15 million annually for new initiatives targeting teens.

VAWA II, as the 2005 legislation is called, does not authorize increased funding for many current programs but includes services for teens and children.

"It's always a struggle to convince Congress to give additional funding, especially with high deficits," said Juley Fulcher, director of Break the Cycle in Washington, D.C., who called funding levels for 2005 "a good start to get us on our way."

A 2002 report by researchers at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found the original \$1.6 billion VAWA saved \$14.8 billion in averted social costs.

June Study on Teen Dating

The legislation follows the release of a study in June finding that 57 percent of 13- to 18-year-olds surveyed reported having friends in abusive relationships. The survey of 683 teens, sponsored by Liz Claiborne's Love Is Not Abuse program, echoes other studies that show 1-in-3 teen relationships are physically or sexually abusive. A 2001 Department of Justice report that found women and girls aged 16 to 24 experienced the highest rate of intimate partner violence.

Liz Claiborne plans to launch a program this fall educating students at 10 U.S. high schools about teen dating violence. Many other

organizations have educational programs for teens, but they receive little to no government funding and are therefore almost entirely dependent on private funding. Only one state--Massachusetts--mandates teen-dating-violence education.

While studies consistently show that teen dating violence is a severe problem, including among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered teens, the issue has not been tracked steadily. Studies conducted since the 1990s, however, have repeatedly found the effects to include low self-esteem, depression, suicide and eating disorders. Grades are more likely to slip and other relationships are almost certain to suffer.

Blurry Line in Relationships

The line between healthy and unhealthy relationships is often blurry for teens, particularly those in abusive homes who model their parents' relationships. Studies consistently show children in abusive homes are more likely to find themselves as victims or abusers in adulthood.

Courtney Macavinta, co-author of "Respect: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect and Dealing When Your Line Is Crossed," to be published by Free Spirit Publishing in August, says a major part of the solution is girls who know their rights, the definitions of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and how to ask for help.

Sarah Jones, teen program coordinator for the Support Network for Battered Women, based Mountain View, Calif., agrees. "It's really crazy that we're not educating our young people on healthy relationships," she said.

Adults, who often shrug off teen dating violence as youthful dramatics, need to be there with open arms and believe teens are telling the truth if they confide that they are being abused or are abusers, advocates said.

But while teens model what they see at home, they are also, perhaps more than any other group, influenced by their peers. The Liz Claiborne survey found the vast majority--73 percent--said they would talk to friends about dating abuse, while 54 percent said they'd discuss it with their parents.

Personal stories from survivors, and even former perpetrators, show abused teens that they are not alone and often captivate the attention of seemingly bored high school and middle school students. They also give resources to friends of victims, who otherwise may not know how to help.

The goal is also to change a culture where bullying and public belittling is alarmingly acceptable, Jones said.

Tiare Rath is a Silicon Valley-based freelance reporter.

For more information:

Liz Claiborne/Teen Research Unlimited --

Teen Dating Abuse Survey 2005:

http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/surveyresults_teens.htm

Resources from Respect --

A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect and Dealing When Your Line Is

Crossed:

<http://www.respectgirls.com>

WomensLaw.org --

Teen Dating Violence Information:

<http://www.womenslaw.org/teens.htm>

Send this story to a friend.

Your Name:

Friend's Email:

Send



[Click for copyright permissions!](#)

Copyright 2005 Women's eNews

Copyright 2005 Women's eNews. The information contained in this Women's eNews report may--with the prior written authorization of Women's eNews--be published, broadcast, rewritten or otherwise distributed.

Women's eNews is a nonprofit independent news service covering issues of concern to women and their allies. An incubator program of the International Institute for Community Solutions, Fund for the City of New York, Women's eNews is supported by our readers; reprints and licensing fees; and the International Institute for Community Solutions, Fund for the City of New York; the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; the Barbara Lee Family Foundation; the Open Society Institute; the Rockefeller Family Fund; The Helena Rubinstein Foundation; the Sister Fund and the Starry Night Fund. The donations from readers are critical to our success. Donate now by going to <http://www.womensenews.org/support.cfm>.

Women's eNews subscribers may select whether to receive a daily full text, daily summary or weekly summary. To change your email address, send mail to membersvcs@womensenews.org. To change the frequency of your mail or to cancel your subscription, send a message to Member Services (membersvcs@womensenews.org) or use our online form:

http://www.womensenews.org/update_subscription.cfm

[Home](#) [About us](#) [Donate](#) [Arabic Women's eNews](#) [Press Release](#) [Sylvia](#) [Links](#)
[Contact us](#) [Search Archives](#) [Letters to the Editors](#) [Subscription and Membership](#)
[Pressroom](#) [Help](#)

[21 Leaders for the 21st Century 2005](#)

[ORDER REPRINTS](#)
[Homepage!](#)

[Make Us Your](#)

[sign in](#)

Copyright 2005 Women's eNews Inc.