How Can I Tell if my Teen is an Abuser?

- Is your son or daughter jealous or possessive?
- Does your teen have an explosive temper?
- Does he/she consistently ridicule, criticize or insult his/her partner?
- Does your teen blame others when he/she gets angry?
- Does your teen exhibit any abusive behaviors toward you, family or friends?

For Parents of Abusive Teens

- Recognize and confront the abusive behavior. Be sure to have specific examples.
- Use the communication tips provided in *"THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN HELPING YOUR ABUSED TEEN."*
- Let him/her know what is not accept able.
  While being supportive of your teen as a person and his/her efforts to overcome the abusive behavior, you may have to make the difficult decision to report your teen's violence to law enforcement.
- Be a role model for supportive, healthy relationships with your own partner.

Where to go for Information and Help

- Local battered women's shelters or rape crisis centers
- Legal Aid Foundation in your area
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233
- Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network Hotline 1-800-656-4673
- Victims of Crime Resource Center 1-800-VICTIMS

For further information on this program and other crime prevention material, write to:

Crime and Violence Prevention Center
California Attorney General's Office
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
www.safestate.org

This publication can be downloaded from www.safestate.org

B10 - 3300
9/99

Parents Guide to Teen Dating Violence

Crime and Violence Prevention Center
California Attorney General's Office

***Teen** dating violence is similar to and can be as lethal as adult relationship violence. Both include hitting, yelling, threatening, name calling and other forms of verbal, sexual, emotional and physical abuse. About one in ten teen couples is affected by dating violence. These facts make it very important for parents to be aware of abusive relationships.*

How Can You Tell if Your Teen is a Victim of Dating Violence?

- Is your teen withdrawing from school activities?
- Has your son or daughter become secretive, ashamed or hostile to (or isolated from) parents, family or friends because of the relationship?
- Does your teen's partner call several times a night or show up unexpectedly to "check up?"
- Does your son or daughter apologize for his/her partner's behavior?
- Has your teen stopped hanging out with friends?

Other Warning Signs:

- Physical bruises, signs of injury or damaged personal property. Be aware of explanations that seem out of place or changes in make-up or dress.
- The use of alcohol or other drugs could be a teen's response to pressure from his/her partner. It may also be an attempt to numb pain or emotions. However, substance abuse is no excuse for or escape from violent behavior. If the alcohol or other drugs were taken away, the underlying causes and the violence in the relationship may still not be resolved.

If you notice any of the behaviors described above in your teen, it is an indication that your teen may be involved in dating violence.

Things to Keep in Mind When Helping Your Abused Teen

- Make sure the timing is right. Talk about the abuse when you are sharing time together.
- Use "I" statements when describing your feelings. Let your teen know how concerned you are about his/her safety, well-being and security.
- Be sure to have specific examples to share with your son or daughter that concern you.
- Listen and believe in your teen. Speak with sensitivity, support and care.
- Remember, if your teen does open up to you, it is possible that you will hear uncomfortable details. It is imperative that you are nonjudgmental by focusing on resolving the problem (the behavior) rather than criticizing your teen.
- Be a comfort zone for your teen.
- Let your teen have some control in making decisions. His/her self-esteem and confidence may have been lowered by the abusive partner.
- Be a role model for supportive, healthy relationships with your own partner.
- Help your teen create a safety plan for when he/she is at school and out with friends.
- Contact your local law enforcement agency or battered women's shelter about procedures for obtaining restraining or stay-away orders.

Things Not to Say or Do

- Do not be critical of your teen or his/her partner.
- Don't ask blaming questions such as: "Why don't you break up with him/her?" or "What did you say to provoke your partner?"
- Don't pressure your teen into making quick decisions.
- Don't talk to both teens together. The victim may feel inhibited about what he/she can say.
- Don't assume that the victim wants to leave the abusive relationship. Assist him/her in assessing the situation.