



Help Starts Here.

Information on Youth Dating Violence

Youth Dating Violence means... any form of violence or abusive behaviour towards a youth by a boyfriend or girlfriend, or by an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend.

Being in a relationship does not give anyone the right to be violent or abusive. Many types of dating violence are crimes. All types of dating violence—physical, sexual, and emotional—are harmful. Dating violence can happen to youth who are casually dating as well as youth in serious relationships. Violence and other forms of abusive behaviour can happen once or many times in a dating relationship. Sometimes an abusive boyfriend or girlfriend refuses to accept that a relationship isn't working or is over. But if young people stay together in an abusive relationship and don't get help, the violence or abuse often gets worse. If you are in dating relationship that is violent or abusive, or have been in the past, **help is available.**

What is an abusive relationship?

Abusive relationships may involve crimes of violence. Punching, slapping, shoving, and other types of physical violence are crimes of assault. So is threatening to hurt someone, with or without a weapon. Forcing someone to have sex is another type of violence, the crime of sexual assault.

A relationship doesn't have to involve hitting or forced sex to be abusive. Dating violence may involve various other actions by one person in the relationship to control or intimidate the other person. It may involve:

- destroying or threatening to destroy property (e.g., punching walls)
- threatening to hurt someone else (e.g., a friend of the other person)
- threatening to hurt himself/herself or commit suicide

- hurting or threatening to hurt a pet
- insulting, criticizing, or yelling at the other person
- making rude or degrading sexual comments
- bullying the other person into doing something such as having sex, drinking, or doing drugs
- being extremely jealous or possessive
- giving orders or making all the decisions
- controlling contact with friends or family to isolate the other person
- checking up on the other person all the time (e.g., constantly calling, stalking)

Boyfriends or girlfriends who are abusive often blame their actions on the victim. Always remember that **dating violence is the fault of the person who commits it.**





Who does it happen to?

Dating violence can happen to anyone in a relationship.

It can happen to females and males, regardless of sexual orientation. Dating violence can happen to youth with any sort of background—various cultures, wealthy or not.

Dating violence can happen at the beginning of a relationship or later on. And it can happen whether or not drinking is involved.

How may youth victims be affected?

Youth who are hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend may feel:

- shocked
- numb
- violated
- powerless
- ashamed
- scared
- anxious
- confused
- angry
- depressed
- alone
- a loss of trust
- a loss of self-confidence
- a sense of grief

These emotions can cause other health problems, such as stomach trouble, headaches, or sleeping or eating problems. Physical violence can result in bruises, broken bones, or other physical injuries.

The first step in dealing with dating violence is to talk about it with someone. Emotional support is important to feeling better and to getting out of an abusive relationship.

Why don't some victims seek help?

Some victims don't ask for help because they:

- are too embarrassed
- are scared of being hurt again
- don't want to get their boyfriend or girlfriend in trouble
- don't know how to get help
- are unsure what abuse is
- are worried about not being believed
- find it hard to communicate
- think things will get better
- don't want to lose their boyfriend or girlfriend

Support is available for victims of dating violence. If you are in an abusive relationship, tell someone you trust and find out what your options are.

What about reporting to the authorities?

Police

Victims of dating violence may wish to contact the police:

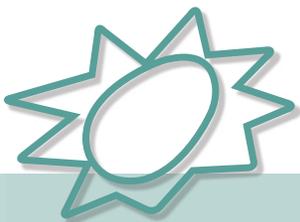
- to help them be safe and put an end to the violence
- because, for some, involving the justice system is important to the healing process

A support person can be with a victim when reporting a crime to the police.

Victims of dating violence can get help from Victim Services and other agencies whether or not the police are involved.

Child Protection Social Workers

B.C.'s child protection law (the Child, Family and Community Service Act) applies to children and youth under 19. If anyone believes that a person under 19 "needs protection" (as defined in the act), that person must tell a child protection social worker.





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Information for Victims of Crime

Teens who have been, or are likely to be, physically harmed or sexually assaulted in a dating relationship may need protection if their parents are not willing or able to protect them.

The Helpline for Children is the place to call to make a child protection report or ask questions about reporting. (See **resources** section on back page.) When a report is made to a child protection social worker, the worker will determine the most appropriate response. This may include, among other things, making a report to the police or conducting a child protection investigation jointly with a police investigation.

What is B.C.'s victims legislation?

Victims of crime have rights. The Victims of Crime Act sets out victims' rights to be treated with dignity and respect and to obtain information.

The Crime Victim Assistance Act provides for benefits to help with recovery from injuries and other costs resulting from violent crime.

What kind of help is available?

In addition to help available through schools, colleges, or universities (e.g., teachers, counsellors, health centres), there are various types of resources available to help victims of dating violence.

Police

Police can help victims of dating violence by:

- responding when someone is in immediate danger
- applying for a peace bond to protect someone who is afraid (for good reason) that another person will harm them
- investigating an incident to see if a crime occurred and, if so, and making an arrest
- providing information about other agencies that can help

Victim Services

Victim Services are located in community agencies or police stations. Victim Services provide:

- emotional support
- justice system information
- safety planning
- referrals to counselling and other services
- help in accessing *crime victim assistance benefits*
- support to victims going to court

Youth who are injured from violent crime can apply to the Crime Victim Assistance Program for benefits, to help pay for medical or dental expenses, counselling, protective measures, or other things to help them recover. Call 1-866-660-3888.

The VictimLINK line provides information and referrals to all victims, as well as immediate crisis response to victims of sexual and family violence. Call 1-800-563-0808.

Other Services

Other services to help youth victims of dating violence include:

- health clinics and hospitals
- transition houses and safe homes, which provide temporary, safe housing for victims of relationship violence
- agencies that provide information or advocacy services to youth
- agencies that are specially geared towards girls and young women, or boys and young men, or youth with disabilities, or lesbians, or gays, or different cultures





The VictimLINK line can provide victims with information on services in their communities. Call 1-800-563-0808.

The Youth Against Violence Line is a service that young people can call to seek help or report incidents of youth violence or crime. Call 1-800-680-4264.

BC NurseLine is a service that anyone can call to get health information and advice from a nurse. Call 1-866-215-4700.

Steps to take if you need help

- If you feel like you are not in a safe place, go to one. To find a transition house or safe home, look in your phone book under emergency numbers or call VictimLINK.
- If you are in immediate danger or need urgent medical help, contact the police or ambulance services, by calling 911 or the emergency number for your community.
- Tell someone you trust what happened. If a family member, friend, or teacher or other adult can provide emotional support or help you in practical ways, ask for help.
- Contact Victim Services by calling VictimLINK. Victim Services can help you directly and can also refer you to counselling and other services.
- If you want to contact the police but the situation is not urgent, call the non-emergency number for police in your community.
- If you may need medical care but the situation is not urgent, see your doctor or go to a walk-in clinic.
- If you have questions about dating violence, or your rights, don't hesitate to ask a Victim Service Worker.

Please note: *This information sheet provides general information only. It is not a legal document.*



Resources

BC NurseLine

- Call toll free in B.C. at 1-866-215-4700, 24 hours every day
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call 1-866-889-4700
- Translation services in over 130 languages on request

Crime Victim Assistance Program

- Call toll free in B.C. at 1-866-660-3888
- E-mail: SGCrimeVictimAssistanceProgram@gov.bc.ca

Helpline for Children

- Call 310-1234 (no area code required), 24 hours every day
- To use the TTD (Telephone Device for the Deaf), call 1-866-660-0505

VictimLINK (victim services information and referrals)

- Call toll free in B.C. at 1-800-563-0808, 24 hours every day
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call Information Services Vancouver TTY service at 604-875-0885; if calling from outside the Lower Mainland, call collect
- Multi-lingual

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