



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

Statement from Senator Hassell-Thompson During Teen Dating Violence (DV) Prevention and Awareness Month

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON February 11, 2011

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This year marks the second anniversary of Congress dedicating February as Teen Dating Violence (DV) Prevention and Awareness Month. During this month, many organizations and individuals nationwide will come together to highlight the need to educate young people about healthy relationships and to raise awareness about this devastating type of abuse.

As Chairwoman of the New York State Senate Task Force on Domestic Violence, I urge all parents, teachers and concerned community members to take a few moments and speak to the teens in their lives about relationship violence. Dating violence among youth has reached epidemic proportions. Consider the following statistics (taken from the The National Resource Center for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month website).

- Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.
- One in three adolescent girls in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds rates of other types of youth violence.
- One in ten high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- One quarter of high school girls have been victims of physical or sexual abuse.
- Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, almost triple the national average.
- Violent behavior often begins between the ages of 12 and 18.

- The severity of intimate partner violence is often greater in cases where the pattern of abuse was established in adolescence.
- About 72% of eighth and ninth graders are 'dating.'

Some of the issues that my colleagues and I intend to focus on this year include examining New York State's laws to determine whether teens may have orders of protection against other teens and if there a need for teen choice in determining parental visitation rights in cases of domestic violence. We will also explore legislation dealing with another form of dating abuse, the malicious cyber-violence that now taunts and threatens many young teens.

We must teach our youth that violence is NEVER acceptable in any type of relationship. Neither is exerting undue control or pressure, whether it be verbal, physical or in a mixed media setting.