

## **Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month: Understanding the Issue and Knowing When to Seek Help**

Every February, communities across the United States recognize Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM), a nationwide effort to spotlight the seriousness of dating abuse among young people and promote healthy relationship habits. [\[loveisrespect.org\]](https://loveisrespect.org)

Teen dating violence can include physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, or digital abuse from a current or former partner. It affects a significant number of teens, with nearly one in three young people experiencing some form of abusive behavior before adulthood. This violence can occur in person or electronically, making it challenging for some teens to recognize or escape harmful patterns. [\[loveisrespect.org\]](https://loveisrespect.org) [\[wingsprogram.com\]](https://wingsprogram.com)

TDVAM emphasizes education—helping teens understand what healthy relationships look like, how to recognize early signs of abuse, and how to safely support friends who may be affected. Events, school programs, and awareness campaigns throughout February aim to teach teens that real love is built on respect, communication, and safety, not control or fear.

### **When to Seek Help**

It's important for teens, families, and educators to know when to reach out for support. Someone should seek help if:

- They feel afraid, controlled, or pressured in a relationship. Abuse can be emotional or psychological even without physical harm. [\[humanoptions.org\]](https://humanoptions.org)
- Their partner isolates them from friends, family, or activities, either in person or online. [\[humanoptions.org\]](https://humanoptions.org)
- They experience threats, humiliation, or persistent jealousy from a partner. These behaviors are warning signs of emotional abuse. [\[humanoptions.org\]](https://humanoptions.org)
- Physical or sexual harm occurs, including coercion, unwanted touching, or forced sexual activity. [\[wingsprogram.com\]](https://wingsprogram.com)
- They notice significant changes in mood, school performance, or social connections, as dating abuse often impacts mental health and daily functioning. [\[breakthecycle.org\]](https://breakthecycle.org)

Help is available through school counselors, local community organizations, domestic violence agencies, and national hotlines such as “love is respect”, which provides confidential assistance for teens and their families. [\[loveisrespect.org\]](https://loveisrespect.org). If you have any questions regarding resources or services, please contact the Ross Township Police Department's Social Service Coordinator at (412) 931-9070 ext 257.