

Web of Friends

Frequently Asked Questions About Reporting Teen Dating Violence

If my boyfriend/girlfriend physically or sexually abuses me, who should I call?

Physical abuse can include lots of different things like hitting, slapping, punching, kicking and choking. Sexual abuse is forced sex or sex acts without the person's permission. If you are experiencing any of these types of abuse, please read the following information carefully and seriously consider getting help.

If you're not ready to tell an adult yet, try talking to a trusted friend. Sometimes just talking to someone can help, but don't be surprised if they get angry at your boyfriend/girlfriend for hurting you. Your friends care about you and don't want to see you get hurt. Help them to understand that you need their support and someone to talk to – not someone who gets mad and judges you for making choices they don't agree with. Together, you can look through the information on this website, www.WebOfFriends.org, and can talk about all of your options.

You may also consider telling one or both of your parents. Even though this can be a hard conversation, they may be able to help you and keep you safe. If this is not an option for you, you can try talking to a teacher, school counselor, or other trusted adult. It is important to understand that if you speak to an adult, they will be required by law to report the abuse to the police. Teachers, school counselors, police officers, members of the clergy, and medical professionals, among others, are required to report any physical or sexual abuse of a minor.

If you want to talk to someone anonymously, you can contact the National Teen Dating Violence Helpline at 1-866-331-9474 or TTY 1-866-331-8453. This way you don't have to give your name and no one can tell where you are calling from, if you are worried about your privacy. This Helpline was designed for teens and it is available 24 hours a day. Check out www.loveisrespect.org for more information. There are trained counselors at the Helpline who can guide you, but if you prefer to speak with someone your own age, you can ask to speak to a peer counselor.

A local option for help is Teen Lifeline at 602-248-TEEN or 1-800-248-TEEN from 3:00pm – 9:00pm. The counselors at Teen Lifeline are available to help with all types of issues, including questions about dating violence.

No matter which route you choose, it's important that you speak to someone. Abuse is wrong and no one deserves to be treated badly.

What should I do if my friend is in a violent relationship?

As a friend, there are lots of things you can do to help. It's really hard for someone who is being hurt to talk about it. It is especially hard for them to go to their parents,

teachers, or other adults because they may feel it is their fault somehow. If you have a friend in an abusive relationship, offer your support and let them know that you will be there for them, no matter what. It's OK to tell them your opinions and let them know you are worried about their safety, but never judge them, yell at them, or tell them they must leave their boyfriend/girlfriend. Remember, it is their life and they have to make their own decisions, even if you don't agree.

Your first step if you have a friend who is being abused is to learn the warning signs of abuse and find out where help is available. Check out the information on this website, www.WebOfFriends.org, or at the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline website at www.loveisrespect.org. Learn everything you can so that when your friend is ready for you to help them, you will know what to do.

What are some of the warning signs of an abusive relationship?

Most relationships do not start out abusive. Often, the abuser is very sweet and kind in the beginning, but at some point, things begin to change. Usually, this change is so gradual that it may be hard for people to even notice at first. It is important to know some of the warning signs of an abusive relationship so that it can be stopped before the physical or sexual violence begins. A relationship may be abusive if a partner:

- Puts you down or calls you names.
- Tries to control who you can hang out with or talk to.
- Is jealous of your time, even time spent with family or at school/work.
- Doesn't let you make even simple decisions for yourself, like what to wear, what music to listen to, or what food to order.
- Monitors your phone calls, emails, or computer use; or they constantly email, call or IM you all the time.
- Tries to scare you with certain looks, threats or by showing you weapons.
- Threatens to kill himself/herself if you ever leave them.
- Forces you into sex or sexual acts.
- Shoves, slaps, hits, or chokes you.

If I call the police on my boyfriend/girlfriend because they abuse me, what could happen to them?

That will depend on a lot of things. There are many different types of abuse, and many different types of relationships. There are many things the police must consider when deciding what to do after a report is made. They must look at exactly what happened, how often the abuse occurred, what evidence is available, and whether you are willing to press charges. The age of the people involved is also important. For example, if the abuser is 18 or older, but the victim is under 18, the abuser is more likely to go to jail than if both of the people involved are minors.

If the person you are dating physically or sexually abuses you and the police charge him/her with a crime, they could be sentenced to community service hours, probation,

and/or some time in jail, especially if they have been arrested before. The most important thing to remember is that abuse of any kind is not OK, and that talking to someone about your situation may help you figure out what to do next.

Can the police do anything about verbal or emotional abuse?

Usually, the answer to this question is no. Physical and sexual abuse are against the law, but many other types of abuse are not. But, if your boyfriend or girlfriend is threatening you with physical violence or is stalking you, this is a crime and they can be arrested. Again, the best thing to do if you are unsure is to talk to someone you trust, call one of the hotlines given above, or check out the information at this website.

Can a minor report sexual/physical dating violence to the police without a parent or legal guardian?

Yes, minors can fill out a police report without their parents or legal guardian. Although it may be easier with an adult, it is not required. After the police take a report, a detective may do an investigation of the charges. At that time, it is possible that the police would contact the parents of the victim if he/she is a minor. One place that minors can go to make a police report, aside from their local police station, is the City of Phoenix Family Advocacy Center. Information about the Center is available online at <http://phoenix.gov/CITZASST/facbroch.html>.

Are dating violence and domestic violence the same thing according to the law?

No. Arizona law says that domestic violence occurs between two people who are married or have been married in the past, have a child together, live together currently or have in the past, or if the victim is currently pregnant with the abuser's child. Violence between people who are dating, but who have never lived together or had a child together, would not fall under the domestic violence statutes in the State of Arizona. However, physical or sexual abuse is still against the law, no matter the relationship between the victim and the abuser. Abuse is still abuse, whether it is considered domestic violence or not.

Some teens may live with their boyfriend/girlfriend and not be married. If there is abuse in this relationship, it is considered domestic violence by law. If two people have had a baby together and there is abuse in the relationship, then it is considered domestic violence even if they don't live together.

Although the law can be complicated, it's most important to remember that physical and sexual abuse at any time is illegal and it is a crime. The penalties for the abuser may be different, but it is always against the law.

My boyfriend/girlfriend and I broke up recently, but now they won't leave me alone. It feels like I'm being stalked. What can I do?

Stalking is a crime and is considered a form of abuse. Sometimes stalking can lead to even more serious kinds of abuse like physical or sexual assault, so it should be taken very seriously. If you feel afraid, you might consider telling your parents or a trusted adult and asking them to help you get an Injunction Against Harassment. This is a court order that would make the person leave you alone for a specified amount of time. If they break the order, they can be arrested.

To get an injunction, you must show proof that the stalker has committed a series of acts (more than one) of harassment against you in the last year. For example, if you have phone records that show that he/she has called you several times, if you have copies of harassing emails, or if others overheard him/her threaten you. To obtain an injunction, you will need to fill out a form at your city court. The judge may require you to have a parent or guardian file the injunction for you. Information on getting an injunction against harassment in the City of Phoenix is available at <http://phoenix.gov/COURT/injaghar.html>. An advocate with the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy Hotline can give you more information about injunctions and talk to you about your legal options. The Legal Advocacy Hotline is available at 1-800-782-6400, Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00.

Types of Abuse that are Against the Law

(Remember: These are just examples and you should always check with someone about your specific situation if you are unsure.)

Assault:

- Hitting
- Choking
- Kicking
- Shoving

Aggravated Assault:

- Any of the above that causes serious physical injury
- If a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument is used (for example: guns, knives, baseball bat, heavy items)
- If the abuser is 18 or older and the victim is 15 or younger

Sexual Assault:

- Forced sex or oral sex without the victim's consent

Dangerous Crimes Against Children:

- Any of the above when the victim is 15 or younger

Stalking:

- Any pattern (2 or more) of actions that would make a reasonable person fear for their safety or the safety of their immediate family

Legal Definitions

Assault: A person commits assault by 1. Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing any physical injury to another person; or 2. Intentionally placing another person in reasonable apprehension of imminent physical injury; or 3. Knowingly toughing another person with the intent to injure, insult or provoke such person. *A.R.S. 13-1203*

Aggravated Assault: (Limited Definition of A.R.S. 13-1204)

A person commits aggravated assault if the person commits assault as defined in section 13-1203 under any of the following circumstances: 1. If the person causes serious physical injury to another. 2. If the person uses a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument. 3. If the person commits the assault after entering the private home of another with the intent to commit the assault. 4. If the person is eighteen years of age or older and commits the assault upon a child the age of fifteen years or under. 11. If the person commits the assault while the victim is bound or otherwise physically restrained or while the victim's capacity to resist is substantially impaired. 14. If the person commits assault by any means of force which causes temporary by substantial disfigurement, temporary but substantial loss or impairment of any body organ or part of a fracture of any body part. 15. If the person commits assault as prescribed by section 13-1203, subsection A, paragraph 1 or 3 and the person is in violation of an order of protection issued against the person pursuant to section 13-3602 or 13-3624.

Sexual Assault: A. A person commits sexual assault by intentionally or knowingly engaging in sexual intercourse or oral sexual contact with any person without consent of such person. *A.R.S. 13-1406*

Dangerous crimes Against Children: (Limited Definition of A.R.S. 13-604.011)

"Dangerous crime against children" means any of the following that is committed against a minor who is under fifteen years of age:

- (a) Second degree murder.
- (b) Aggravated assault resulting in serious physical injury or involving the discharge, use or threatening exhibition of a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument.
- (c) Sexual assault.
- (d) Molestation of a child.
- (e) Sexual conduct with a minor.
- (f) Commercial sexual exploitation of a minor.
- (g) Sexual exploitation of a minor.
- (h) Child abuse as prescribed in section 13-3623, subsection A, paragraph 1.
- (i) Kidnapping.
- (j) Sexual abuse.
- (k) Taking a child for the purpose of prostitution as prescribed in section 13-3206.
- (l) Child prostitution as prescribed in section 13-3212.
- (m) Involving or using minors in drug offenses.
- (n) Continuous sexual abuse of a child.

(o) Attempted first degree murder.

(p) Sex trafficking.

(q) Manufacturing methamphetamine under circumstances that cause physical injury to a minor.

(r) Bestiality as prescribed in section 13-1411, subsection A, paragraph 2.

A dangerous crime against children is in the first degree if it is a completed offense and is in the second degree if it is a preparatory offense, except attempted first degree murder is a dangerous crime against children in the first degree.

Stalking: (A.R.S. 13-2923)

A. A person commits stalking if the person intentionally or knowingly engages in a course of conduct that is directed toward another person and if that conduct either:

1. Would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or the safety of that person's immediate family member and that person in fact fears for their safety or the safety of that person's immediate family member.

2. Would cause a reasonable person to fear death of that person or that person's immediate family member and that person in fact fears death of that person or that person's immediate family member.

B. Stalking under subsection A, paragraph 1 of this section is a class 5 felony.

Stalking under subsection A, paragraph 2 is a class 3 felony.

C. For the purposes of this section:

1. "Course of conduct" means maintaining visual or physical proximity to a specific person or directing verbal, written or other threats, whether express or implied, to a specific person on two or more occasions over a period of time, however short, but does not include constitutionally protected activity.

2. "Immediate family member" means a spouse, parent, child or sibling or any other person who regularly resides in a person's household or resided in a person's household within the past six months.