

# Violence Prevention

Child Abuse, Teen Dating Violence, and Human Trafficking

*It's easier to build  
strong children than  
to repair broken adults.*

*Frederick Douglas*



## Protect Our Children

Child abuse, teen dating violence, and human trafficking are devastating experiences that can leave lifelong scars on its victims and families of the victims. According to womenshealth.gov, children who witness or are victims of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse are at higher risk for health problems as adults. These can include mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. They may also include diabetes, obesity, heart disease, poor self-esteem, and other problems. And when the abuse occurs at the hands of a trusted friend, family or community member, the amount of psychological damage increases.

Child abuse and neglect are common. At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year, and this is likely an underestimate. In 2018, nearly 1,770 children died of abuse and neglect in the United States.

It is estimated that one in every eleven female and one in every fifteen male high school students report having experienced physical dating violence in the past year.

According to the Human Trafficking Hotline, Florida ranks third in the country for reported cases of human trafficking. From 2015 to 2019, Florida cases increased by 114%.

This newsletter includes information, data, and resources to help you better understand these issues.



**PREVENTION SERVICES**

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## What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm, or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, and emotional abuse. Perpetrators can also include coaches, religious leaders, teachers, or other adults who are in a custodial role of a child under eighteen. ([www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org))

Rates of child abuse and neglect are five times higher for children in families with low socio-economic status compared to children in families with higher socio-economic status. Children under the age of four and children with special needs are also at higher risk for victimization.

Other risk factors include:

- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs, child development, and parenting skills
- Parental history of child abuse and or neglect
- Substance abuse and/or mental health issues including depression in the family
- Parental characteristics such as young age, low education, single parenthood, large number of dependent children, and low income
- Nonbiological, transient caregivers in the home (e.g., mother's male partner)

Information from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>



**SDLC Mental Health and Wellness Portal**  
For information on child abuse, childhood trauma, and mental health.



At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year.

**Neglect is the most common form of child abuse.**

Florida law requires that ANY person in Florida who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver or other person responsible for the child's welfare MUST immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline of the Department of Children and Families.

### How to Make A Report:

**Telephone:** 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873). Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week

**TDD:** 1-800-453-5145

**Fax:** 1-800-914-0004

**Online:** <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT  
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
[MYFLFAMILIES.COM](http://MYFLFAMILIES.COM)

## Protective Factors

The following are protective factors that may lessen the likelihood of children being abused or neglected.

- Supportive family environment and social networks
- Concrete support for basic needs
- Nurturing parenting skills
- Stable family relationships
- Household rules and child monitoring
- Parental employment
- Adequate housing
- Access to health care and social services
- Caring adults outside the family who can serve as role models or mentors



Information from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/riskprotectivefactors.html>

## Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Abuse can be hard to recognize. Here are some signs that could indicate possible abuse or neglect.

- Has unexplained injuries, such as burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Seems scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn, or aggressive
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Abuses animals or pets
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is frequently absent from school
- Lacks needed medical care
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather

For more information go to:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/whatiscan.pdf>

Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida (CAC) offers abuse determination services as well as therapeutic counseling, parenting education and prevention programs in Lee, Hendry, Glades and Charlotte Counties.

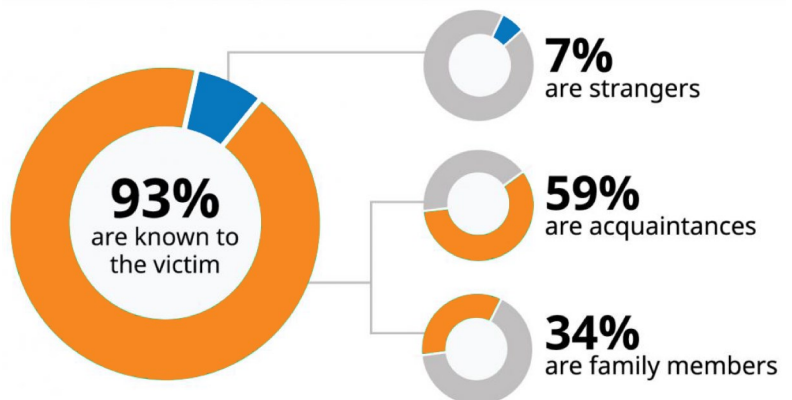
<https://www.cac-swfl.org/>



## PERPETRATOR RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD

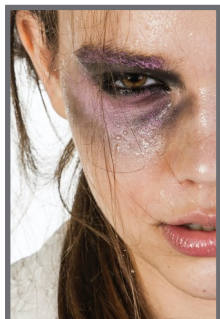
Among cases of child sexual abuse reported to law enforcement, victims between the ages of 0-17 years often know their abuser.

<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/saycrlc.pdf>



## Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a type of intimate partner violence. It occurs between two people in a close relationship. Dating abuse can slowly evolve, making it difficult to recognize when a relationship has gone from being healthy to unhealthy.



According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) teen dating violence includes four types of behavior:

**Physical violence** - when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.

**Sexual violence** - forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (e.g., sexting) when the partner does not or cannot consent.

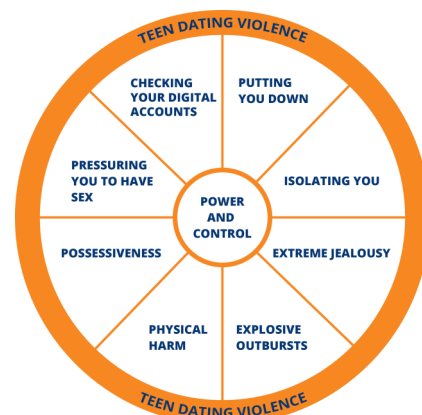
**Psychological aggression** - is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person.

**Stalking** - a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim.

Teen dating violence can also happen digitally, like repeated texting and posting pictures online without the other partner's consent.

If your partner exhibits the following behaviors, it could be a sign of an unhealthy relationship.

- Checks your phone, email, or social media accounts without your permission.
- Puts you down frequently, especially in front of others.
- Physically, financially, or emotionally isolates you from friends or family.
- Is extremely jealous or insecure.
- Has explosive outbursts, temper, or mood swings.
- Causes any form of physical harm.



**15%**  
OF MEN



Experienced intimate partner violence for the first time before age 18.

**26%**  
OF WOMEN



### Consequences of Teen Dating Violence

Youth who are victims of teen dating violence are more likely to:

- Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs, and alcohol
- Exhibit antisocial behaviors, like lying, theft, bullying or hitting
- Think about suicide

Information from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teendatingviolence/fastfact.html>

## Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is modern slavery. It involves exploiting a person through force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of forced labor and/or commercial sex. Victims of human trafficking include men, women, boys, girls, and transgender individuals.

There are approximately 30 million people enslaved throughout the world with 2.5 million located right here in the United States.



- Many of these victims are lured with false promises of financial or emotional security; instead, they are forced or coerced into commercial sex (prostitution), domestic servitude or other types of forced labor.
- Any minor under the age of 18 who is induced to perform a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking according to U.S. law, regardless of whether there is force, fraud or coercion. Increasingly, criminal organizations, such as gangs, are luring children from local schools into commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, every two minutes a child is trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the United States.

Information from <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools/human-trafficking.stml>

*Defeating human trafficking is a great moral calling of our time.*

*Condoleezza Rice*

### Warning Signs and Possible Risk Factors

No single indicator is necessarily proof of human trafficking. Recognizing the signs is the first step in identifying a problem. Does the child:

- Have unexplained absences from school?
- Suddenly change his or her usual attire, behavior or relationships?
- Suddenly have more (and/or more expensive) material possessions?
- Chronically run away from home?
- Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense or nervous and paranoid?
- Defer to another person to speak for him or her, especially during interactions with school authority figures?
- Describe an adult as a friend or boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Show signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint or other serious pain or suffering?
- Have new branding/tattoos?
- Appear to have been deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care or other life necessities?
- Have possession of his or her own identification documents (e.g., student identification card, driver's license/passport) or does someone else have them?

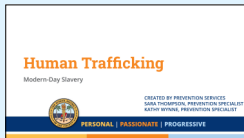
<http://www.fldoe.org/>

## Take Action. Courage to Report. Courage to Heal.

The eradication of child abuse begins with building informed, empowered communities that have the courage to talk openly about this difficult issue.

**Parents:** Educate your children about child abuse in an age-appropriate way. If you're uncertain how to approach it, contact your child's physician, school counselor, or a local children's advocacy center (CAC) to learn about ways to have this discussion.

**Community:** Start a conversation with responsible family members, co-workers, other parents, teachers, and coaches about what you have learned.



<https://youtu.be/uDEc1vBvCRI>

Human trafficking can happen in any community. The SDLC Prevention Services created this video presentation to inform parents about this timely topic.



### NATIONAL TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH

February is the National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. Learn more about raising awareness about teen dating violence and how to promote safe, healthy relationships.

<https://youth.gov/feature-article/teen-dating-violence-awareness-and-prevention-month>

### NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

Call 1-888-373-7888  
(TTY: 711)|

\*Text 233733



The organization *love is respect* is a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and offers information and support for young people between the ages of 13 and 26. This service is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

### Human Trafficking Fact Sheet



<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5596/urlt/HumanTraffickingFactSheet.pdf>



### SDLC Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Web Page



**Polaris** Freedom happens now.

The Polaris organization is dedicated to fighting sex and labor trafficking throughout the United States. Polaris assists victims and survivors with the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline and maintains the largest known U.S. data set on actual trafficking experiences. <https://polarisproject.org/>