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Love Hurts? Alarming Rate of Teen Dating Violence Persists
February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

EAU CLAIRE, Wis.- February 5, 2016 –As Valentine’s Day approaches, couples of all ages will celebrate their relationships with heart-shaped chocolate and singing cards. This February during *Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month*, the Health Department invites everyone to take a closer look at the relationships in their life and community.

Dating violence can be experienced as sexual, emotional, verbal, and/or physical abuse. Victims may be isolated, threatened, humiliated, or physically harmed by their partner. While dating violence can happen to anyone at any time in life, teenagers and young adults experience the highest rates of any age group. Nationwide, **one in three** teens is a victim of verbal, sexual, and/or emotional abuse from a girlfriend or boyfriend. If this holds true in Eau Claire County, **over 2,500 teenagers** in the community could be current victims of teen dating violence. *Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month* encourages teens to define healthy relationships for themselves to stop dating violence before it starts.



“Everyone in our community is affected by dating violence, and it will take a community effort to produce a lasting change,” says Abby Hinz, Public Health Nurse. The Eau Claire City-County Health Department is currently working with community partners to carry out *Safe Dates*, an evidence-based program for healthy teen dating education. AMPED Health, a community collaborative focused on teen health will lead this effort starting in the fall.

Below are tips on how we, as a community, can prevent teen dating violence and promote a lifetime of healthy relationships:

- **Recognize the problem:** Teen dating violence is common, but discomfort surrounding the issue often prevents open conversations within families and within the community. Reaching out to teens can set a strong foundation for health, wellness, and safety in their future relationships.
- **Use your voice:** Talk with friends and family about sexual respect, consent, and healthy relationships to increase awareness and decrease stigma.
- **Define what you want in a healthy relationship:** Equality, mutual respect, personal limits, and open communication are great starting points—choose values that speak to you.
- **Know the resources:** If you or a loved one is in an abusive relationship, the National Dating Abuse Helpline provides free and anonymous support—call 1-866-331-9484 or text “loveis” to 22522. Visit www.LovelsRespect.org for more information about teen dating violence.
- **Get involved in Eau Claire efforts:** Join Eau Claire Healthy Communities Coalition efforts related to healthy relationship promotion. To learn more, contact Abby Hinz at 715-839-2859 or visit <http://eauclaire.wi.networkofcare.org/ph/>

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