

Promoting healthy relationships

Addressing intimate partner sexual violence

Sexual assault has lasting effects on individuals, families, and communities. When someone is assaulted or harassed it can affect their ability to concentrate on schoolwork, their job, and their relationships. Sometimes a person is assaulted by a person they love or are romantically involved. This type of violence isolates that person from other people in their life and has dangerous consequences. This fact sheet offers background and resources on intimate partner sexual violence.

WHAT IS INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) is **when an individual uses force, threats, manipulation, or coercion to control their partner and force them into unwanted sexual contact or activity**. IPSV can also include birth control sabotage, forced unsafe sex practices, and/or controlling a female partner's decisions regarding pregnancy. IPSV can happen regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, geography, ability, appearance, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Adolescent relationship abuse

Adolescence is a time for exploring relationships. Unfortunately, many tweens (age 11-14) and teens are experiencing coercion, abuse, or assault as part of their first or early relationships. **Twenty-eight percent of tweens reported their partner pressured them** into "going all the way" or engaging in oral sex at some point in their relationship (Liz Claiborne, 2008).

A national study found **9% of teens reported "my partner pressured me to have sex when [he or she] knew I didn't want to"** (CDC, 2010). In a national study of Latina and Latino youth, almost 6% of teens reported some form of sexual coercion from their dating partner (Sabina, Cuevas, & Bell, 2013).



You can create a supportive space for survivors by:

- Believing that the victim is **never** to blame for an assault.
- Saying "**I believe you**" when a survivor shares the experience with you.
- Believing that **we each have a role** in creating safer communities.

You have the power to create change and support a survivor of sexual violence.



Adult experiences with IPSV

Intimate partners are supposed to be supportive, respectful, and bring out our best selves. However, some individuals use sexual abuse, coercion, and assault as ways to control and terrorize their partner. Almost 10% of women reported experiencing rape by a current or former intimate partner at some point in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011).

IPSV has some qualities that make it different from other forms of intimate partner violence and/or sexual assault (McOrmond-Plummer, 2008).

These qualities may make it more challenging for a survivor to come forward or heal from the experiences.

Survivors of IPSV often experience:

- Long-lasting and/or repetitive trauma—the partner may repeatedly assault or abuse over the course of weeks, months, or years.
- Higher risk of physical violence, sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), or fatality.
- Higher risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, or anxiety.



Sexual coercion and abuse in LGBT relationships

IPSV can occur in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) relationships. **Many times these crimes go unreported** due to inappropriate or biased responses from services intended to help, fear of being outed, or fear of being considered unfaithful to the LGBT community for talking about partner violence and abuse. Actions of an abusive partner within an LGBT relationship could include coercing a partner into sexual activity to “prove” their sexual orientation or gender identity or talking about parts of a partner’s body that are not in line with how the partner sees themselves.

RESOURCES

New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault

www.njcasa.org

A full listing of rape crisis centers and contact information can be found on NJCASA's website. For immediate assistance call the 24-hour Statewide Hotline at 1-800-601-7200.

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The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the statewide organization representing 21 county-based rape crisis centers and Rutgers University's Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance. NJCASA elevates the voice of survivors and service providers through advocacy, training, and support for efforts to create safer communities for all women, men and children.

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