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Teen-Dating Violence Increasing, Experts Say



Reporting

[Pamela Jones](#)

CHICAGO (CBS) ?}



Ashlee told CBS 2's Pamela Jones she was hurt by a former boyfriend. Experts say such abuse is all too common.

Kids in Chicago bruised and beaten at age 13 – by their dating partners.

Counselors are saying it's happening at an alarming rate, and for some, it's been deadly. CBS 2's Pamela Jones reports.

A Chicago advocacy group did a survey last year and found that almost one in 10 seventh-graders say their boyfriend or girlfriend physically abused them.

They're elementary students dealing with issues of mental abuse and physical battering they've seen come with dating relationships, even at the young age of 12 or 13.

One student witnessed a couple's bloody fight. "The girl, she kept fighting her boyfriend, and he busted her mouth," she said.

The comments came during a seminar at Sherman Elementary School hosted by Between Friends, a domestic violence help group trying to stop teen dating violence. The seminar focused on role-playing and open dialogue.

"What's surprising, too, is that we find a lot of kids don't know what a healthy relationship looks like," said Kathleen Doherty, executive director of Between Friends.

For many kids, hitting a dating partner rises to the level of encouraged behavior. A case in point: a 13-year-old who recently confided in a school counselor.

"He had to hit her," said Azell Madden, a Sherman school social worker. "If he didn't hit her, then she didn't consider him a 'man,' and therefore would be looking to leave him and go with someone else."

A young woman named Ashlee told us her boyfriend started beating her when she was just 16.

"He would slap me. He would punch me," she said. "He picked up a bat and he hit me with it. Yes, he hit me with it."

Ashlee had enough strength to leave, but for others, like 16-year-old Desiree Holmes, the lessons came too late. [Police say](#)

[her boyfriend hit her hard enough to kill her late last year.](#)

"People had actually seen them in physical altercations," said Holmes' former pastor, Carolyn Vessel of the Way of Life Church.

"A lot of the girls, from what the guys tell us, don't consider themselves in a relationship unless they're physically abused."

In Holmes' case, we're told there was so much shoving and horseplay that friends never really talked about the threat of the situation.

So for parents, if you see any horseplay with your child and the person they're dating -- or any kind of controlling behavior -- those may be signs your kid could be in over their head with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

To find out more information on Between Friends, click [here](#).